CHAPTER-II
CHAPTER – II

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THE ORIGIN OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The 19th Century witnessed number of movements of Socio-religious nature such as the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society and the Ramakrishna Mission etc. The contributions made by these associations to the national awakening are immense. In the years immediately preceding the establishment of the Religious, Social Reform Movements, Indian cultural and National life has touched a very low ebb. The glorious culture of the past Hinduism had almost wholly lost the vitalizing power and spark of life.

At that time India was under the guidance of Rishi Agastya and 2 Disciples of Bhagavan Vaivasta Manu and Bhagavan Vyasa are the 2 Hindu Rishis (Rishi Morya and Rishi Koot Koomi) who in their Hindu bodies are residing in an inaccessible place in the Himalayas under whose inspiration the Theosophical Society was founded1. The Theosophical Society was founded on the basis of the concept of Theosophy or Brahma Vidya.

THEOSOPHY

The word “Theosophy” has been constituted by combining two Greek words (ie) “Theos” which means ‘God’ and “Sophia” which means ‘Wisdom’. In Sanskrit it is called “Brahma Gyan”. Theosophy in its teachings and ethics, though not in name, is as old as new, but the word “Theosophy” is said to date from the 3rd century A.D. when the Eclectic Theosophical system, which later developed into Neoplatonism was started by Ammonias saccus and his disciples in Alexandria – though Diogenes Lacertius attributes that system to an Egyptian priest in the early days of the Ptolemic dynasty.

The Greek Scholar Iambchues was the first man who used the word Theosophy for the knowledge of God in the 3rd Century A.D. Then in modern times, this word had been used by the Theosophical Society. This society had played an important role in the history of Religions, Society and Culture of Modern India. There is a need to explain about Theosophy since it only leads, Helena Patrona Blavatsky and Henry steel Olcott to lay the foundation of the Theosophical Society. Theosophy is a body of ideas which are very old. Some of them are found in the religions and philosophies of India, China, Egypt, Greece, Palestine and Arabia; others

4. Kali Kinkar Datta, A. Social History of Modern India, Delhi, 1975, p.25.
come from the discoveries of scientists of the past and present. Theosophy is not a religion in itself, but is the truth which underlies all religions alike, the hidden root from which all the different religions have sprung. It is the same as the Gnosis of the Christians, Brahma Vidhya of the Hindus and Sufism of the Muslims.

Theosophy is not presented as a revelation or dogma not as belief but for examination and judgement. In matters of religions, Theosophy essentially believes in the unity of God - His three fold Examinations Viz., a hierarchy of angels; human spirits and sub-human intelligences and universal brotherhood. Philosophically, it supports the school of idealism, asserts the primacy of consciousness and maintains that the human soul is a kin to the divine.

Helena Petrova Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1901) a Russian and an American assisted by others founded the Theosophical Society at New York in the year 1875. HPB born in an aristocratic family in Russia left her family at the age of seventeen and spent her next ten years in traveling throughout the world in her quest for spirituality. She spent considerable time in Tibet and it was there she, with

the help of a Guru gained entry into certain Lamastic Convents, ancient seats of learning where no European male or female had ever set foot earlier. She got personal instructions from her Guru Master Kuthumi on sacred science and mundane subject. Thus she was prepared for the revival of “Ancient Wisdom” and it was there her spiritual crusade was ignited that led to the establishment of Theosophical Society along with Colonel Olcott. These two spiritual minded people tried to bring to a sharp focus their heterodox ideas and this had resulted in forming an idea of starting this society to pursue and promote occult research. According to this two people esoteric teaching is really the same as Theosophy. Theosophy is not Buddhism, Hinduism Christianity and Jainism. It is the esoteric synthesis of all known religions and philosophies. A study of comparative religion proves that the origin and essence of all religions are the same and that fundamentally all religions are one, teaching the same and inculcating the same ideals of conduct and life. It is the archaic wisdom–religious, the esoteric doctrine once known in every ancient civilized country. The unity of everything in the universe implies and justifies our belief in the existence of knowledge, scientific, philosophical and religious. This knowledge must be called wisdom religions. They considered Theosophy as a conglomeration

of all religious principles. In fact rigidity had no place in the Theosophical Society.

From the Lamnastic Convents the founders get all the instruction to be carried out by them. The objects of the society were to include: Universal Brotherhood; no distinctions between races, creeds and social positions the study of Philosophies of the East; and opposition to materialism and dogmatism. The new society was intended to stem the tide of materialism, spiritual phenomenalism, and worship of the dead, and to guide the world into a spiritual awakening. The two founders were not given detailed instructions about what to do and how to do it, but they were told what they should never do. The founders had to oppose selfishness, dogmatic faith and fanaticism, belief in the infallibility of the masters or even in their existence and the society should never become a church or sect.\textsuperscript{12}

Looking over all religions of the world one finds that their central ideas are like the pieces of a great mosaic and need to be put together before one can see the grandeur of the full effect, that each faith has its own note of music, and one cannot afford to lose any of the dominant keynotes any of the jewels of the different faiths, as all the religions of the world are the intellectual presentments of the one great spiritual verity, the different

\footnote{12. \textit{Ibid.}, p.290.}
colours of the one white light of the spiritual Sun of Truth\textsuperscript{13}. Hence HPB stressed that the theosophist must have become freed of every leaning towards any one form of religion in preference to another. He must be free from all exacting obligations to society, politics and family. He must be ready to lay down his life, if necessary for the good of Humanity and of a “Brother Fellow” of whatever race, colour or ostensible creed. She also insisted and expected its fellows to personally exemplify the highest morality and religious aspiration\textsuperscript{14}. In the words of HPB any person of average intellectual capacities and a leaning towards the metaphysical of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbours than receiving help himself, one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people and one who loves truth, goodness and wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit, they may confer as a Theosophist\textsuperscript{15}. The real strength of the movement however lay in their supposed and pretended relations with the spiritual world\textsuperscript{16}. It is exceedingly interesting to watch even to unfold which led to the formation of TS and how through their interest in spiritualism, people scattered throughout the world gradually converged into the final effort led by HPB and HSC\textsuperscript{17}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} P. Pavri, \textit{op. cit.}, p.11.
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{The Theosophist}, p.292.
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Theosophical Society} (Pamphlet), p.4.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Julius Richter, \textit{A History of Missions in India}, Edinburgh and London, 1908, p.380.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Josephine Ransom, \textit{A Short History of The Theosophical Society}, Madras, 1938, p.11.
\end{itemize}
The growth of TS from its Commencement in 1875, is phenomenal. But when it was established in Newyork, between 1876 and 1878 the Theosophical Society as a body was comparatively inactive. The American soil was indeed too thin and barren for the Theosophical plant. Both HPB and HSC felt that India was to become the centre of the society’s activities and so they travelled to Bombay, arriving there on February 16, 1879. They were greeted by their Indian hosts. The condition of India at that time was that skepticism and materialism eaten out the life of the nation. The crowds of the so-called English-educated class were followers of Huxley, Mill and Spencer, and had entirely forgotten their own literature; were contemptuous of the past and hence hopeless for the future; they were copying English ways, English manners, filling their houses with English furniture to the destruction of Indian arts and crafts. They had lost all national spirit De-spiritualisation had brought about national degeneracy. There was no activity of national life, no pulsing of the national heart.

