

ANNIE BESANT
HER PASSIONS AND HER RELATIONSHIPS
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There have been many controversial issues highlighted in Theosophical literature over the years. Certain issues surrounding Annie Besant seem to elude analytical objective review. Much of what has been written about her life deals with her many accomplishments. One period of her life which deserves closer examination is the period from 1888 to 1896, the years which include her early involvement with the Theosophical Society, her inner development and motivation, not only as a teacher and leader but also as a shrewd and skillful manipulator, or as one who may have been manipulated.

More books have been written about her than any other Theosophist, with the exception of Mme. Blavatsky, yet there have been aspects of her life which have evaded close scrutiny, such as her relationship with William Q. Judge. That relationship has been mostly ignored, or maybe purposely shrugged aside in the belief that old wounds are better closed — even with pieces of infectious material left inside — with hope that the whole body will heal. However there were other relationships which have been crucial to the evolution of the Theosophical Movement. The influences of powerful men in Annie Besant's life is one aspect which warrants further exploration.

Palm readers have been used, especially in the orient, for hundreds of years. Both Madame Blavatsky and William Q. Judge have been known to utilize their services. During Mrs. Besant's first visit to India (late 1893 to early 1894), while on her lecture tour,

. . . at Kumbakonam Annie Besant was interviewed by a 'palmist.' She says, 'they gave a very accurate sketch of my life with one or two details never printed — and then went on to the future, with reasons for future taken from events in past births. . . .'¹

In this article I propose to outline some of the events in Annie Besant's life which highlight her interests, tendencies and relationships, and to explore how these came to affect the Theosophical Movement, followed by a recent reading by a palmist, using a copy of a print of Besant's hand taken on April 22nd, 1894. It is interesting to learn what an individual's palm can reveal. Mrs. Besant was a complex person and this is reflected in the reading.

It was Annie Besant's involvement with Mr. William T. Stead and the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1888 which brought her in contact with Madame Blavatsky. Stead, as editor, needed someone with a quick and sharp intellect to review *The Secret Doctrine*. Mrs. Besant and her friend, Mr. Herbert Burrows,² had both spent some time investigating séances and the phenomena of spiritualism when the opportunity came for them to have an audience with Madame Blavatsky. Both socialist in nature,

¹*The Irish Theosophist*, Vol.II, No.5, Feb. 1894; p.59

²One of the founders and leaders of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation and active with Annie Besant in leading the Match Girls' Strike of 1888.

they were drawn to the philosophy of Theosophy. Annie Besant was more a materialist socialist³ than Burrows who approached Theosophy more as genuine philosophy which could help him understand humanity's social/moral problems, and could nourish his quest for answers to his complex bewilderment. Mrs. Besant became enthralled with Mme. Blavatsky and quickly seized the opportunity to join the Theosophical Society, sitting at HPB's feet and absorbing all she could from her new-found guru.

After reviewing Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, Besant felt that she had finally found her niche in life. Mr. Stead commented, "that book was the turning point"⁴, which consumed her for the rest of her life. Besant wrote to him:

Could find no answer to problems of life and mind in Materialism, especially as touching —

1. Hypnotic and mesmeric experiments, clairvoyance, etc.
2. Double consciousness, dreams.
3. Effect on body of mental conceptions.
4. Lines between object and subject worlds.
5. Memory, especially as studies in disease.
6. Diseased keenness of sense-perception.
7. Thought transference.
8. Genius, different types of character in family, etc.

These were some of the puzzles. Then Sinnett's books gave me the idea that there might be a different line of investigation possible. I had gone into spiritualism, I went into it again, and got some queer results. But I got no real satisfaction until I got the "Secret Doctrine" from you to review, and then I was all right.

I ought to add that I had long been deeply troubled as to the "beyond" of all my efforts at social and political reform. My own Socialism was that of love, and of leveling up; there was much Socialism that was of hatred; and I often wondered if out of hatred any true improvement could spring. I saw that many of the poor were as selfish and as greedy of enjoyment as many of the rich, and sometimes a cold wind of despair swept over me lest the "brute in man" should destroy the realisation of the noblest theories. Here Theosophy, with its proof of the higher nature in man, came as a ray of light, and its teaching of the training of that nature gave solid ground of hope. May I add that its call to limitless self-sacrifice for human good — a call addressed to all who can answer it — came to me as offering satisfaction to what has always been the deepest craving of my nature — the longing to serve as ransom for the race. At once I recognized that here was the path to that which I had been seeking all my life.

