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## DISCRIMINATIVE WISDOM

For the student of Theosophy, one big advantage of living today is the abundance of information available. In the early years of the Theosophical Society, only a few books existed—books such as *Isis Unveiled* (1877), *The Occult World* (1881), and *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883)—but today's inquirer has access to hundreds of books, articles, and recordings on various aspects of Theosophy, many of them online.

On the other hand, one big disadvantage for today's student of Theosophy is the abundance of information available. Too much information can be a double-edged sword by making it easier to focus on quantity instead of quality. There is a tendency in many of us (myself included) to move on too quickly to the next book before we have really understood and absorbed the contents of the one just read. In an article appearing in the May 1972 issue of *The Theosophist*, I. K. Taimni wrote:

Most aspirants—and especially those of a scholarly type—suffer from the erroneous idea that they have to acquire more and more intellectual knowledge and fill their mind with ideas in order to be able to know the truths of the inner life . . . So they read more and more books and go on piling up scraps of information in their mind without exercising any kind of discrimination in the matter . . . The result of this misdirected effort to grow fat intellectually as quickly as possible is similar to what happens when we try to eat more and more food with a view to getting physically stronger without sufficient exercise to digest and assimilate that food. There is intellectual indigestion and our mind becomes clogged and burdened with half-digested ideas clouding our perception.

So here we have yet another example of where we can exercise the first qualification for the Path described in books such as *At the Feet of the Master*: discriminative wisdom (*viveka*). It is important to read books dealing with the spiritual life, but it is equally if not more important to spend time reflecting and assimilating what we read. Until we have done that we cannot make those ideas a part of our life.

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