Realising that spirituality must first be restored to its place in life, they began by the revival of religions. In the beginning the Theosophical Society worked for the revival of Buddhism. HSC’s name is in fact a household fact (word) among the Buddhists of Ceylon. No honest Buddhist

18 S.Z. Niazudeen, op.cit., p. 15.
will deny the fact that no man had done so much solid good work for the Buddhists of this Island in modern times as HSC. The corner stone of the educational work of the Buddhists was laid by him that this TS and Movement stands as a great edifice in memory of his work. Thousands of Buddhists and Sinhalese children are receiving their education in Buddhist School under the Society's auspices and their number is daily increasing. The reason why he works to revive Buddhism may be regarded as one who labours in the True path of Theosophy for more than any other man who chooses as his goal the gratification of his own ardent aspiration of knowledge of wisdom\textsuperscript{21}.

In India there was then no national life, no congress no industrial exhibitions, no idea of the unity of the Indian people. Hence they both pointed out the value of Hindu Teachings. They held up the Vedas and Upanishads as the glory of India, proclaimed the value of Indian thought and the priceless heritage of the Indian people. They also analysed that the Indians at that time have superstitious belief, and they taught the people to eradicate it. This they can do it only by knowledge and not by abuse. Theosophy gave the Indian people a good knowledge\textsuperscript{22}. Thus both of them have done a marvelous sacrifice and the theosophical movement took its roots in India and the society gradually spread its wings around the world.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.385.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.59
All the Indians took keen interest in this movement and they took up the task of energizing the theosophical movement throughout the world\textsuperscript{23}.

The TS composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world who are united by their approval of the society's objects, by this wish to remove religious antagonism and to draw together men of good will what so ever their religious opinions and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others\textsuperscript{24}.

Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. Theosophy like a river contains shallows in which a child can wade; there are depths in it which the strongest diver cannot fathom. The Immanence of God, the solidarity of Man these are the basic Truths of Theosophy\textsuperscript{25}. They hold that truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life by devotion to high ideals, and they regard truth as a prize to the striven for, not as dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge and not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They saw every religion as an

\textsuperscript{23} The Theosophist, p. 294
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p.298.
\textsuperscript{25} P.Pavri, \textit{op.cit.}, p.2.
expression of the "Divine Wisdom" and prefer its study to its condemnation; and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of Truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the spirit, teaching man to know the spirit as himself and the mind and body and his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religion by unveiling their hidden meanings and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligences as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the TS study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live like them. Everyone, willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member and it rests with the member to become a True Theosophist.

27. Ibid., p. 32.
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AT ADYAR

Even before the founding of the TS and its establishment an organised attempt was made in Tamilnadu by St. Ramalingar to found a mystic society in 1867 under the name “Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Sangam”. It was to be based on the principle of Universal Brotherhood. But this did not come up to the expected level.

Between 1879 and 1882 from Crows Nest of Bombay, Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky toured and lectured throughout the world as a result of which the Theosophical Society had become an international organization. (See Appendix-II) There is no other society which includes within its men and women of all faiths and nationalities, who yet are united in a dedication of human service, and are inspired by the idea of Brotherhood. This Society is a great centre of thought and effort. This Society and Theosophical Movement could be called as a forward movement of humanity towards idealism, fostered by Theosophists, generation after generation who work in every type of activity, mental, moral and social.

The TS as founded, aimed to achieve its object as lined by HPB and HSC. The main object and its distinguishing features were the acceptance of

30. Ibid., P.64
31. Ibid., p.66.

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Hindu ideals and believes as well as an idealisation of India’s past. The uniqueness of this movement consisted in the fact that it was inaugurated by non-Indians who were great admirers of Hinduism. The TS worked in India for the revival and purification of Hinduism, in Ceylon for the cause of Buddhism, and in Europe and America for the true interpretation of the glorious religion of the Christ.

The founders of the TS were searching for a suitable place for the headquarters of the society at this time. Madras was the choice of HSC. It was in 1882 the Headquarters of Society was shifted from Bombay to Adyar in Madras. The choice of Madras as their base itself was only after a deep scrutiny of facts. During his travel to India and Ceylon HSC had observed places, people and climate with a view of selecting the best places for a permanent Headquarters for the Society. Liberal offers of houses, free of rent had been made to them in Ceylon, where HSC had already worked for the Buddhist, and the island presented the most charming appearance to anyone seeking an Asian home. But considering Ceylon’s isolation from India, the cost of postage and the enlightened character of the Indian populace, outweighed the loveliness of Ceylon and led the founder to choose Madras, where there more learned Pundits in villages and the

The educated class had been less spoiled by western education in Madras. It was the wholehearted support extended by T. Subba Rao, a prominent Theosophist from Madras, who had close association with HPB and HSC was chiefly instrumental in having invited the founders to visit Madras in 1882 and induced them to choose Madras as the permanent Headquarter of Theosophical Society.36

The paradise that HPB and HSC discovered and described when they come to Adyar was not then a part of the city of Madras37 (Now called Chennai) The centre of Chennai, the crowded area which was named “George Town by the British” is about seven miles from Adyar. In between there was not too large a population and the town had the feel of a very spacious, pleasant village consisting of houses interspersed with open spaces, small lakes, groves of fruit trees and gardens, all of which lay north of the quiet Adyar River opening out onto the Bay of Bengal in a large estuary38.