The result was the final repudiation of Materialism and the adoption of Theosophy.⁵

Besant had tried her hand at expressing herself with the pen before. She had written articles for other

³In her August 30th, 1891 lecture at the Hall of Science, Mrs. Besant explained that there were two different schools of Materialism. One is the Materialism which cares nothing for man but only for itself and the other is known as a philosophy so selfless in its noblest forms that few are grand enough to grasp it and live it out.

⁴"*CHARACTER SKETCH: OCTOBER*, Mrs. Annie Besant" — *Review of Reviews*, October 1891, p.366

⁵*Review of Reviews*, October 1891, p.366

papers, *The Link*, the *National Reformer* (a paper not as supportive to her socialistic views), and *Our Corner*, a small monthly paper. Besant felt that in Theosophy she had found the philosophy that satisfied her enormous appetite for logic and reasonable scientific deduction, and which could finally satisfy both her craving for understanding life as well as her exacting morality.⁶

Mrs. Besant was showing great promise and appeared to be much dedicated to the cause of Theosophy. She was in her forty-second year when she joined the Theosophical Society on May 10th, 1889, shortly after writing her book review on *The Secret Doctrine*. She was quickly brought in as a pledged⁷ member of the Esoteric Section. Shortly before her passing, HPB, recognizing Mrs. Besant's dedication and hard work, sent out an Order stating:

I hereby appoint in the name of the Masters, Annie Besant Chief Secretary of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section & Recorder of the Teachings.”⁸

Interestingly HPB could have appointed any other very competent worker, such as G.R.S. Mead, Claude Falls Wright, Alice L. Cleather or others. The question is why Annie Besant?

Mme. Blavatsky was impressed with Mrs. Besant's work and quickly promoted her as co-editor of *Lucifer*. In March 1889 Mme. Blavatsky had consulted a palmist named Cheiro. Cheiro confirmed that she did not have many years to live. Knowing this, HPB had hopes that Mr. Judge and Mrs. Besant would meet before she passed away. We are not sure why but can venture a guess that HPB wanted Mr. Judge's opinion about Mrs. Besant. HPB consulted with Judge on many things. Annie Besant had just been appointed Chief Secretary of the I.G. of the E.S. & Recorder of the Teachings and could eventually become active internationally. Mrs. Besant was well known in England for her public speaking abilities and her skills could easily be utilized to relieve H.S. Olcott of that heavy burden which he had been carrying for so many years. Theosophy was finally being accepted world wide and competent speakers were few.

Mme. Blavatsky seized the opportunity and decided to send Mrs. Besant to America to attend the Theosophical Society's American Section Convention scheduled for April 26 and 27, 1891. Mrs. Besant was to represent Mme. Blavatsky as her special delegate and also deliver her personal message. On March 27th, 1891 HPB wrote to Mr. Judge:

⁶An example of her exacting morality is her clear-cut solution for population control. Mrs. Besant advocated the Malthus doctrine (Thomas R. Malthus, 1766-1834): that the increase in population is greater than the increase in the means of subsistence and that unless birth is controlled, poverty and war must serve as a natural restriction of the increase (*Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, 1975). Besant and Bradlaugh were convicted, sentenced to heavy fines and imprisonment for publication of a pamphlet advocating the “Malthus Doctrine” of birth control. Upon appeal the sentence was set aside on a technical point. Within weeks of the close of the trial, in 1877 she published *The Law of Population: Its Consequences and its Bearing upon Human Conduct and Morals*.

⁷“The Meaning of A Pledge” (said to have been written by Dr. Archibald Keightley), Blavatsky Collected Writings Vol.12, pp.506-511. William Q. Judge as a member of the Esoteric Section was the only person whom Mme. Blavatsky did not demand take the Pledge.

⁸Esoteric Section Order, signed and sealed by H.P. Blavatsky, on April 1st, 1891, which was Read and Recorded by William Q. Judge on April 11th, 1891 — Blavatsky Collected Writings, Vol.12, p.485

She is not psychic nor spiritual in the least — all intellect”⁹ and yet she hears the Master’s voice when alone, sees His Light, and recognises His Voice from that of D____.¹⁰ Judge, *she is a most wonderful woman*, my right hand, my successor, when I will be forced to leave you, my sole hope in England, as you are my sole hope in America.¹¹

This passage has been the cause of great confusion. It is a paradox. How can this seeming paradox be resolved? How could Mme. Blavatsky say that Mrs. Besant was her apparent successor for Europe and yet not have been spiritually developed in the least? In her Theosophical writings Mme. Blavatsky went to great lengths to describe those who have developed the intellect at the expense of the spiritual. From *Isis Unveiled* to later writings Mme. Blavatsky was consistent on spiritual successorship, calling it “a gross and palpable fraud.”¹² One can have a successor in mundane affairs, such as a president or other offices, but how can one succeed another at the spiritual level?

