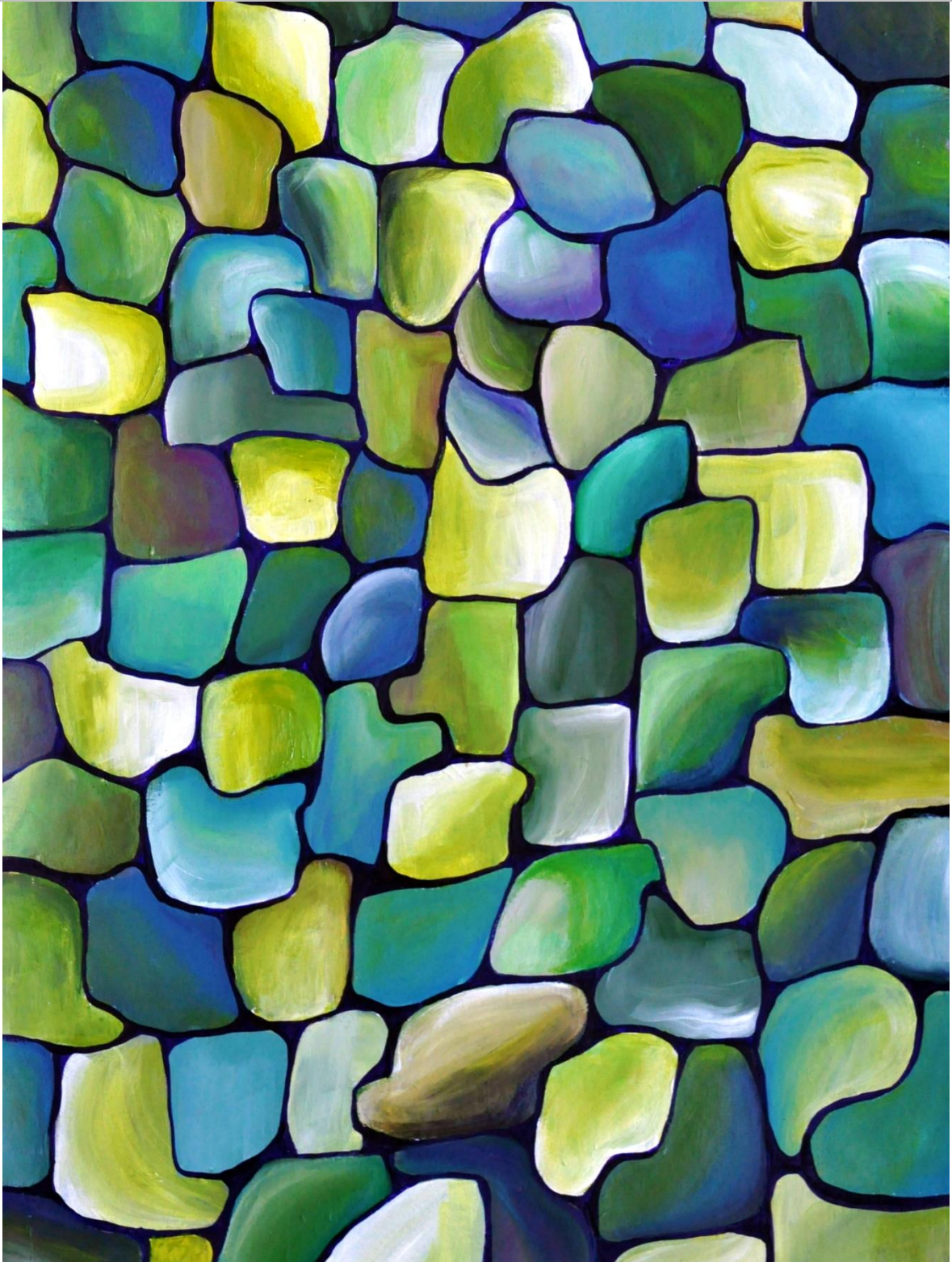


*Prerequisites to membership  
of the Theosophical Society*



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Frontispiece by Sonia Chivavar.