The TS estate at Adyar, a suburb of Madras, is the international Headquarters of the T.S. Etimologically Adyar means in Tamil, the river that joins the sea (Adai – join or reach, aru – river) “ADAIARU”. The river which starts from the Sembarabakkam lake, in Chingleput and after running

36 Ibid., pp. 286-287.
37 Adyar News Letter, p.4.
of quite some distance, it joins the sea, Bay of Bengal near the headquarters of the T.S.\textsuperscript{39} The first glance of this wonderful place told the founders it seems that their future home was found.

The founders bought a property of about 27 acres on the southern bank of the Adyar river, with a wonderful view of the sea and estuary over which sun and moon rose and set in splendour in the quite of the morning and evening. There were no cars, telephones, electricity or other modern conveniences to attract people, create bustle and make the human presence too insistent to let this paradise remain pure.\textsuperscript{40}

It is essential for the individual member and for the society that it serves as a great Spiritual Centre. The society at Adyar is and always has been a Spiritual Oasis. Though there are many a wonderful land and many famous sight, there is none to equal the extraordinary intangible something of Adyar. It is a wondrous spot and it must be maintained as though it was a holy Temple. The TS rejuvenates and revitalises the day with cheer and hope. In the depressing and deterioting conditions of the Chennai Metropolis, there is still hope for its residents, while the TS stands in sylvan glory\textsuperscript{41}.

\textsuperscript{39} Adyar News Letter 1987, p.10.
\textsuperscript{40} The Theosophist, p.8.
\textsuperscript{41} Wake Up India, p.1.
The TS always speak for unity, for brotherhood, for service and for sacrifice. Brotherhood in fact is the very truth, a law in nature, nation after nation, state after state has fallen into ruin by ignoring the universal truth of brotherhood, allowing the strong to oppress the weak, instead of protecting them, the learned to despise the ignorant instead of educating them42.

In everyday life, body, mind and speech must begin to express the values inherent in universal life which demands great watchfulness. As a good gardener removes weeds with care, so must impediments to the manifestation of these values be eliminated with alertness – which is renunciation – not achievement. The growth of the TS is well proved since when a meeting was held on September 18, 1875, the memorandum, the Bye-laws and preamble to the society was prepared by a committee which was specifically constituted for that purpose. The publications of Adyar Bulletin, the Theosophist and the Adyar News Letter* deserves special mention about its growth and development43.

**THE EMBLEM OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

The emblem of the TS is composed of a number of symbols, all of which have been used from very ancient times, to express profound spiritual and philosophical concepts about man and the universe. They are found in a

43. Fortinightly Reports, 26 November, 1917.
* Adyar Bulletin (1916 – 1923)  The Theosophists (1879 – till date)  
  Adyar News Letter (1916 – 1987)
34. A view of the Bay of Bengal from the Adyar Estate
7. The Great Banyan Tree
variety of forms in the great religions of the world and in their universality is further shown by their appearance in widely separated cultures. Each symbol studied separately will yield a wealth of understanding. Taken together as in the emblem, they suggest a vast evolutionary scheme, embracing the whole of nature, physical and spiritual. In its original and present form, the emblem contains a synthesis of the basic teachings of Theosophy and its crisp description is given below in detail.44 THE EMBLEM of the Theosophical Society is composed of a number of symbols, all of which have been used from very ancient times to express profound spiritual and philosophical concepts about man and the universe. They are found in a variety of forms in the great religions of the world and their universality is further shown by their appearance in widely separated cultures. Each symbol, studied separately, will yield a wealth of understanding. Taken together, as in this emblem, they suggest a vast evolutionary scheme embracing the whole of nature, physical and spiritual, and their study may lead the serious enquirer to contemplate some of the deepest mysteries of existence.

Partly because of their antiquity and partly because of the difficulty of establishing their origin, the symbols cannot be interpreted with a narrow precision. The interpretation here offered is to be taken as suggestive of the truths they seek to convey rather than as an exact statement of their meaning.

44. The Emblem of the Theosophical Society – Pamphlet.
THE ANKH: In the centre of the two interlaced Triangles is what is known as the Ankh (or the Crux Ansata). This comprises a circle surmounting the Tau Cross (the type of cross which follows the shape of the letter ‘T’). The Ankh is an Egyptian symbol of great antiquity and it portrays the resurrection of the spirit out of its encasement of matter, otherwise expressed as the triumph of life over death, of spirit over matter, of good over evil. This concept of the ‘Resurrection’ is found in all the great religions.

THE INTERLACED TRIANGLES (often called the Double Triangle, and known in the Hebrew religion as the Seal of Solomon or the Star of David) are surrounded by a serpent. This combination of the Triangle and the surrounding serpent symbolizes the created universe wherein creation is limited in time and space.

The Triangles, looked at separately, symbolize the three facets of the manifestation which is known as the Trinity in various religions and personified in Christianity as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, and in Hinduism as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. In ancient Egypt it was Horus, Isis and Osiris. The darker of the two triangles, which is downward-pointing, and the lighter triangle, which is upward-pointing, symbolize respectively the descent of the life and God into matter and the ascent of that life out of matter into spirit, the perpetual opposition between the light and dark forces in nature and in man.
THE SERPENT: Coming now to the symbolism of the serpent itself (apart from the significance of its surrounding the triangles as mentioned above): The serpent has always been a symbol of Wisdom. The Hindus call their wise men 'Nagas' (a word meaning serpent). Christ adjured His disciples to be as 'wise as serpents'. What is known as the Uraeus (or sacred Cobra) seen on the forehead of a Pharaoh of Egypt denoted his initiation into the sacred rites where knowledge was gained of the hidden wisdom. The serpent swallowing its tail represents the 'circle of the universe', the endlessness of the cyclic process of manifestation.

THE SVASTIKA is another of the numerous forms in which the cross is found. It is the Fiery Cross, with arms of whirling flame revolving (clockwise) to represent the tremendous energies of nature incessantly creating and dissolving the forms through which the evolutionary process takes place.

In religions which recognize three aspects of Deity, the Svastika is associated with the third aspect, the Third Person of the Trinity, who is at one the Creator and the Destroyer: Shiva in Hinduism and the Holy Ghost in Christianity.

THE AUM : Surmounting the emblem is the sacred word of Hinduism in Sanskrit characters, the three letters representing the Trinity. There is also
the idea of the creative Word or Logos sounding throughout and sustaining the universe. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was the God, and the Word was God.’