From her childhood, growing up without a father, to her marriage to a curate¹³, Annie Besant had been brought up naïve of life and its pitfalls. After marriage it seems that her “illusions of life had vanished”¹⁴, her innocence gave way to doubt with its ensuing struggle against un-belief. She had been a sensitive, dreamy, enthusiastic child believing in the ecstasy of a moral and uncorrupt society. Life tested her and as faith in the Almighty Father was being threatened by doubt, her thought drifted to that of an almighty demon. She claimed:

No one who has not felt it knows the fearful agony caused by doubt to the earnest religious mind. There is in this life no other pain so horrible.”¹⁵

She drifted from being a Theist to an Atheist and quickly became involved with Mr. Charles Bradlaugh.¹⁶

⁹*Theosophy* Vol.3, May 1915, p.323, and *H.P. Blavatsky A Great Betrayal* by Alice Cleather, p.73

¹⁰D____ must have referred to Damodar. This code name is significant for many reasons. Only Mr. Judge would have known its significance at that time since he most likely received communications from Damodar in the same manner as did HPB. Mme. Blavatsky knew that Mr. Judge could distinguish between Damodar’s voice and that of the Masters. Using codes names and signs also became part of Mr. Judge’s way of communicating with some of his trusted co-workers. Refer to footnote No. 27 regarding Judge’s occult abilities.

¹¹*Canadian Theosophist*, Vol. 27, Jan. 1947; p.340

¹²*Isis Unveiled* Vol.2, p.544, TPH edition, 1972

¹³Annie Wood married Reverend Frank Besant, a schoolmaster, on December 28th, 1867 at the age of twenty. Six years later, in 1873, she filed the Deed of Separation.

¹⁴*Review of Reviews*, October 1891, p.354

¹⁵*Review of Reviews* October 1891, p.355

¹⁶Mr. Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891) was involved with the National Secular Society which was an organization for the propagandism of Freethought. Mrs. Besant “wrote to Mr. Bradlaugh, was accepted as a member on and August 2nd, 1874, went to hear him for the first time at the Hall of Science.” (*Review of Reviews*, October 1891, p.360).

Mr. Bradlaugh may have been the first man to completely captivate Annie Besant. He offered her a position on the staff of the *National Reformer*, she adopted the nom-de-plume “Ajax” and started her journalistic career. Thus began the “almost ideal affectionate friendship”¹⁷ between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant which some say never terminated even upon his death. Perhaps an observation from another woman can put Mrs. Besant in proper perspective. In *Review of Reviews* part of a letter from an unidentified woman is quoted:

One thing in Mrs. Besant makes me wonder. She is a far stronger, more intellectual person than I, a giantess in a certain sense, and yet I see in her what seems weakness, one which I, though an inferior person, was never tempted to fall into. I mean that way of going to man for light and guidance instead of God. In the deepest darkness and agony of spirit, in the moment when she felt the world was slipping from beneath her feet (I know well the suffering she describes), she went after Pusey, Arthur Stanley, Bradlaugh. It was always a good man but a man, and she got nothing from them. Naturally to a mind like hers it was only feeding on husk to hear the advice of even the best men. . . . The question comes to me, ‘How could so powerful and independent a being as Mrs. Besant stoop to go for spiritual aid to a man, if she at all believed there was a God?’ . . .¹⁸

Mr. Bradlaugh was not the last man to influence Mrs. Besant.

Mrs. Besant was a very inquisitive person. She had a very strong desire for knowledge, especially about things abstruse. She had expressed her views on religions and politics through newspaper articles and a number of books.¹⁹ Even though her moral views at the time were strong she declared that from 1886 to 1889 she suffered from acute distress over her philosophy of life. All that seemingly changed when she reviewed *The Secret Doctrine*. She left a note to Mr. Stead,

I am immersed in Madame Blavatsky! If I perish in the attempt to review her, you must write on my tomb, ‘She has gone to investigate *The Secret Doctrine* at first hand’.²⁰

