

Great Esotericists

Katherine Westcott Tingley



Katherine Tingley (1847-1929)¹

During the latter half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries—when men dominated society at almost every level—women played a disproportionate role in the formation and operation of esoteric movements and the dissemination of esoteric teachings. Mary Baker Eddy, Helena Blavatsky, Anna Kingsford, Annie Besant, Moina Mathers, Helena Roerich, Alice Bailey, and Dion Fortune were notable examples. Earning a worthy place on that same list was Katherine Augusta Westcott Tingley (1847–1929).

Katherine Westcott was born to well-to-do parents in Newbury, Massachusetts. Her birth date is given as July 6, 1847, when the Sun and Jupiter were in Cancer; and the Moon, Mars, Uranus and Pluto in Taurus. She had no planets in the arc Libra through Aquarius. One source gave her time of birth as 10:00 a.m., which would indicate a Virgo ascendant and Gemini on the midheaven, but the accuracy of that information is unknown.² Published rayological tabulations do not list our subject, but her life's work suggests that she had a Ray 2 soul and a Ray 3 personality.

Katherine's early education emphasized music, but her intuitive faculties were evident by age four or five. After spending time in the woods, she would tell her mother that she heard the trees singing. Fearing mental illness her parents dispatched her for several years to a boarding school run by nuns. In her early teens, the family moved to Virginia, where her father served as an officer in the American Civil War (1861–1865). There Katherine saw the terrible plight of wounded soldiers, and humanitarian instincts were awakened that would remain in her for the rest of her life.

In due course, Katherine Westcott moved to New York City, and founded The Emergency Society, which operated a shelter and soup kitchen for the poorest of the poor, and the Ladies Society of Mercy, whose members visited hospitals and prisons. In an interview many years later, she reflected on her service mission:

Day after day I went about in the homes of these people. I saw the pathetic woman with the drunken husband, and sometimes I

understood why the husband drank. Then, too, I saw the industrious husband with the worthless, slovenly wife. I saw hardship as the result of vice, and vice as the outcome of hardship. I realized that all our systems of helpfulness were totally backhanded. We dealt then, and most people deal now, with effects rather than causes. After the damage is done we attempt to repair. I saw a vision of getting to fundamental causes, starting the child right and fitting him to meet the exigencies of life with some possibility of keeping the upper hand and retaining originality, purity, and ideals.³

In 1888, following two failed marriages, Katherine married Philo B. Tingley, an employee of a steamship company. While involved in her humanitarian work, she met William Q. Judge, head of the New York Lodge of the Theosophical Society. The two immediately recognized each other's qualities; Katherine joined the Society on October 13, 1894, and two weeks later Judge accepted her into the Esoteric Section.

Judge was a charter member of the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875. When Helena Blavatsky and Henry Olcott moved to India in 1879, to establish the international headquarters in Adyar, they left Judge in charge of the American Section. Blavatsky's declining health forced her to leave India in 1885, and she made her transition in 1891.

Charles W. Leadbeater arrived in Adyar in 1884, and Annie W. Besant followed in 1893. Although Olcott continued to serve as president until his death in 1907, Besant quickly became its most influential member. She and Leadbeater embarked on an ambitious program

of clairvoyant research, which, in Judge's view was a departure from Theosophy's core principles. A dispute erupted, and charges and counter-charges were exchanged between Judge and Besant. Judge was expelled, and in April 1895 a majority of members of the American Section voted to secede from the parent Society.

Upon its incorporation in the United States, the breakaway faction registered the name "The Theosophical Society." To avoid confusion, however, it soon became known as the Theosophical Society in America. It appointed Judge President-for-Life; but, already in ill health, he passed away within one year. In March

1896 Katherine Westcott Tingley, a member for less than eighteen months, was elected president.

The new Society continued most of the activities of the New York Lodge. But the year of Judge's presidency and first few years of Tingley's saw the formation of several institutions. One was Universal Brotherhood, giving voice to the fundamental Theosophical principle of global brotherhood "without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color." Another was the School for the Revival of the Lost Mysteries of Antiquity (SRLMA). A third was a publishing enterprise to disseminate Theosophical books and tracts.

Katherine Tingley also made a ten-month, round-the-world tour, probably making good use of her husband's connections with the ocean liner industry. She and her party met many individuals and Theosophical organizations; they also organized meals and other events for disadvantaged people en route.