The emblem as a whole symbolizes the Absolute, God transcendent and immanent. God transcendent – that is, in and beyond creation – (the sacred word AUM) overshadows the cycle of manifestation (serpent) energized by the diving activity (Svastika): and within this field of manifestation the linked triangles of spirit and matter enshrine the symbol of immortality (the Ankh), God immanent – that is, indwelling in all created form.

Surrounding the emblem runs the motto of the Theosophical Society, ‘There is no Religion Higher than Truth.’ Truth is the quest of every Theosophist, whatever his faith, and every great religion reflects in some measure the light of the one eternal and spiritual Wisdom.

ENTRY OF MRS. BESANT IN THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The entry of Mrs. Annie Besant in the TS was a remarkable one. Ever since 1886, she had been feeling that her philosophy of life was not sufficient. So she began to read number of books but could find little in them. By the early spring of 1889, she had grown desperately determined to find at all hazards what she sought. It was at this time, she took the books;
they were the two volumes of “The Secret Doctrine,” written by HPB⁴⁵. No fair-minded or impartial student can study The Secret Doctrine—that masterpiece of theosophical teachings—without being struck with admiration at the depth of knowledge it reveals, and without observing how modern science is advancing on lines traced and anticipated by the gifted, though much maligned, author of that monumental work⁴⁶. Hence her mind leapt forward to presage the conclusions, the matters being very natural, coherent, subtle and also intelligible. She was dazzled blinded by the light in which disjoined facts were seen as parts of a mighty whole and all her puzzles, riddles, problems seemed to disappear. Her brain gradually assimilated that which the swift intuition has grasped as truth. Then she was introduced to HPB and Mrs. Annie Besant plunged into a new vortex of strife and make herself a mark for ridicule⁴⁷.

To reach the knowledge of the ‘one is the aim of every philosophy; said Bruno. Philosophy is the knowledge of unity by reason, apart from the multiplicity of objects. Only he who knows unity is a philosopher. “Such a one,” said Plato – a philosopher who can be esteemed as God⁴⁸.

⁴⁶. P. Pavri, op.cit., p.15.
⁴⁷. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, op.cit., p.44.
⁴⁸. P.Pavri, op.cit., p.16.
On her conversation with HPB she was more attracted and she decided to join the TS. That day (ie) May 10, 1889, she was accepted by HPB as a member of the TS who quoted Mrs. Annie Besant as a noble woman\textsuperscript{49}. She was thus plunged headlong into Theosophy and become the life and soul of the Theosophical Movement though there was a storm of criticism from among the public, to say even Charles Bradlaugh opposed her entrance in T.S. Mrs. Annie Besant explained with reasons for her joining the TS. The Theosophical Society has persons of all religions as its members. Pure thoughts, pure words, pure deeds being the sum total of all religions, he who practices these in one religion can be considered a follower of any other or all religions\textsuperscript{50}. She also said about the Theosophical position, "Theosophy asks you to live your religion, not to leave it"\textsuperscript{51}. Strongly influenced by the teachings of HPB and HSC, Mrs. Annie Besant was easily won over to their side. In her words, Theosophy means "Knowledge of Divine Matters" (ie) Knowledge of God by direct spiritual intuition, though there are varieties of definitions given. It is associated with the most serious and most successful of all modern attempts to establish a new religion\textsuperscript{52}.

\textsuperscript{49} C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, \textit{op.cit.}, p.44
\textsuperscript{50} P.Parvi, \textit{op. cit.}, p.13.
\textsuperscript{52} G. West, \textit{The Life of Annie Besant}, London, 1929, p.2

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Theosophy in the words of Mrs. Annie Besant is a philosophy of life and explains that the solar system is a magnificent manifestation of the Divine life with man as a part of it. It states that man as seen by developed faculties is not a body having a soul, but is a soul and has a body in fact several bodies to act as vehicles in various worlds. Theosophy also explains that thought and feeling are not aggregations of matter but are the causes of those aggregations and declares with Sir William Crookes that we must see in life the moulder and shaper of matter.

When HPB died in 1891, Mrs. Annie Besant made her first promise in the year 1892, to the Indian Theosophists about her visit to India. HSC was the president at that time. In 1893, Mrs. Annie Besant was deputed along with the Vice-President of the society, Mr. W. Q. Judge to represent the society at the world parliament of Religions in Chicago. She spoke there and it is reported that Mrs. Annie Besant rose to an unusual heights of eloquence. Her discourse at Chicago on the Cardinal Doctrines of Hindu Religion electrified very large audiences of mixed faith.

Annie Besant went on her first Indian tour along with HSC in November, 1893. During this she lectured at Tuticorin, Trinelvelly and at Palayancottah, the busiest center of missionaries effort in southern India, where they were favoured with the presence of no less than three bishops of

53. P. Pavri, op. cit., p. 16.
Roman Catholics and Protestant Churches. She also lectured at Madura Trichionopoly, Tanjore and Kumbakonam. At Madura she lectured about "The Dangers of Materialism". She told materialism was the result of the European Civilization and there was a gradual lowering of the old ideals of life and too many of the youths of India held that material civilization was too high and they allowed themselves to be dazzled by the western learning and the western appliances of Science and were actually ashamed of their own literature. Thus she aroused the Indian Youth from falling victims to the materialism. Annie Besant expressed in her first tour that she would work for the spiritual regeneration of India as in that alone lay her advancement. In December 6, 1893 she lectured in the exhibition hall at Lal Bagh, Bangalore. The Dewan of Mysore, Sir. K. Seshadri Iyer came to hear her and he commented about Mrs. Besant that she was looked upon by them as the incarnation of Gurgi and Maitrayi re-incarnated in west, to rose the sons of India from their long sleep to the consciousness of the spiritual treasures of which they were inheritors. In December 21, 1893, she lectured at the Victoria Hall of Madras to which large number of people turned up. She delivered that India was really great, only because of her spiritual life, spiritual knowledge and spiritual philosophy and she told that the future of Indian lies in the spiritual regeneration of the country and no political effort gallant as it may be would suffice to raise India and asked the Indians to take spiritualism as a weapon. She also pleaded to recognize her not as an
English women but as a Hindu Soul. In January 12, 1894, she lectured at the Town Hall of Calcutta. Wherever she went, Annie Besant talked about the importance of Spiritualism and the drawbacks of materialism. Everywhere she got the royal and most enthusiastic welcome. When she lectured people hang upon her words, and when she retired they visited her in temporary lodgings. She was very popular not because of that, she had made a name for herself in Europe, but because she sympathized with the Indians. The entry of Annie Besant in Indian sphere of Theosophical Movement had given a new life, to which had been for sometime, outward appearances at least in a listless condition. HSC observes that, she had made a deep and permanent impression upon the minds of the educated classes of different Indian communities and that most bitter opponents of the Theosophical Movement came to him to join in the Theosophical Society. Annie Besant had travelled nook and corner of India to spread the message of Theosophy.