When she came to Theosophy she had been accustomed to taking control of situations and controlling her environment, that is, once she was convinced and truly believed in a cause she set her course of action, stepped on her podium and swayed people.²¹ Mrs. Besant had the gift of speech and her skills were well known in England. She could win over the confidence of others. Mr. Stead stated:

To me the essential miracle is the conversion of Mrs. Besant from Materialism to a

¹⁷*Review of Reviews* October 1891, p.360

¹⁸*Review of Reviews* October 1891, p.361

¹⁹She had written *The Law of Population: Its Consequences and Its Bearing Upon Human Conduct and Morals* in 1877; *Marriage: As It Was, As It Is, And As It Should Be* in 1879; *Why I Am a Socialist* in 1886, shortly after she had joined the Fabian Society in the Spring of 1885; and *Why I do not believe in Goda* in 1887, as well as others titles.

²⁰*The Passionate Pilgrim - A Life of Annie Besant*, by Gertrude Marvin Williams, p.184

²¹In 1885 Mrs. Besant wrote: “Never have I felt one hour’s regret for the resolution taken in solitude in January 1875, to devote to that sacred cause every power of brain and tongue that I possessed. Not lightly was that resolution taken, for I know no task of weightier responsibility than of standing forth as teacher, and swaying thousands of hearers year after year.” *Review of Reviews*, October 1891, p.361

firmly based belief in the reality of the spiritual world. We all tried our level best to work that miracle, but we failed. Madame Blavatsky succeeded.²²

Mrs. Besant devoted herself completely to the Theosophical Movement, although careful not to come on as strongly as she had done with all other organizations that she had previously been involved with. She had decided to bide her time and not push for her way, believing that eventually she would be able to write, lecture and teach, which were her passions.

There were two reasons for this unique pause. She was finding for the first time an adequate emotional fulfillment. Secondly, she was finding it necessary to make a considerable mental readjustment. Fresh from her work in laboratories and reviewing and translating scientific works, she had acquired habits of rational thinking along empirical lines. With her gift for analysis and logical organization, she stood on the threshold of a subject which defied all such mental habits.²³

Although careful not to push her ideas at first, patience gave way to need, and in 1889 she published her first theosophical work, *Why I Became A Theosophist*. Shortly after Mme. Blavatsky's death, she went back to her Freethought platform where she delivered her farewell address on August 30th, 1891. This was published as *1875 to 1891 - A Fragment of Autobiography*.

Just as you can't change the spots on a leopard, sometimes people just can't change from their previous dispositions. Only two months after Blavatsky's death, Besant published *Theosophy and the Law of Population*.²⁴ Not long after she and Herbert Burrows compiled *A Short Glossary of Theosophical Terms*. Besant had issues which she wanted to promote and now with her guru gone there was no one to restrain her. No one that is, except William Q. Judge in America. She was not concerned with Henry S. Olcott, the President, because he seemed quite taken by her intellect, and she could probably work quite well with him for the time—besides, he was much older.

Mr. Judge was, you could say, HPB's right hand man. She had even wanted Judge to take her place in India after her departure in 1885. On July 27th, 1886 Blavatsky had written to Judge:

I know that you could do a lot of good in India. *Take my place Judge*. You will make up in devotion what you lack in occult knowledge. I will give you my share of *The Theosophist*. . . . Replace me at Adyar. . . . Even if I am dead you can always get 10% from *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Theosophist*.²⁵

By the time *The Secret Doctrine* was published, Judge had gained much occultly and had progressed to the point that HPB depended more on him. He had been asked to write *The Book of Rules for the Esoteric Section* under the guidance of Master M. and HPB. Mr. Judge was quite an unassuming man, with great organizational skills and a sharp mind for details and accuracy. Although trained as

²² *Review of Reviews*, October 1891, p.366

²³ *The Passionate Pilgrim - A Life of Annie Besant*, by Gertrude Marvin Williams, p.202.

²⁴ This was her second attempt to promote her views on population control. See footnote no. 6 regarding her first attempt to publish *Law of Population* which had been "withdrawn", most likely for its political and dogmatic views.