**M**ANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN<sup>1</sup> is a saying, that, to our great regret, applies to our Society collectively, and to a certain number of its members individually, to perfection. Numerous are the Branches sprung from the Parent trunk, and still more numerous the Fellows who have been admitted within its fold. Every member had, upon entering it, declared himself over his own signature — as “being in sympathy with the objects of the Theosophical Society *and acquainted* with its rules,” represented by his two sponsors (“fellows in good standing”) as an individual who would be “a worthy member” of the Society, and had pledged his solemn word of honour, to “abstain from doing anything that may bring discredit upon the Society or its officers.” The above-quoted sentences, as everyone knows, stand printed in the forms of the *Application* and the *Obligation* of the “Rules” of the Society. Besides these promises made in the presence of witnesses, there are other obligations as sacred, to which the candidate binds himself during his initiation; such, for instance, as the recognition of the right of every other Theosophist to every privilege he would have for himself, promising that the belief of other members will enjoy, so far as he is concerned, that toleration and respect “which he desires each and all of his brother members to exhibit in regard to his own faith.”<sup>2</sup> These obligations, and many others, are carefully explained to each candidate, either by the President initiator himself, his delegate, or by letters in the correspondence that generally precedes the formal acceptance of, and admittance to fellowship of, every proposing member. No Theosophist has the right to plead ignorance of these rules, or to show disappointment and complain after he has once joined the Society — since every point is carefully explained to him and he is expressly told everything *that he has, and what he has not*, to expect. One of the points insisted upon the most is, that no man who joins the Theosophical body, simply out of curiosity or in the hope of penetrating its alleged mysteries, and satisfy his thirst for phenomena, need join it at all; and the candidate is expressly told that if he seeks admittance in the expectation of being taught by the Founders the occult sciences, or of seeing them perform for his benefit “miracles” and wonders, he can do no better than withdraw his application and renounce fellowship at once, since nine times out of ten he will find himself disappointed.

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<sup>1</sup> [Matthew xxii, 14]

<sup>2</sup> *Objects of the Society*, pp. 5-6

If in the course of time, and after a certain period of probation, he is found really as worthy as he is willing, then he may be put in the way of coming into closer relations with the Masters; and, the latter willing, he may even hope to be accepted as *chela*, i.e., received, as either a “lay,” a “probationary,” and later on a “regular” or *accepted chela*; all this depending upon his family duties, social status, and his mental and physical fitness. The latter chance being very rarely given, and most men showing no proper requisites for it — *the strongest desire, unless prompted by utterly UNSELFISH motives being of little if any use* — the Society takes the greatest care to have all this clearly explained beforehand, lest the Fellow after joining should feel disappointed and repent. Even in this latter emergency a chance is given to him. He may resign; and, when a poor man (the usual fee in this case as in some others, being very often remitted to the applicant), who has nevertheless complied with the rule and paid his Rs. 10, if he can prove that for one cause or another he was wittingly or unwittingly led into error by some too zealous Theosophist — his fee is returned to him. The only thing that remains binding upon, and is certainly expected from him, is that he shall not reveal the “signs and passwords” of the Society<sup>1</sup> nor give out “whatsoever information connected with the legitimate work or researches of the Society, was communicated to him, as a member of that Society, in confidence” (*Obligation*), to keep which, secret and inviolable he has pledged his “most solemn and sacred PROMISE” over his own signature, and repeated it verbally during his initiation. All this, of course, he has to “faithfully keep secret” under the penalty of being proclaimed by every honest man — a *dishonest scoundrel*.

Such being the case, all the Fellows duly warned and the limits to their expectations clearly drawn for them, a dissatisfied member of our Society has the right to quietly withdraw from the Association by resigning his fellowship. In no case has he any excuse for publicly complaining; least of all has he any right to criticize the policy of the Founders, and Council, or to denounce them whether orally or in print. By so doing he breaks the Rules and his solemn pledge, and has to expect to be proclaimed as a dishonest man to all his Fellow Brothers — the Society having to be warned in good time of its traitors and traducers. Art. XV<sup>2</sup> of the *Rules* is explicit upon this point.