In September, 1906, HSC met with an accident on board and fell down a stairway during his tour in Europe. This accident seriously impaired his health and he passed away on February 17, 1907. In July 6, 1907, she was elected as the President of the Theosophical Society by an overwhelming majority of votes to fill his place which she held with distinction and devotion until she too passed over on September 20.
Theosophical Society during the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant

Mrs. Annie Besant during her Presidentship (ie) From 1907-1933, laid emphasis on two important features namely the importance of Social Service and Freedom of Thought. As its president, she traveled extensively throughout India and preached the merits and greatness of the Hindu Religion. For a brief period the TS joined the Arya Samaj led by Swami Dayananda Saraswathi for that since Dayananda’s ideal was to unite the people religiously, socially and nationally. Mrs. Annie Besant followed Dayananda’s ideal for the same reason. The motto of the Theosophical Society is “There is no Religion Higher than Truth”. Mrs. Annie Besant earnestly request every member of the TS to maintain, defend and act upon the fundamental principles of the society and also fearlessly to exercise his own right of liberty and thought of expression thereof within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others. (ie)

57. Theosophy in India, Pamphlet, p.45.
To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. This brotherhood extends to all animals, birds, fishes, even the plants, animals and seas. The Divine Nature which is latent in them as in us, helps our inherent Divinity to step forth its beauty. To encourage the study of comparative religion, the study of philosophy and science were encouraged and steps were also taken by her to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in Man. Besides, she also included these things\textsuperscript{58}.

When things are investigated,  
Knowledge is extended.  
When knowledge is extended,  
Thoughts are sincere.  
When thoughts are sincere,  
The Heart is rectified.  
When hearts are rectified,  
The Personal life is cultivated.  
When personal lives are cultivated,  
The Family is regulated.  
When families are regulated,  
The Country will be in order.  
When countries are in order,  
The World will be at peace.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 11.}
The last three lines links in this chain concern communities; the family the nation and the world. She also insisted that every individual as artist and art in the sense of painting, sculpture, dance, flower arrangement is a tool with which all can produce the work of art called Self-Transformation. Thus it seems that Theosophy, art, education, literature and activism are far from being disconnected things are very closely related. Though the practice of art and literature, one should get his or her education for the activism of self-transformation and by transforming oneself, one can transform the world.

The Truth of Theosophy have been set forth in the following manner as viewed by Mrs. Annie Besant. Firstly, the soul of man is immortal, and its future, the future of a thing where growth and splendour has no limit. Secondly, each man is his own absolute law – giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself, the decrees of his life, his reward, his punishment. The TS has faith in Hindu beliefs of Re-incarnation, Karma and drew inspiration from the Philosophy of the Upanishads and the Samskya, Yoga and Vedanta School of Thought.

During the presidentship of Mrs. Annie Besant, the members of the TS firmly believed that they are of service to those who are stranded with no

hope or knowledge of their divine destiny. They felt that Theosophy illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of Religions and unveiling their hidden meaning and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence as they are justified in the eyes of intuition. Every one who are willing to study, to be tolerant to aim high and to work perseveringly is welcomed as a member and it rests with the members to become a Theosophist.

In the words of Mrs. Annie Besant, a true Theosophist will not only try to spread his knowledge of these doctrines but will also try to use it in tackling questions relating to education, penal law, vivisection etc. The Theosophist thinks of God and the world as inseparably one. Truth the basis of religion is the keystone of the TS. According to the fundamental prepositions of Theosophy, the spirit in man is the only permanent thing, hence all are inseparably found together by the tie of Brotherhood. This was inculcated in the minds of every Theosophist by Mrs. Annie Besant. The society consists of persons belonging to different faiths but united by the approval of the TS’s objects. They also extend tolerance to all and they seek to remove ignorance.

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65. *Theosophy in India*, p.54.
Mrs. Annie Besant's period of presidency was the beginning of a New Era. She was different from HPB and HSC. The TS's circumference is world wide, but its centre in India, the home of Maharishi's, the land from which the wisdom of spirit flows out of the world66. The name Besant is "VASANTHA" which means spring. Mrs. Annie Besant has been the messenger of the New Era. She saw the dawn and made an appeal for reconstruction. She proclaimed the essential elements of the new consciousness: idealism, intuition, universality, religious inspiration, beauty and brotherhood. She herself was its mighty light bearer. Her thoughts and activities; a constant appeal to unity, to collaboration between peoples, races, religions, classes, continents especially between East and West. She always spoke to the Theosophists the synthesis of religion and science, philosophy and ethics, education and art. Her dreams were universal religion, World University and Universal Parliament. In truth Mrs. Annie Besant looked the Indians as her children. All people in Adyar used to call her as "Mother - President."67 Mother President lays great stress on collaboration (ie) love which knows and knowledge which loves. She awakened the children the desire to share and to Co-operate; which will be a sound basis for a real human culture, in which the fighting instinct is by and replaced by the spirit of understanding and fraternity68. The law of unity

68. Annie Besant, Birth of New India, Madras, 1917, p.354.
becomes the guiding principle in life, and there is born a nobility of character, equilibrium, strength and courage, which prepares the young generation for the trials of life. The seeking of spiritual values, moral greatness, wisdom, beauty which are the signs of superior evolution was taught by Mrs. Annie Besant.

As Mrs. Annie Besant had wonderful thoughts and innate love for the development and improvement of human nature, it was even before (ie) in 1893 itself, HSC considered Mrs. Annie Besant to be the best equipped to become the next president of the society because

- of her superior knowledge in Education
- of her splendid public record
- of her Library and financial ability
- of her ardent, martyr like devotion to Truth.

Though he nominated and commended her to the voters, it should be ratified by a 2/3 majority vote of the whole International Society. Of course, that was done and she became the second International president.