²⁵ *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* by Josephine Ransom, p.237

a lawyer, Judge claimed that he was “totally unfitted for any other business but Theosophy and Buddhism.”²⁶ Mr. Judge was the only individual to receive copies of the notes from the Inner Group meetings although he never attended physically. One suspects, however, that he was there observing all the details.²⁷

At first Besant and Judge seemed to work well together. In September 1893, Chicago hosted the World’s Fair for the Parliament of Religions. Mr. Judge had procured an assignment for the T.S. which would give them a great opportunity to advance their cause. Theosophical speakers from many countries were invited to attend. Included was Gyanendra N. Chakravarti, who was a Hindu scholar, a Brahman member of the T.S. from Allahabad, and professor of mathematics. Chakravarti, although a Theosophist, had never joined the Esoteric Section therefore was not bound by its pledge. He was, in a way, the head of a cult of his own and was skilled in hypnotism and had psychic powers.²⁸

When the Theosophical Congress at the World’s Fair was over the overseas members returned to England. Chakravarti continued on to India in early October and was followed by Annie Besant and Countess Wachtmeister a week later. Mrs. Besant and the Countess arrived in Colombo, Ceylon, on November 10th and were met there by Colonel Olcott. This was Annie Besant’s first visit to India. Since September 1891, Adyar had been trying desperately to induce Mrs. Besant to visit India but she had been warned not to go. In a letter to Judge, Vera Jelihovsky, H.P.B.’s sister, explained that she had written a letter to her daughter, Vera Johnston in London, asking her to transmit to A. Besant “*that Mrs. Besant must not go to India*, because the results of her voyage would be bad, dangerous, harmful, and disastrous to the extreme.”²⁹ On November 27th, 1891 Mrs. Besant announced that she had “been compelled to postpone her visit to India for this season, her physician having forbidden her to make the visit this year, and recommended a brief holiday; she has utilized this by a brief visit to New York.”³⁰ Actually she capitalized on this opportunity to cross the Atlantic to beseech Judge to bring accusations of grave immorality against Col. Olcott.³¹

En route to Chicago, Chakravarti reached London in August and took up residence in Avenue

²⁶ *The Theosophist*, Vol. 52, Oct. 1931; pp.67-68

²⁷ John Patrick Deveney’s *Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society* mentions Mr. Judge’s ability in this regard. (Published by Theosophical History Occasional Papers. Volume VI)

²⁸ *The Passionate Pilgrim*, p.210

²⁹ *The Path*, Vol. 10, Apr. 1895; pp.25-26

³⁰ *Lucifer*, Vol.9, Dec. 15; p.344 and *The Vahan*, Vol.1, Dec. 1891; p.8

³¹ Mrs. Besant’s charges against Col. Olcott and her later charges of fraud against Mr. Judge caused Mr. Herbert Burrows, her close friend and co-worker, to resign from the Theosophical Society on October 2, 1895. Mrs. Besant had strong suspicions, but hardly any facts to substantiate her claims. She alleged that Col. Olcott had had an affair with Miss Henrietta Müller when Olcott was in England after Blavatsky’s funeral.

Road.³² It was at this time that Chakravarti and Mrs. Besant became close friends. Mrs. Besant, being of high intellect and now with her intense desire for occult knowledge, was very much attracted to Mr. Chakravarti.³³ Mr. Chakravarti was affiliated, in Allahabad, with a group of Brahmins who had occult ties. In a Mahatma Letter³⁴, the famous Prayag letter, dated Nov. 1881 under Master M.'s dictation, HPB warned Mr. Sinnett of the impending problems developing in Allahabad.³⁵ (That Lodge eventually changed its rules and its name to the Prayag Psychic Theosophical Society in 1883.) Vera Jelihovsky's warning to Mrs. Besant grew fainter and Chakravarti's influence grew stronger. Mr. Judge warned Mrs. Besant for a second time not to go to India but that only generated more doubt in her mind about him and his abilities.

Dr. Archibald Keightley narrated his observations in London during Mr. Chakravarti's visit in 1893: I lived at Headquarters during Mr. Chakravarti's visit there and knew from Mrs. Besant, from him and from personal observation, of his frequent magnetisation of Mrs. Besant. He said that he did it to 'coördinate her bodies for work to be done'. . . . And I soon saw the mental effect of this in Mrs. Besant's entire change of view, in other matters besides those of H.P.B. and Mr. Judge.³⁶

Mrs. Besant was determined to go to India, stating "*I am ordered to go*"³⁷. She claimed to have received a message from the Master. The message was delivered through Chakravarti, now her new guru. Her new guru had become her "especial guardian".³⁸ He guided her studies and guarded her door at night against outside influences. "He spread before her the glories of India's golden age, the

³² *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* by Arthur H. Nethercot, p.390

³³ Through the process of affinity Mrs. Besant had always surrounded herself with intellectuals with similar interests, from C. Bradlaugh, W. T. Stead, G.R.S. Mead to Bertram Keightley. Now we start to see somewhat of a change in her; she is not only interested in high intellectuals but also people who show signs of occult abilities, and her interest shifted to dominant men such as Mr. Chakravarti and later C. W. Leadbeater.