*Any Fellow, who may be proved, to the satisfaction of the Council, to have slandered any Brother or Sister Theosophist, or to have written or uttered any words calculated to injure such in any way, will be required to substantiate the charges involved, or failing to do so, in the opinion of the majority of the Council, will be invited to resign, or will be expelled as may seem good to the President in Council, and the name of the person so resigning or expelled shall be published in the Journal of the Society, and thereafter all Branches will be required to refuse fellowship to the person thus excluded from the Society.*

Now our Society, as was explained even to the outside public repeatedly, has one general, and several — if not minor, at least less prominent aims. The earnest pursuit of one of the latter — occult science in this case — far from being regarded as the common duty and the work of all, is limited for the reasons given above to a very

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<sup>1</sup> *Rules*, p. 6, para. 2

<sup>2</sup> p. 22

small faction of the Society, its pursuit resting with the personal tastes and aspirations of the members. As to the former — the chief aims of the Theosophical Fraternity — it is hardly necessary to remind any Fellow of what it is. Our fundamental object is *Universal Brotherhood*, kind feelings and moral help proffered to all and every Brother, whatever his creed and views. Based upon the conviction that a Brotherhood of all faiths and denominations, composed of Theists and Atheists, Christians and Gentiles throughout the world, might without anyone surrendering his particular opinion be united into one strong Society or Fraternity for mutual help, and having one and the same purpose in view, *i.e.*, the relentless, though at the same time calm and judicious pursuit of Truth wherever found, especially in Religion and Science — it is the first duty of our Society as a united body to extirpate every weed that overgrows and stifles that truth which only can be one and entire. The best recognized way to make both the psychological and physical sciences, as all sectarian and dogmatic religions, yield their respective verities, is, in construing them, to take the middle path between the extremes of opinion. The men of science — especially the extreme materialists — being often as bigoted in their denial, and as intolerant of contradiction as the theologians are in their self-assertions and assumed infallibility, there is not much choice left in the treatment of, or the attitude to be chosen toward both. Nevertheless, there being an abyss between the methods and claims of science and religion, the former being based upon close observation, experiment, and the mathematical demonstration of what it does know, and the latter resting merely upon *faith* or anti-empirical observations and personal emotional deductions therefrom, very naturally — and though they have to be tolerated and outwardly respected on the principles of mutual indulgence for our respective shortcomings and fallibility of human opinion — the religious and various personal and sectarian beliefs of our Fellows cannot yet be always taken into consideration or exalted above plain facts and scientific demonstrations. In other words, ready as we all may and must be to avoid hurting the religious feelings and even the prejudices of our brothers, we cannot promise to be ever foregoing what in our honest convictions *is* truth, lest we should inadvertently expose the error of a brother, much as it may appear to him also truth.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thus to our Brother, Bramabadi S.N. Agnihotri, who complained that his article “Personal and Impersonal God and the Founders of the T.S.” directed against us was not published in our magazine, though it was written in *no* “spirit of hostility or malice,” we would say the following: “Were you not a member of the Theosophical Society, but a simple religious opponent, your article would have been published. But since you break in the latter every prescribed rule of your Society, which you had pledged yourself on your *solemn word* of honour to protect, abstaining from doing anything that may be prejudicial to it; and since, besides being sectarian and intolerant, it is as dogmatic and opposed to our policy as it can be, so long as *you are* a Fellow you have no right to demand its insertion in its present form. What right have you, for instance, to instigate one half of the population (or even of the Brotherhood) against the other half? Who gave you as a Theosophist permission or commission to traduce, denounce and accuse your Brother Members — the Buddhists, the Pantheists, the Advaitis, and the Freethinkers and Atheists, whose convictions are as honest and as sincere as your own in the following strains:

“So far as their [the Founders] teachings are calculated to awake the minds of our countrymen towards the greatness of their forefathers, and their old literature, so far as it proves to rouse in them the necessity and culture of moral principles . . . so far, I say, let the whole of India, from Himalaya to Cape Comorin, appreciate and rejoice in, and be thankful for, their teachings. But should they in their zeal, or rather over-zeal, attempt, as the attempt is already being made, to uproot our faith from the very Being whom our Āryan forefathers, the *adepts* of the science of Religion, declared the ‘Life of Life’ and ‘Being of Beings,’ a *person* [?], the source of all morality and goodness, *let them be cried down by the whole people of this vast Peninsula.*”

The “whole people” will not heed the *untheosophical* instigation for the simple reason that most of them, with the exception of the two handfuls of Brahmos and Āryas are either Polytheists, Pantheists, Jains, or Advaitis,

The greatest, as the most mischievous feature of fanaticism — the synonym in most cases of insane conceit and a selfish reverence for one's personal conclusions and self-assertions regarded as infallible — is the fanatical persecution of opinions and persons holding them whenever they dash with the preconceived views of the persecutors. And, since the latter have always proved an impediment to both progress and truth, hence the Theosophical Society is pledged collectively to wage incessant war, combat and denounce every such outburst of bigotry and intolerance — the most fiendish, injurious and degrading of all feelings. Thus only can the jealousy, hatred and mutual persecution among sects which, to the distraction of undetermined yet serious-minded people, and the scandal of those who accept only facts upon a scientific basis, now so plentifully abound — be gradually destroyed and, perhaps, extinguished forever.

Has the above programme been carried out as originally intended by either our Branches or individual members? With the exception of a few self-sacrificing devoted Fellows, it certainly has not even been attempted, since our best “active” fellows, while carrying out one part of the prescribed programme, on the principle of “live and let live,” yet keep silent (even the editors of dailies and weeklies) before the manifestations of individual and sectarian fanaticism, allowing even such violent religious riots as that which took place recently at Colombo between the Buddhists and the Roman Catholics to pass unnoticed. Indeed, the Biblical parable of the sower and the seeds applies perfectly in the case in hand. Sown broadcast, the seeds of membership fell in some (happily few) cases into queer places and brought forth as queer fruits. “Some seeds fell by the wayside and the fowls (our opponents) came and devoured them up”; . . . some “fell upon stony places,” and having not deepness of earth, forthwith they sprung with promise and enthusiasm, and as they had no root in them, “they withered away.”

Nevertheless, and we may say they are in the majority, some of the “seeds” falling into really good ground, they brought forth fruit “some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold and some hundredfold.” Such members are the pride and glory of the Society. And because they are true and honest, unflinchingly devoted and ready to die for that which they know to be truth — though as real Theosophists they neither force nor proclaim to unwilling ears their faith and knowledge, they are hated and persecuted by their own brother members who have remained as bigoted as before they joined our Society. These are the members born from the seeds that “fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them” — THE THORNS OF BITTER SECTARIANISM AND BIGOTRY.

Thus, some of the Lahore members of the local Theosophical Society — we do not either call or consider them as Theosophists — those of them at any rate, who are at-

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none of these believing in one “Ishwar” and in moot cases — as in that of the Jains, and Advaitis — in *no* “Ishwar” at all. But what right — we say — has the writer to force upon or preach his own sectarian views and beliefs, deprecating their religion or religions to other members and fellows (Art. VI of Rules)? If he wants to believe that the “Life of Life” is a “person” he has every right to, and no one interferes with, his belief. Why then should he interfere with that of others? If the belief of many of his brother fellows conflicts with his — and he knew it beforehand — why should he have joined at all? And once he has voluntarily joined he *has to* conform to the regulations and rules or — resign. Unless he makes his choice, and abstains in future from such letters, he will have no one to blame if the Council “after due warnings” punishes him for the violation of this clause “by suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the President-Founder and General Council.” (Rules, Art. VI.) Our rules must be and *they shall* be respected.