**GROWTH OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY UNDER MRS. BESANT:**

From the period of Mrs. Annie Besant's presidentship, rapid expansion begins. The society became a dynamic force flowing in many directions, fertilizing the fields of Religion, Education, Free Masonry

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(admitting women) and Social Service.\textsuperscript{72} As the head and president of the TS, Mrs. Annie Besant regulated the work done by thousands of its members competently.\textsuperscript{73}

When she became the second International president of the TS in 1907, she had the foresight to expand the Estate. Six valuable pieces of property - Blavatsky Gardens, Olcott Gardens, Besant Gardens, Besant Grove, Alsace Grove and Damodar Gardens were acquired. The estate then extended over 263 acres, with a river frontage of over a mile along the Adyar river and sea frontage of about 1/3 of a mile.\textsuperscript{74} She has described Adyar in the following words:-

\begin{quote}
"It is simply delightful, what air we have here; What Nights! And what marvelous quiet No more city noise and street yells".
\end{quote}

It is a botanists, naturalists and nature lover's delight, for within it are gardens and wooded areas containing several indigenous and exotic species of plant life which are a heaven for animals and birds. The river estuary is a sanctuary for over one hundred and fifty species of birds including seventy migratory ones.\textsuperscript{75} When she became the president (ie) in 1907, She acquired for the society all the land East and South of the original estate that forms

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p.29.
\textsuperscript{73} R.C. Majumdar, \textit{British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance} (Part II), Bombay, 1965, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{74} Adyar, pamphlet, p.4.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p.7.

66
the part of the present headquarters campus at Adyar, Comprising the great BANYAN TREE [Ficus Bengalensis] and other natural resources.\textsuperscript{76} The most spectacular tree on the Estate, attracting thousands of visitors every year is the Great Banyan Tree.

The banyan is unique. There is no other vegetation like it on the face of the earth. It is a species of fig with a thick woody stem that spreads out in an enormous canopy of leafy branches, which throw down hundreds of aerial roots, which is intern develop trunks. This particular Great Banyan is about 450 years old, one of the oldest in India, and from North to South it measures 238 Ft and from East to West 250 Ft. The total area exceeds 59,500 sq. feet. This tree continues to grow from the mother root extend many off spring. It has been the centre of many notable gatherings of the T.S. and thousands of visitors have rested in the shade.

This Great Banyan Tree was discovered only some time after Blavatsky Garden was brought during the presidency of Mrs.Besant, as this tree was hidden in deep jungle. But after it was bought, the space around it was cleared, it was tended with care; and although the central trunk naturally disintegrated with age, the surrounding trunks and roots continue to thrive.

\textsuperscript{76} The Theosophist, p.203.
Three thousand people are said to have congregated beneath it during the lecture programmes in the days of Mrs. Besant. It was here in 1909 that Mrs. Besant held her “In the Twilight talks” and in 1935 the Diamond Jubilee convention was held, when loudspeakers were used for the first time in India. Eminent people like Mrs. Besant, J. Krishnamurthi, M.K. Gandhi, the Dalai Lama and others have lectured or have been received under this “Special Tree”, and a more peculiar and a special one was that Sir. Baden-Powell presented to Mrs. Besant, founder of the Scout Movement in India, the “Silver-Wolf”, the highest Scout honour. This extension gave the TS a seafront and the space to protect its calm atmosphere and magnetic quality from intrusion. Even to-day, enveloped by the growing metropolis that is Chennai, often shattered by traffic noise and the blare of loudspeakers, that ‘Paradise’ is in reasonable possession of its inscrutable attractions.

This campus from the time of Mrs. Annie Besant plays a vital role in maintaining the health and cultural heritage of Chennai citizens. It serves as a precious green lung of great environmental significance. Its natural, shady wooded trees help to maintain the healthy condition of the surrounding people. Many researchers have documented more than four hundred species of plants in the campus, including many exotic ones as well as a diversity of mammals, reptiles, birds and insects, living in peace and

77. Personal Interview with Mrs. RADHA BURNIER - The Present International President of the T.S., Dated May 7, 2003.
harmony with the residents and members who come all over the world to experience the sanctity of their headquarters. The compound is a heaven for birds.\textsuperscript{78} It harmonizes with the philosophy of the Theosophists in the period of Mrs. Annie Besant, of regarding, all life as one, all equally sacred and worth of reverence.

None could deny that the development of Adyar estate during the period of Mrs. Annie Besant has that peculiar uplifting atmosphere of a place to which thousands of people have been coming in with a spirit of surrender and reverence. A person's visit to Adyar give a taste of beauties at the physical level that reflect that spiritual glory of Nature – Nature be the Garment of God.\textsuperscript{79} The TS in Adyar under the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant greatly recognised the equality of religion which was the primary aim of the society. She greatly encouraged the study of religion, science, philosophy and to discover the hidden powers in man. It was she who summed the following sentences with the essence of all religions and recommended it to be the prayer song of the society in 1923.\textsuperscript{80}

O - Hidden Life, vibrant in every atom,
O - Hidden Light, shining in every creature,
O - Hidden Love, embracing all in oneness,

May each who feels himself as one with thee
Know he is also with every other.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Annie Besant, \textit{The Ideals of Theosophy}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p.20.
All the leaders of this society from the time of Mrs. Annie Besant preached the doctrines of Theosophy through the medium of Brahmanical Hinduism. Though the founders started this type of preaching, it had its highlight and stress only during the period of Mrs. Annie Besant. All the leaders explained the ancient wisdom and knowledge in the light of Hinduism while promoting the cause of Theosophy they brought about a revival of Hinduism as well. Mrs. Annie Besant always spearheaded such revival who preached the wisdom of Sri Krishna and the Gita and turned Theosophy into something specifically Hindu.  