³⁴ *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* compiled by Trevor Barker, 2nd edition. pp.461-464

³⁵ Some Brahmins in India were concerned that the T.S. was an organization for the promotion of Buddhism. The past President of the Prayag T.S. had sent Mr. Judge a copy of the Prayag letter. Judge aware of their concerns and of the Master's message in it:

[T]hat unless a man is prepared to become a thorough Theosophist, i.e. to do what Damodar did — give up entirely his caste, his old superstitions . . . he will remain simply a member of the Society, with no hope of ever hearing from us." Mr. Judge insisted that the letter was genuine and felt that it should be published. He published the Prayag Letter in *The Path*, March 1895, under title "*A Mahatma's Message to some Brahmans*."

³⁶ *The Path* Vol. 10, June 1895, pp.99-100.

³⁷ *The Path*, Vol. 10, Apr. 1895; pp.25-26

³⁸ *The Passionate Pilgrim - A Life of Annie Besant*, by Gertrude Marvin Williams, p.211

pride of blood and position of India's Brahmin caste as the most aristocratic lineage in the world."³⁹ Mr. Judge had reminded her that her occult relationship with her new guru had aroused comments and was in violation of E.S. rules.

During her first India tour, Mrs. Besant applauded the Hindu caste system and denounced western civilization. She was bewitched by India and adopted Ani Bai as her new name. Wm. Emmette Coleman wrote:

Mrs. Besant has publicly embraced the Hindu religion as a whole, and requested that she be called by her new Hindu name of Anna or Ani Bai, instead of her European one. She tells the people that she was and is a Hindu, — that in her prior incarnation she was an Indian pandit, and she is now 'visiting her own land after a sojourn in the West, where she was re-incarnated to know the nature of the materialistic civilisation of those regions'.⁴⁰

There were also claims that she had bathed in the sacred Ganges at Benares.⁴¹

Although "Anglo-India was annoyed by her breach of their own caste"⁴² Mrs. Besant was not criticized much in India. She was able to captivate her audiences wherever she lectured and soon became the darling of the Indians. But there were a few highly educated Hindus who held a different opinion. The following quotation provides a good indication of how she proceeded in her first visit to India following Blavatsky's death:

S. Sathianadhan, M.A., LL.B. (Cantab.), in an Appeal to his "Countrymen" on Theosophy, states that her popularity as a lecturer in India "does not depend so much on her eloquence or her learning as on the trick of enlisting the sympathies of the audience by posing as a martyr, and on the outrageous flattery in which she indulges." This flattery, he says, is being resented by the more thoughtful of his countrymen. "Nothing has been a cause of such incalculable harm to the cause of progress and truth in this country as the flattering the vanity of the Indians, by referring, in season and out of season, to the greatness of their ancestors and their civilisation. Such talk only helps to keep them in a fool's paradise." Although in dense ignorance of the religion and philosophy of the Hindus, except a slight smattering derived from popular literature, "Ani Bai" hesitates not to instruct (?) the natives relative to their religion. As Mr. Sathianadhan remarks: "Mrs. Besant's acquaintance with the ancient literature of the East in the original is even less" than that of Madame Blavatsky, "but her presumption in expounding Vedic philosophy is even more astounding." Another Hindu scholar thus speaks of her assumptions: "She is extraordinary in being able to build up the most daring conclusions on the flimsiest basis of facts, with the aid of the crudest hypotheses and the most far fetched analogies. She can talk glibly of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the

³⁹ *ibid*, p.211

⁴⁰ *Light.*, Vol. XIV, Apr. 14th, 1894; pp.176-177 — "Mrs. Besant and Indian Civilisation", by Wm. Emmette Coleman

⁴¹ Col. Olcott issued a "CARD" published in *The Path*, Vol.9, May 1894, p.65, denying these alleged stories about Mrs. Besant, adding "The April *Theosophist* will contain an article by myself upon the First Besant Tour". See fn. no. 45.