tached to, or connected with, the Ārya-Sāmaj, even before the rupture of their body with the Theosophical Society, have shown unmistakable signs of steady and active opposition not only toward the Founders, but toward every fellow of another creed, whether he was orthodox Hindu, a Brahmo, a Buddhist, or a freethinker. Why they have joined us at all is still a mystery. If we are told that it was done in ignorance of the true religious views of the Founders — who are, if anything, esoteric *Buddhists* or Advaitīs which is all one, then they will be answered *that it is not true*, and on their own confessions and accusations. They knew it then, as they do now, that the Founders discarded every idea of a *personal* god, precisely on the principle enunciated by our Brahmo Brother, S.N. Agnihotri — who says in his letter that if the idea of the *personality* of god

. . . goes against your [our] conviction, you [we] are not only justified in doing so [rejecting and denouncing it], but in duty bound to crush it, altogether.

The Theosophists of the Ārya-Sāmaj knew it, we say, because the proof is here before us in the footnote of the *Reply to Extra Supplement of the "Theosophist,"*<sup>1</sup> which states comically enough that

In September 1880, when at Meerut, Mme Blavatsky, in the presence of . . . Theosophists and a *large number of Ārya gentlemen*, positively denied the existence of [a *personal*, if you please] god, or any blind force [?!] as she pleased to name it, and declared herself a *nāstika* . . . etc.

Passing unnoticed this rather confused and jumbled statement (of denying in one breath a personal God and a blind Force) the fact that the Ārya-Sāmajists of Lahore joined in November of the same year, *i.e.*, two months after the said declaration, proves conclusively that they knew what they were about. As also that other fact, that since the rupture only two out of nearly 20 Sāmajists have so far resigned, showing plainly enough that they do not much mind the personal opinions of the Founders (as every Theosophist is in duty bound) so long as that belief interferes in no way with their theistic creed. Yet, remaining Theosophists in name, they have constantly vilified and traduced the Society, the MASTERS and those who believed and recognized the latter — first behind their backs, and now openly and defiantly at public meetings and assemblies. Now since no Theosophist is asked to believe in anything believed in, or professed by other members; and since the Theists would be in far greater difficulties to prove conclusively the existence and powers of their personal God than the occultists would if asked to demonstrate the actual existence and powers of their Mahatmas, it becomes evident that such a course of action, besides being against the rules and policy of the Society, shows the presence of a malicious spirit of intolerance and hatred found but in sectarian bodies. This *odium theologicum* culminated recently in the following pretty exhibition, we hear.

The President of the Bareilly, Rohilcund Theosophical Society, Rai Bishen Lall, who was passing through Lahore on his way to the north on Society's business, stopped there for a few days. He was accompanied by a young chela, who is a recognized pupil of one of our Masters, and who lived with him for several years. Hearing of this

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<sup>1</sup> p. 3

the Ārya-Sāmajists, who will hear of no other God save their Īśvara, and of no other prophet save their Maharishi Swami Dayānand, conspired to defeat the several Theosophists, of whom one at least, not only believes in but personally knows his Mahatma. The minor details of the event we do not know, nor do we care to learn them. Whoever was the first to entertain the brilliant idea of challenging to chop off, or even cut his finger *to prove the existence and powers* of the Mahatmas, has only proved his utter inability to perceive the fitness of things. If a true Theosophist, his first duty was to support and protect the dignity of his Society, by never permitting that such an absurd *tāmasha* should publicly take place; and if one of the *bogus* Theosophists of the Ārya-Sāmaj, however great his personal incredulity in the reality of the belief of his brothers — the devotees of the Mahatmas — he had no more right to propose such an experiment than would an *anti-Āryan* Theosophist to demand that an Ārya-Sāmajist should allow the experiment of having his head cut off, to prove the existence of his “Īśvara” and the powers of his “Mahatma” — Dayānand Swami. In short, as our rules forbid the preaching of one’s special creed, so they prohibit any challenge of one religionist to another. Notwithstanding this, and to our disgust and surprise, we read the following that appeared in the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* of April 5<sup>th</sup>.