While Besant and Leadbeater focused on the advancement of esoteric knowledge, Tingley focused on world peace, service and education. All distinguished themselves in their respective niche areas. Katherine Tingley provided us with a role model of selfless service, dedication to her vision of Theosophy, and building an effective esoteric organization. She and the people her organization nurtured continue to inspire us.

While in India in 1896 Tingley had an encounter with a man she identified as “Helena Blavatsky’s Teacher.” She described him thus:

Now, even in H. P. Blavatsky's time he was considered to be quite old in years, but he looked very young when I saw him. I would have said that he was then not more than thirty-two or thirty-three years of age. He appeared to be Tibetan, dark of skin. His face was unlike any other that I had ever seen before. His whole life was lighted up with an inner light that had toned his features, had brightened his eyes, and had brought to him the glow of youthfulness and splendor of character.⁴

Among much else the man offered this advice:

If you had to go from here to America you would not sit still and dream about the place you wanted to go to, and think that was enough. The trouble with some theosophical aspirants is that they waste the strength of their lives looking at the goal ahead, rather than at the immediate moments and seconds of which the Path is

composed. . . . They should let the beaming thought pour itself into each arriving moment and be indifferent to the morrow. One can find in every instant of time, if one has the desire, the door into worlds of golden opportunity, the gateway to a glorious path stretching out into the limitless eternal.⁵

On her return, Tingley stopped in California and decided that Point Loma, near San Diego, should be the permanent headquarters of the Theosophical Society in America. In February 1900, the Society officially moved from New York City to “Lomaland.” An impressive complex of buildings was under construction, including the Temple of Peace, the Raja Yoga Academy, and an outdoor amphitheater. Regarding the choice of “Raja Yoga” as the name of the school, she explained that it meant “the kingly union of mental, spiritual, and physical development, aimed to return to the pure ideal of Greek simplicity.”⁶ Initially, the school was for the children of families living at Point Loma, but it grew to absorb the SRLMA and offered instruction from the primary grades through advanced graduate studies.



Raja-Yoga Academy, International Theosophical Headquarters, Point Loma⁷

In an interview she gave after moving to San Diego, Tingley reflected on the vision she had had since childhood:

When I was a little girl in Newburyport I saw in my childish imagination the schools

I was later to erect at Point Loma. When I was little more than five years of age I used to build with my blocks the plans of the buildings now part of the theosophical establishment in California. Every building was octagonal in shape. Every one con-

tained a piano. Every one was presided over by a mother and a teacher included in one person. Thus in later years at Point Loma, I built octagonal buildings with a piano in each one and a housemother at the head. . . . I realize that the power and value of music in the daily life had never been sufficiently appreciated or properly utilized.⁸

The amphitheater, overlooking the ocean, was the first open-air theater in the United States. An article in a local history journal describes its impact on the region:

Katherine Tingley was an admirer of the dramatic arts, and she viewed drama, music, and the dance as providing a means of depicting man's nobler side before the general public. The people of the larger community of San Diego were thus treated to Greek drama, and to Shakespeare, and as the musical training of Raja Yoga students took shape, an increasingly professional concert series augmented the dramatic presentations.⁹

Katherine Tingley oversaw the many facets of Lomaland's operations. She also worked tirelessly for universal brotherhood, world peace, and the alleviation of suffering among the poor, prisoners, and the victims of war. She lectured throughout the world and organized many conferences to further those ends. Tingley wrote four books: *The Gods Await*, *Theosophy: The Path of the Mystic*, *The Wine of Life*, and *The Splendor of the Soul*. In 1919, Lomaland was chartered in the state of California as the Theosophical University. And the Society's publishing arm became the Theosophical University Press.

Katherine Tingley made her transition July 11, 1929, at the age of 82, while on a lecture tour in Sweden. She had served as president of the Theosophical Society in America for thirty-three years. Gottfried de Purucker, a long-time colleague, succeeded her as president. In 1942, the United States Navy requisitioned Lomaland for military purposes, and the Society moved to the Los Angeles area, finally settling in Pasadena, where it remains today. The Society is now generally known as the Theosophical Society—Pasadena.