⁴² *The Passionate Pilgrim - A Life of Annie Besant*, by Gertrude Marvin Williams, p.228

Linga Sariras, the Akasa, and all the endless terminology of Hindu philosophy and religion as if she were a profound scholar of these subjects. But beneath all this show of knowledge one can detect that it is from a cursory perusal of translations and magazine articles that the little modicum of information she possesses has been gathered. It is, therefore, extraordinary to find that on this slender substratum of information she can pose as a leader of Hindu thought, and pretend to have crossed the ocean to instruct the Hindus and revive their ancient greatness.”⁴³

Returning to England from India Mrs. Besant found new rumors circulating about her having



MRS. BESANT.
(PHOTO, BY O SHANNESSEY AND CO., MELBOURNE.)

Mrs. Besant dressed with what appears to be a shawl wrapped around her in an eastern way. The photo is by O Shannessy and Co., Melbourne. *The Westminster Budget*, May 3, 1895; p.14

converted to Hinduism and having adopted their costumes. Even before her going to India in newspaper articles Annie Besant had been featured in cartoons. *How to Become A Mahatma* was one that circulated in September 1891 in the *St. Stephen's Review*, where she was depicted at the various stages of her life: marrying a vicar, preaching family limitation with Bradlaugh, expounding socialism, in Hindu garb, then with Mahatmas whispering in her ear.⁴⁴ *The Theosophist* published denial of these rumors:

In the story as to Mrs. Besant's bathing in the Ganges there was not a word of truth; it was a pure invention of hostile Anglo-Indian newspapers. Nor has Mrs. Besant appeared anywhere in Hindu dress. Nor has she been converted to Hinduism since she came to India, nor changed her position towards it.⁴⁵

In an interview by *The Westminster Budget* on May 3rd, 1895, in “the private room in Avenue-road, where in years gone by Madame Blavatsky received the privileged visitor” Mrs. Besant presented herself in “[c]reamy white silken stuffs and a pearly grey shawl of the East. . . .”⁴⁶

Mrs. Besant asserted her belief in the genuineness of the Mahatma Letters, except the Prayag Letter.

⁴³*Light*., Vol. XIV, Apr. 14th, 1894; pp.176-177 — “Mrs. Besant and Indian Civilisation”, by Wm. Emmette Coleman

⁴⁴ *Review of Reviews*, p.362; *The Passionate Pilgrim A Life of Annie Besant*, illustration facing p.224

⁴⁵ “Mrs. Besant's Indian Tour” *The Theosophist*, Vol.15, Apr. 1894; pp.442-449

⁴⁶ The article is titled MRS. BESANT AND THE MAHATMAS. HOW THEY LOOK AND HOW THEY ARE SCENTED. *The Westminster Budget*, May 3rd, 1895; p.14.

In March 1895 Mr. Judge challenged her to make her view public and stated “[i]t is now time that this important point be cleared up.”⁴⁷ She denied the authenticity of the Prayag Letter saying “I do not regard the letter as genuine, *but I have never attributed it to H.P.B. . . .*”⁴⁸ She continues:

The publication of the letter, if it should be regarded as from H.P.B., may do some harm to the Theosophical Society in India, and will certainly injure her memory, as it is in flagrant contradiction with her definite and published teachings.⁴⁹

Her conviction at the time clearly indicates her naivety regarding the genuineness of Mahatmas’ messages and their teachings, and demonstrates Chakravarti’s occult influence upon her.⁵⁰ Her defense of the Hindus also becomes apparent. Later I will illustrate that Chakravarti’s occult influence appears in her hand.

Mrs. Besant’s sincerity in her believing what she did at the time was never questioned. She could therefore always walk away from any situation, either when being questioned at the podium or confronted by interviewers. Mrs. Besant always evaded being accused of being either the instigator or the target when controversy arose. Her convictions and sincerity deterred imputations.

It was during her first visit to India, while she stayed with Chakravarti, that her doubts about Mr. Judge’s abilities surfaced⁵¹ and on February 6th, 1894 she wrote the President of the Theosophical Society, Colonel Olcott, to formulate and lay charges against Mr. Judge, the Vice-President of the Society. During her condemnation of Mr. Judge, she accused him of writing missives (bogus Mahatmic messages) on margins of letters and, therefore, of fraud. Mr. Basil Crump, Barrister-at-Law, reviewed her prosecutor’s brief and declared it a sad failure. He stated:

If this case were being tried before a proper tribunal, there would certainly be no defence required. But alas! it is being tried by lynch-law. And what *proof* have we in this ‘brief’? . . . ‘THERE IS NO PROOF.’⁵²

She could not produce documentary evidence⁵³ in support of her accusations — claiming that she had destroyed all messages and letters before leaving for Australia. How, therefore, can one believe her claims, after HPB’s death, that she saw the Masters? How can one sort the facts of a truly occult