We have received the following Telegram, dated Lahore, April 3<sup>rd</sup>:

“Rai Bishen Lall, F.A.S., F.T.S., delivered a public address in Sikshasabha Anjani, Punjab premises. Monster attendance. About one thousand, perhaps more. Subject national union on basis of Āryan philosophy and national interests. An advanced Chela from the north narrated personal experiences in Yogavidya occultism and consented to show one test phenomenon. None succeeded in cutting off his finger wearing an occult ring, though one tried hard with a knife. Doctor’s examination showed natural blood and bones. Greatest enthusiasm and rush. Meeting ended disorderly, for all anxious seeing more miracles. Representatives from different societies attended meeting. Union likely among all under theosophic banner.<sup>1</sup> Further particulars hereafter.”

We have reasons to know how, and why it was done by the “advanced Chela.” Knowing the aversion of his venerated Masters for all such exhibitions of *hatha yoga* phenomena, especially when made publicly, he would have never consented to it had not another person, a brother Theosophist, devoted and true, but rather too enthusiastic, risked to have his own finger chopped off for the greater glory of the Mahatmas, who, as he believed, “would never allow a true follower of theirs to suffer.” Expecting, and fully confident that no man would succeed to cut him while he was under the protection of his MASTER, he very imprudently volunteered his own finger. Seeing the danger imminent, the “Chela” — who had better reasons than his to know that while he himself would and could not be hurt *the first time*, his fellow brother would, for he had as yet but little claim upon the MASTERS and was even ignorant of their dislike to such exhibitions — permitted the test phenomenon as described in the telegram. But the unbelievers and scoffers would not rest satisfied with the one experiment. As stated in the dispatch they became disorderly . . . “anxious to see more miracles.”

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<sup>1</sup> [See H.P. Blavatsky’s Editorial note on p. 467. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

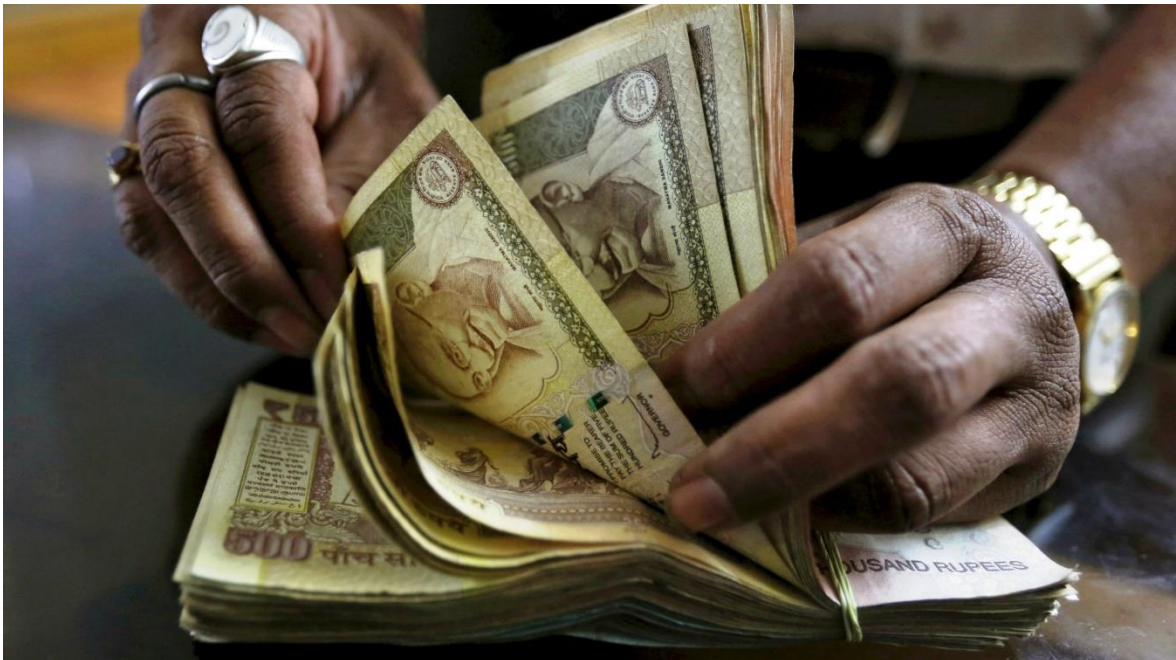
They insisted upon making a second experiment and perhaps a third, if the Chela would only let them. The result was, that at a private house the same Brother having once more volunteered his finger, and defied his opponents to cut off a piece and carry it away, the “Chela” determined that, if anyone’s blood was to be spilt, it would not be that of his friend, since this fact would neither change his belief in, or knowledge of, the powers of the Mahatmas, while his friend’s hand might have been crippled for life. Therefore he placed his hand upon the cover of a pamphlet, and sure of what was in store for him, invited the Lahore Shylocks to cut. They did so *and carried away a small piece of the finger in triumph!*