GROWTH OF ADYAR LIBRARY AND ARCHIVAL CELL DURING THE PRESIDENTSHIP OF MRS. ANNIE BESANT

Though the founders of the TS initiated for the foundation of the Adyar Library, the constant growth and development took place only during the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant. Library Movement is one of the main objective of the TS (ie) to acquire wisdom through the study of Comparative Religion, Science and Philosophy. In this respect Adyar is fortunate enough as it is having a big library of its own. It is considered as the Central Library of the TS all over the world. It has a registered gradual growth. It is one of the important oriental libraries of the world. When the

founders, founded the TS at Adyar, they felt the necessity of the Library as adjunct to the work of the TS.\textsuperscript{82}

The library was formally inaugurated on December 28, 1886, with the religious ceremonies. The representatives of the Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Muslims participated and blessed the Adyar Library. The Madras Mail reported that it was a grand success with various religious leaders participating in the inauguration of the Adyar Library.\textsuperscript{83} The opening of Adyar Library was a milestone in the history of Library Movement in Madras, particularly among the Adyar elite. Adyar Library grows and the members of the TS set their constant confident during the period of Mrs. Annie Besant. As per source, The library consists of 15,000 units of palm leaf and paper manuscripts and 60,000 asserted works.\textsuperscript{84}

Further, it has books in 24 languages. Due to further addition, it has books in Polish, German, Dutch, Danish, Norweigian, Icelandic, Swedish, Russian, Finnish, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portugese and French.\textsuperscript{85} The Treasures of manuscripts and printed texts contained in its show cases are too numerous, and its book shelves are crowded with choices of religious

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{82.} The Theosophist Centenary Issue, p.7.
\textsuperscript{83.} The Madras Mail, December 29, 1886, p.2.
\textsuperscript{84.} Somerset Playne, Southern India, London, 1915, p.128.
\textsuperscript{85.} G.R. Groves, Adyar, Madras, 1950, p.44.
\end{flushright}
writings. The library has books on theosophy and journals from all over the world. There are also sections devoted to science, art and a world section containing books from and about every country. There is a Linguistic Aisle showing the development of language through the ages and an Aisle of greatness containing the biographies of great men and women. Scholars in Sanskrit and Vedic Literature are employed to translate the material. The library has about 12,500 visitors annually.

The publication of a catalogue in the year 1891 was a landmark in the history of the Adyar Library. Of course, it was the great work of Mrs. Annie Besant as a Theosophist. The next catalogues were published subsequently in 1926 and 1928.

The history of Adyar Library would not be complete unless a reference is made to the Archival cell at Adyar. It was started in the year 1898 and it possess rare materials like HSC’s old Diary leaves, HPB’s scrap book and possessions of Mrs. Annie Besant.

The Chinese Tripitakas, The Tibetan Kanjur and Tanjur, a collection of rare works in Latin and other western languages and a complete set of
24. The Adyar Library Building
important research journals are among the priceless possessions of this Archival Cell. Along with other works, the library currently receives 225 journals from several countries. Several rare and previously unpublished works in the manuscript collection have been edited and brought out in print, a staff of pandits and scholars are engaged in this task. This work were carried on from the time of Mrs. Annie Besant and is still being done. Further the library and the Archival Cell extending its services to research institutions, universities and scholars in India and abroad and supplies microfilm and photostat copies of the needed materials on request.

Dr. Radhakrishnan, the former President of India had remarked that the TS under the leadership of Mrs. Annie Besant gave to Hinduism a progressive and universal character.91 Both the Library and Archival Cell had developed considerably during the presidentialship of Mrs. Annie Besant. Shri R. Venkatraman, the former President of India have paid rich encomium to the Adyar Library and the Adyar Archival Cell for its excellent service in diffusing oriented wisdom.92

The Adyar Library and Research Centre which was founded in 1886, originally situated in the Headquarters Building was shifted in 1986 to a more spacious one inside the society itself better suited to its growing needs. The Society’s museum and Archival Cell are located on the ground

floor of the Headquarters Building. Original Theosophical manuscripts, correspondence and other records are kept in an air-conditioned area for better conservation. In letters, notes and papers preserved here are recorded the many incidents, crisis and Triumphs of the TS history. It also consists of numerous valuable things presented to HSC and Mrs. Annie Besant in artistic Silver Caskets and on Silver Metal Plates. There are also portraits, photographs and statues of Theosophical leaders and memorial tablets, souvenirs, medals, cards, badges and silver trowels, recalling the events and personalities of the long past of the TS.93

Though many famous people visited the Headquarters and Library at Adyar two important persons may be mentioned here. The French author Pierre Loti and later the Viceroy Lord Curzon.94 Before becoming the president of the TS, Mrs. Annie Besant spent the whole year in India (ie) from 1902-1905. It was she as a Theosophist accompanied Lord Curzon during his visit here.

The development of the Headquarters hall which symbolises the Unity of Humanity was the great achievement of Mrs. Annie Besant during her presidency. Along the walls of the hall are base relief symbols and figures; those on the north, east and west representing living religions (ie) Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism,

94. Ibid., p.334.
Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism. The south wall represents the extinct religions. In the west is a large board on which are inscribed the names of all sections of the TS with its formation. The busts of HSC and Mrs. Annie Besant are to be found in the northern side of the hall.95

Several of the programmes of the Annual International Convention are held in the hall. Though many programmes are held, three are worth mentioning here. They are the white Lotus Day (ie) Every year to be celebrated on May 8th.96 This was the request made by HPB, since her surviving colleagues should keep green the memory of her services to humanity and her devoted love for the TS. This day was celebrated since 1929, as suggested by Mrs. Annie Besant, to express the general feeling of loving regard for HPB who brought us the climbing path which leads to the summits of knowledge.97 Adyar Day is celebrated on February 17, every year. It was suggested by Mme. Irmade Manziarly in 1922 as a day on which Adyar should be honoured and strengthened throughout the world.98 Three Special Festivals are celebrated for the whole Theosophical Society

February 17 - Adyar Day

May 8 - Commemoration Day or white Lotus Day

November 17- Founder's Day

96. Adyar News Letter, p.1
98. F.W. Halsey, Adyar Day, Madras, 1949, p.1
the day from which TS dates its life. All great movements as they make a past, have a growing list of "DAYS". The Headquarters Hall has a perceptive atmosphere of peace which cannot be described in words; it has to felt.

Situated in the Coconut grove by the Adyar River, not far from the Headquarters building, is the Buddhist shrine. The Buddha's statue was given by Mrs. Annie Besant which shows The Buddha as the Teacher of Dharma turning the "Wheel of the Law". Besides this, the building of a mosque, which was started during the time of Mrs. Annie Besant, completed in 1937, was modeled on the famous Pearl Mosque at Agra.