⁴⁷ *The Path*, Vol.9, March 1895, p.431

⁴⁸ *Lucifer*, Vol. 16, July 1895, p.375

⁴⁹ *Lucifer*, Vol. 16, July 1895, p.375

⁵⁰ Mr. Judge stated that when Mr. Chakravarti was in New York in 1893, he had expressed his opinion that the letter was a “forgery or humbug”. Mrs. Besant *later* expressed the same view. *The Path* March 1895, p.431

⁵¹ In my soon to be published compilation of information on “The Judge Case” I will present details pointing to the fact that Chakravarti was not the only person who presented Mrs. Besant with information which convinced her to pursue having charges laid against Mr. Judge.

⁵² *The Case Against W.Q. Judge*, 4 page circular, May 5th, 1895.

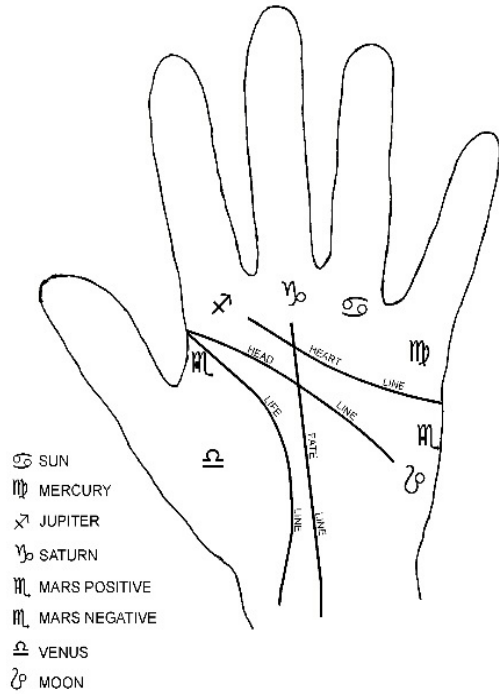
⁵³ I am also going to present in my compilation of “*The Judge Case*” what was exhibit “A” in Annie Besant’s charges against W.Q. Judge.

experience from a magnetization or other external influence? How can one appraise Annie Besant's good intentions? Was HPB's appraisal of Annie Besant incorrect? Did HPB make an error of judgement or did she provide Mr. Judge with an accurate appraisal of Mrs. Besant?

In Part II we shall look at what evidence can be found in Annie Besant's palm.

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



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.*

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. (See The Map of The Hand)

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

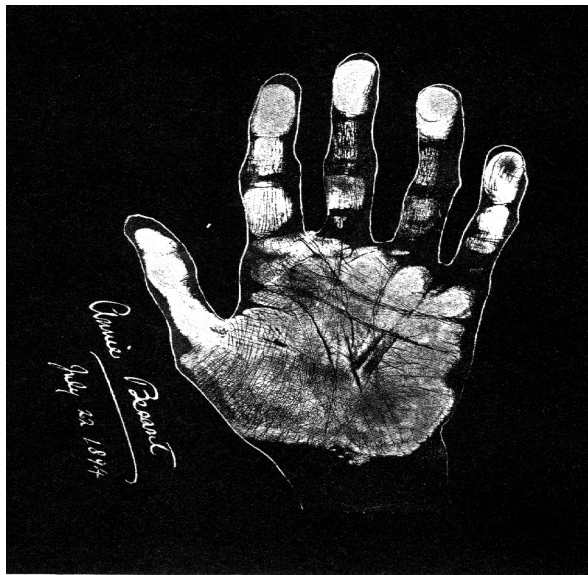
⁵⁴ Count Louis Hamon better known as "Cheiro" the noted palmist at the turn of the last century, stated: "'As is the mind, so is the form' is the stand-point from which I defend a legitimate and scientific study of the hand." From "The Mind and the Hand", *Metaphysical Magazine*, September 1895, p.177.

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.

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

Before Mme. Blavatsky’s death she made arrangements for Cheiro to meet with a newcomer to the ranks of Theosophy, 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.

Edmonton is home to Dr. Art Basu⁵⁹, 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 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

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.

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 1-780-448-1295 or through his web site at www.astrology-psyhic.com

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

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, 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 *re-active* versus *pro-active*. 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

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

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".

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 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

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.

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 made 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 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 T.S., was

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.

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.

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 W.Q.'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 to the Masters 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 which 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

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

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

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 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 could have 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

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."

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.

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.