The Council and President will of course have the matter investigated. If any member of the Theosophical Society will be found to have sided with those theistic butchers, he will be expelled and his name published in this *Supplement*. To take advantage of the enthusiasm and confidence placed in either God or mortal by any fellow man — let alone a brother Theosophist — to cut and lame him — is disgusting in the extreme. Besides which it is absurd, not to use a still less mild expression, since the experiment proves nothing whatever. Were its success or non-success to prove anything in such an experiment, then the world would have to turn all *duggas*, shamans and sorcerers; since it is a recognized fact that some Red-Cap Lamas publicly rip their bowels open, take them out, and then having replaced them, make a few mesmeric passes over the wound and not even a trace of the cut is left. This they do in the name of their “Devil-God,” a hideous monster with a hundred legs and a pig’s head. We invite the Ārya-Sāmajists to believe in the latter on the same principle. Moreover, we regret that the idea of just reprisals has not occurred to our Brothers. They ought to have offered their opponents who boast so loudly of their absolute faith in the powers and knowledge of God, to prove the actuality and powers of their Īśvara and Swami Dayānand’s teachings on the same practical and experimental demonstration. When either a Brahmo or a Samājist, who boasts of producing miraculous cures in the name of and “through” the power of God, consents to allow us the experiment with a razor and defies us to cut open his windpipe; and that every effort to draw even a drop of blood fails, then we promise solemnly to become a theist and recant and abjure all our past heresies. No *crime* is thereby offered. Neither the throat, nor the hand or foot of the theistic devotee will run the slightest risk, we pledge our life and honour to it. No true Theosophist would ever think of availing himself of the advantage that has been so eagerly sought for and taken at Lahore. No *true* Theosophist would ever have the cruelty to carry, Merchant-of-Venice-like, not only a pound but even an atom of, *human flesh, taken away in a piece of paper*. No, what we offer is neither cruel, nor dangerous. Let any theist, whether Brahmo or Ārya, publicly submit himself to the above said experiment; let him allow and defy any *Nāstika* to draw *one drop*, only one single drop out of any fleshly part of his body he will himself choose. If no blood can be drawn — of course after due medical examination — then we will confess ourselves beaten. Who of them is willing to stake his belief in God and His miraculous intervention, upon the appearance or non-appearance of a drop of blood? Until then we proclaim publicly the Lahore experimenters — bloodthirsty Shylocks, unworthy of the name of men, least of all of Theosophists. Such are the fruits of sectarianism and bigotry. We conclude by reminding



the members of the Theosophical Society residing at Lahore — of course with several honourable exceptions — of the following *rule*:

XI. The Parent Society, through the President-Founder, has the right to nullify any Charter when such may appear to it expedient, and to decree the expulsion of any Fellow, of whatever Branch, for disgraceful conduct, or the violation of the bylaws or rules. The name of the expelled person and the circumstances of his offence being reported to all the Branches, fellowship with him as to Society matters shall cease. Provided, nevertheless, that no Fellow shall be expelled without an opportunity having been given him for an explanation and defence.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> [In the same Supplement to *The Theosophist* was published a Presidential order dissolving the Puñjāb Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society of Lahore. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]