Just a short distance from the sea, alongside the river path, is the "Garden of remembrance". This spot was originally consecrated on May 17, 1917, the full moon day of Vaisakha by Mrs. Annie Besant for the work of the "Order of the Brother's Service". Besides, all the above shrines, there is also the Theosophical Publishing House, one of the most important means by which the Teachings of Theosophy are disseminated throughout the world. Though the foundation was made earlier, it took its concrete shape

100. F.W. Halsey, op.cit., p.46.
101. Sushama Sreenath, Adyar, Chennai, 1999, p.10
The White Lotus as a Symbol of Human Constitution and Human Evolution

The White Lotus flower
open to the sun (fire) symbolizing the human spirit

The Lotus stem
in the air, symbolizing Manas, thought

The Lotus stem
in the water, symbolizing Astral like the emotions

The Lotus roots
in the mud, symbolizing the physical
THE GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE
20. The Theosophical Publishing House in Besant Gardens
only in 1913. It took over the publication of the Theosophist Magazine, which had originally been managed by the founders at their residence. Since then, it has brought out over several hundred books by leading thinkers of TS in addition to a large number of pamphlets, leaflets and booklets. It distributes worldwide monthly journal, ‘The Theosophist’, and the quarterly ‘Adyar News Letter’; the former provides food for thought, the latter is a chronicle of recent events at Adyar.

The list of the T.S’s publications and magazines during the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant was very impressive. The original works were listed in about sixteen languages.

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<td>Hindi</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each is Bulgarian, Swedish, Hungarian, Russian and Sinhalese.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Theosophical Order of Service was founded by Mrs. Annie Besant in February 1908, for the relief of suffering and now it spreads all over the world, this is of much importance because; Mrs. Annie Besant is described as a Healer. It was the most intimate character that can be related

102. Personal Interview with Mr. HARI HARA RAGHAVAN – Manager of the Vasantha Press, TS., Dated May 16, 2003.
103. *Theosophy in India*, 1917, p.44.
104. *Besant’s Diary of Principal Events* (1847 – 1933), p.73.
to her. For instance, no one has ever described her pilgrimage to the Cave of Amarnath in the Himalayas. With her party, over the snow went she, barefoot, along rough tracks, camping under the frosty stars, bathing in icy waters, poor food, little to drink, not much fire. She had unusual healing powers. She rarely exercised her healing gifts. The motto she chose for the order of service was “A Union of those who love in the service of all that suffers”.

A person named Mr. Aria purchased and presented to Mrs. Annie Besant the plot of land, about 20 acres, and named it Besant Grove in the year 1909. During April 1909, the Vasantha Press was opened by Mrs. Annie Besant and A.K. Sitarama Shastri was installed as manager and she left for London. Educational activities expanded in India and Ceylon, after her return from London through the Theosophists.

TREASURY OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The TS has its own separate section called “The Treasury” which look after the financial aspect of the society. The annual expenditure is about Rs. 4,00,000. The income is derived from rents, fees, dues, interests, donations and sale of garden produce. The chief expenses are salaries wages and allowances for the workers and maintenance. Though the TS was in

105. Besant, Diary of Principal Events (1847-1933), p.73.
106. Josephine Ransom, op.cit., p.381.
107. Ibid., p.382.
the beginning mainly concerned with spiritual problems, as years rolled on its leaders became very much interested in social problems and of which they paid more attention was education. Not only the founders, but also the successors did all the works very carefully. Till her last breathe, Mrs. Annie Besant worked for the society. Infact, it was during her presidentship the society took lot of efforts to educate the Youth of the Country. It was she who defended the society from the attacks of enemies. It was during her presidency many Theosophical Lodges were established to spread the objects of the TS.

Growth and Development of Theosophical Lodges when Mrs. Annie Besant was the President of the Theosophical Society (1907 – 1933).

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<td>1908</td>
<td>631</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>698</td>
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Mrs. Annie Besant herself quoted about the TS and the Theosophical Lodges, “To me service is the noblest function of life and loyalty, loyalty to a friend, a cause a principle, a superior, the finest fibre in human character..... wherever there is a lodge of the TS a little candle is lighted, and a tiny nucleus of Brotherhood glows rosily”.

Under the auspices of the society, for the promotion of National Education, a National University was established at Adyar in 1918, during the presidentship of Mrs. Annie Besant, with the poet Laureate Rabindranath
Tagore as the Vice-Chancellor, Justice. S. Subramania Aiyer as the Pro-Chancellor and G.S. Arundale as the Rector of the University.\textsuperscript{111} This was the result of the long pending demand of the Indians to form a university. Though in due course, it was not able to prolong its work, the efforts taken by Mrs. Annie Besant could not be forgotten.\textsuperscript{112}

During the tenure of Mrs. Annie Besant, The TS was converted into a political organisation and it carried on political propaganda for the Home Rule.\textsuperscript{113} She established a network of political committees covering much of British India and thus she provided an opportunity for the mass political participation. Later Gandhi inherited many of the Home Rule workers and their organizations and publications. He also used the communication channels created by Mrs. Annie Besant as valuable machinery for his struggle against the British.\textsuperscript{114}

HSC was the first president and he was followed by Mrs. Annie Besant. The successors of Mrs. Annie Besant continued, continuing and will continue the work of Theosophy.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{111} The Handbook of The Indian Section, p.116.
\textsuperscript{112} The South Indian Mail, p.6.
\textsuperscript{113} B.N. Chopra, et.al., History of South India, Delhi, 1979, p.256
\textsuperscript{114} V.T. Patil(ed.), Studies on Gandhi, New Delhi, 1985, p.172.
\textsuperscript{115} The Theosophical Society, Leaflet, p.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of the President</th>
<th>Period of Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>H.P. Blavatsry &amp; H.S. Olcolt</td>
<td>1875 - 1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mrs. Annie Besant</td>
<td>1907 - 1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>George G. Arundale</td>
<td>1934 - 1945</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>C. Jinnaraja Desa</td>
<td>1945 - 1953</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Sri Ram</td>
<td>1953 - 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Mrs. Radha Burnier</td>
<td>1980 - till date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though no distinction is made between the presidents of the TS, for each is selected for a particular contribution he or she will be able to make towards the revealing of Theosophy, and to the strengthening of the TS. But among what will be a long line of presidents the name of Mrs. Annie Besant will indeed shine forth.\textsuperscript{117} The TS is now an international organization with members now in 52 countries belonging to different religions, races and walks of life\textsuperscript{118}. Mrs. Annie Besant had played a prominent role in growth of the Theosophical Society.

\textsuperscript{116} Tamilarasu, Nov. 1975.
\textsuperscript{117} Annie Besant, \textit{An Autobiography}, Madras, 1939, p.51.
\textsuperscript{118} Josephine Ransom, \textit{op. cit.}, p.18 – Vide Appendix No:1