

Who was H.P. Blavatsky and what did she write?

Helena Blavatsky, was one of the founders of The Theosophical Society. Because she was an unusual woman who made a considerable impact on the thought of the Western world, speculation about her has often exceeded information and understanding. She was able to exercise extraordinary powers of E.S.P., and was a controversial figure because of her forthright and outspoken nature and her fearless attacks on hypocrisy and bigotry.

At the same time, she won fame for her great metaphysical knowledge. that has greatly influenced the thinking of inquiring minds all over the world.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was born in Russia to a noble family in 1831. From earliest childhood she attracted attention with her psychic powers, her ability to produce phenomena at will. She was, however, not interested in her powers as such, but in the principles and laws of nature that governed them. She became a deep student of metaphysical lore, and travelled to many lands, including most of the orient, penetrating even Tibet, in search of hidden knowledge. These were extraordinary travels for a lone woman in the 19th century. In 1873, she went to the United States for the second time and there in 1875, in New York, was instrumental, with Colonel H.S. Olcott and others, in forming The Theosophical Society.

In 1878 H.P. Blavatsky — or “H.P.B.” as she became known — became an American citizen, the first Russian woman ever to do so . In 1879 she and Col. Olcott arrived in India and in 1882 they established the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, near Madras (now Chennai).. In 1885 H.P.B. went to Europe and it was there she completed her magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*. She died in London in 1891.

Isis Unveiled

The first major book by H.P.B was *Isis Unveiled* in two volumes. It created a sensation when published in New York City in 1877 and the first edition of 1000 copies was sold out in two days. Within only seven months three printings had been issued. Volume I deals generally with the alleged “infallibility” of science, while the second volume deals in a similar manner with the so-called “infallibility” of religion. However, the material covers much more than the sub-titles indicate and many subjects are discussed including the interpretation of mythological stories in several religious scriptures, aspects of magic, ancient Egyptian writings, the classic philosophies, world religions , and a multitude of other subjects.

Because of the advance of science in the past hundred years and today’s broadened approach to religion, some portions of what H.P.B. wrote in the eighteen-seventies are no longer pertinent; yet *Isis Unveiled* is filled with challenging pages of undiminished importance

The Secret Doctrine

H.P.B.’s greatest work is *The Secret Doctrine*. This book appeared in 1888 in two volumes, the first being Cosmogogenesis, the study of the origin and development of the universe, and the second Anthropogenesis, the study of the origin and development of man.

H.P.B. made it clear that *The Secret Doctrine* was not written as a revelation, but rather as a collection of fragments scattered throughout thousands of volumes embodying the scriptures of the great Asian and pre-Christian European religions. Furthermore, she made no suggestion of dogma and the reader was asked to study the ideas and information only from the standpoint of common sense, experience and reason.

This vast scheme of evolution is based on three fundamental propositions:

“ (a) An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought.

(b) The Eternity of the Universe *in toto* as a boundless plane; periodically “the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing.”

(c) The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Oversoul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul—a spark of the former—through the Cycle of Incarnation in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law.”

Although drawn from many sources, *The Secret Doctrine* is based largely upon an archaic manuscript entitled *The Book of Dzyan*, of which it is a commentary and an interpretation. The stanzas of *The Book of Dzyan* are written in poetic terms that are not easy to understand, but they reveal, to the person willing to study them, a sublime description of cosmic evolution beginning with the eternal darkness before the awakening of a universe. Later stanzas describe the reawakening of the universe to life, the differentiation of forms, the process of world-formation, and the appearance of man on earth. .

The Secret Doctrine continues to be the principle source-book for students of Theosophy. No one is expected to accept the text as a final word, but only to ponder its thoughts with a free and questing mind.

Other Works

H.P.B wrote a number of briefer books. One of these is *The Key to Theosophy*(1889) , a work that remains a most valuable introduction to theosophical thought and philosophy. She also left voluminous articles which have been brought together in *The Collected Writings of H.P. Blavatsky* compiled by Boris de Zirkoff, and published in fourteen volumes.

One of H.P.B.'s best loved works is a modest little book of spiritual insight and instruction called *The Voice of the Silence*. It is her translation of an old Eastern manuscript and includes her explanations and comments on a series of precepts offered to one seeking the path to enlightenment.

First published in 1889, *The Voice of the Silence* has been issued in one edition after another in many languages and treasured the world around. Here is a favourite passage from *The Voice of the Silence*:

Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain - as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.
Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself has wiped it from the sufferer's eye. But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart, and there remain. Nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed. 'Tis from the bud of renunciation of the self that springeth the sweet fruit of final liberation.

Perhaps the true measure of the enduring worth of the writings of H.P. Blavatsky is the simple fact that they are still in print, and still being read and studied.

Recommended reading:

The Extraordinary Life and Influence of H.P.B. *by* Sylvia Cranston

Old Diary Leaves *by* H.S.Olcott

The Letters of H.P.Blavatsky *Edited by* John Algeo