The original Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, included strong personalities who did not always share one another's vision. While Helena Blavatsky was alive, her dominant position as spiritual leader maintained a fair measure of unity.¹⁰ But upon her passing, the internal tensions led to a number of schisms. In addition to Judge's departure, another notable one occurred in 1912 when Rudolf Steiner, head of the German Section, left to form the Anthroposophical Society. The Theosophical Society in America was not immune. Immediately after Tingley's election, a group led by Ernest T. Hargrove, who had been Judge's secretary, broke off to form yet another competing Theosophical Society. It survived until 1943.

The early Theosophists all agreed on the broad principles of discipleship. Their differences were mostly over matters of emphasis. While Besant and Leadbeater focused on the advancement of esoteric knowledge, Tingley focused on world peace, service and education. All distinguished themselves in their respective niche areas. Katherine Tingley provided us with a role model of selfless service, dedication to her vision of Theosophy, and building an effective esoteric organization. She and the people her organization nurtured continue to inspire us. To her great credit, Tingley lived up to her ideal of brother-/sisterhood; she never engaged in the harsh rhetoric toward other individuals and groups that plagued the esoteric community throughout much of the twentieth century.

Contributed by John F. Nash

¹ The photo of Katherine Wescott Tingley is in the Public Domain.

² Source:
http://www.astrotheme.com/astrology/Katherine_Tingley. Last accessed Sept. 13, 2015.

³ Gertrude Stevenson, "Katherine Tingley Explains Her Work and Aims: An Interview," *Sunrise: Theosophic Perspectives*, (April/May 1998).
Online:
<http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sunrise/47-97-8/th-ktgs.htm>. Last accessed Sept. 13, 2015.

⁴ Katherine Tingley, "My First Meeting with H. P. Blavatsky's Teacher," *Sunrise: Theosophic Perspectives*, (April/May 1998). Online: <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sunrise/47-97-8/th-ktkt2.htm>. Last accessed Sept. 13, 2015. Blavatsky's two principal teachers were the Masters Morya and Koot Hoomi, but she also met the Master Djwhal Khul. The description of the man as being Tibetan in appearance suggests that he may have been Djwhal Khul.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Gertrude Stevenson, "Katherine Tingley Explains Her Work and Aims: An Interview."

⁷ Academy Building, International Theosophical Headquarters, Point Loma, California. Online:

<http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/theos/s8amgfk2.jpg>.

⁸ Gertrude Stevenson, "Katherine Tingley Explains Her Work and Aims: An Interview."

⁹ Iverson L. Harris, "Reminiscences of Loma land," *Journal of San Diego History* (Summer 1974, Volume 20, Number 3).

¹⁰ Unity was never complete. For example, Anna Kingsford, head of the London Lodge, left the Society in a dispute with Blavatsky and A. P. Sinnett.

Book Review

***Mystery and Language of Color*, by Kurt Abraham.** White City, Oregon: Lampus Press, 2015. Paperback 129 pages, Publisher's price US\$24.00. Available at: www.amazon.com and lampus@wizards.net.

In one of his many revelatory passages on color, the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul informs us that color is the result of logic meditation. He goes on to say that the universe was conceived and built through the use of color, and that we too can acquire the capacity to build or create through the wise comprehension and use of color.

In this learned book, which draws upon the writings of Alice A. Bailey, Helena Blavatsky, Charles Leadbeater and Rudolf Steiner, as well as his own intuitive insights, Kurt Abraham provides us with the information and guidance to understand the deep esoteric significance of color as well as the means to apply it.

The Mystery and Language of Color distinguishes itself from some of the more familiar books on color, such as those that deal with chromotherapy or color healing. This work is concerned with colors as vibrational frequencies and active creative powers, and the means by which the veil that separates the external world from the subjective, subtle realms can be dispersed. The mystery and language of color includes more than what appears to the ordinary eye or the physical senses, as Abraham reminds us in this quote from Blavatsky: "Our physical senses cannot take cognizance of vibrations above and below the septenary and limited gradations of the prismatic colors... unless we learn to paralyze our Quaternary [personality] and discern both the superior and inferior vibrations with our spiritual senses..." (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 5. p. 457)

These finer, invisible colors and levels of perception, all of which have their own vibrational frequency, can be clairvoyantly perceived. Yet, it is possible to perceive *subjective* color by other means and techniques. Before examining the specifics, Abraham begins with a pre-

sentation on the fundamental postulates of esoteric philosophy needed to understand the language of color. Among these are the Law of Correspondences, the three great Cosmic Laws: the Law of Synthesis, the Law of Economy, and the Law of Attraction and one of its subsidiaries, the Law of Colour, behind which lies the mystery of the Seven, the Three and the One.

