"The Gita Class" and the Heart of Study

From a Student

[This talk was given during 15th Annual International Theosophy Conference held in August 2013 in New York. The theme title of the conference was "How to Awaken Compassion? - H. P. Blavatsky and the Eternal Secret Doctrine".]

The students at the Wednesday afternoon Bhagavad-Gita Class at the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT) in Los Angeles are links in a long chain. Started over 85 years ago, in this class there are no experts, authorities or leaders - only fellow students who consider the text together. How does this work? What is its value? Welcome to the Gita Class!

We meet every Wednesday, all year long. We start reading the Gita in October, and end (not that we ever "end") in late May or early June, when we turn to other works to maintain the energy of the meeting cycle through the summer months. In the fall, we return again to the Gita with a brief overview of the Mahabharata, stressing that each character in the epic is a facet of the human heart; nothing is alien, all is a lesson and a progression in the soul's journey. (And, sometimes … just to break the "narrative" of the personal perspective, and to brush away any cobwebs of expectation, we begin the annual consideration by starting with Chapter Eighteen instead of Chapter One.)

While there are no set rules, there are patterns, lines of work, and texts: we read aloud and then question and wonder together, using the rendition of the Gita by W. Q. Judge, and the accompanying Notes on the Gita. *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Key to Theosophy*, and *The Theosophical Glossary* also are available as supplementary material. Each session begins with reading and discussing the "Declaration" of ULT, followed by a statement from a student volunteer of the "Three Fundamental Principles" of theo-sophia.

The foundation provided by text-based classes frees us from personal bias and opinion, on any sort of attainment or lack of attainment. If there is a disagreement, the chair person can simply say, "Let's go back to the text; let's