The primary source of color is also discussed as well as color's two-fold purpose. According to Bailey, in a *Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, color serves to cloak the Spirit aspect, and acts as a center of attraction for the central spark that lies behind the outer veil.

Chapter Two explores the seven visible colors of the spectrum in greater detail, beginning with the importance of indigo, the synthetic undertone for the present Second Solar System. The esoteric colors and qualities of systems One and Two are also discussed. This chapter concludes with comments from the author on the necessity for frequent brooding and meditation on color as a means of ascertaining both its esoteric significance and microcosmic functions. "This involves seeing the activity in the unseen, the cause behind the effects," and an effort to employ the knowledge that has been gleaned. He goes on to suggest that "one can, for example, substitute a rose response for a red sensation in the astral body."

Abraham follows this with a chapter containing a series of colorful images based on his work with a technique described in the Agni Yoga teachings. The *diamond consciousness* technique involves being conscious of the Mundane and Subtle Worlds simultaneously. The author explains that this technique "has to do with having a clear question in mind before going to sleep. "One thinks of a clear-cut, intelligent question and then forgets about it." In the morning, when one is in a hypnagogic state, i.e. half awake and half asleep, a clear thought or image can arise. No attempt at interpretation is to be made at this stage. But after

the impression or image fades, it is to be well-noted and carefully drawn.

The images in this first series depict feelings, moods, emotions and mental states, all of which are accompanied by clarifying notes. It is not clear if these images are intended to serve as prototypical images or symbols, or if they are more idiosyncratic or personal in nature. Nevertheless, the images presented here serve as an example of how it is possible to work with the aforementioned technique. These pictures also show how one can develop a growing sensitivity to the Soul and attune one's self to the inner significance of color.

Chapter Four explores the theme of "Color Dynamics." Here, Abraham takes as his starting point Bailey's "Sublimation of the Five Human Stages." This material, drawn from *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 1, makes use of verbal imagery and reference to color to denote humanity's journey from the "red of selfish desire to the clear blue flame" wherein "the world of lighted forms is perceived." The author explains the meaning and symbolism of each stage and the journey we must all take from darkness and inadequacy to the burning light and life of service and peace—the life-condition of a Bodhisattva. Also touched upon are the colors that will be of most concern to the beginner. These are rose, green and orange, since they correspond to earlier stages on the spiritual path—Stages I through III.

Abraham's primary focus in Chapter Five is on color as it relates to Venus and the Higher and Lower Minds. The author writes in a clear and concise manner about the origin, structure and significant differences between the Higher and Lower Manas. Included are several multi-colored diagrams that will help the reader better understand the material being discussed.

A second set of images is introduced in Chapter Six. Twelve Images are included that explore such themes as the *Armor of Masculine Aggression* as it pertains to the planet Mars. Others deal with the Divine Feminine, the planet Jupiter, the Healing Power of Music and Hope.

The next section provides a lucid and accessible presentation on the Antahkarana in which all the complex facets of the building process as well as the results are examined. Also included is a meditation, given by Djwhal Khul, involving the use of color to facilitate soul-mind-brain communication. Meditation, as Bailey says, is the most effective tool for developing the ability to understand "personal vibration, to attune that vibration to the egoic one, and to synchronise it later with that of the Master."

A final series of images from the author is offered in the closing chapter of the book. This set of pictorial images depicts the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac. Here, as elsewhere, the author elucidates each image, its meaning, and the ideas that the various colors and forms suggest.

Kurt Abraham gives us much to ponder upon in this investigation on *Mystery and Language of Color*. The book contains a wealth of foundational information, along with several useful tools that can inspire readers to undertake their own research into color, vibration and light. Readers are offered a valuable treatment of the subject—one that can help them better appreciate the beauty of color, its psychological meaning, its effect on the outer and inner life and its practical application for advancement on the Path of Discipleship.

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