

William Quan Judge



William Quan Judge was born in Dublin, Ireland, on April 13, 1851. His family emigrated in 1864 to New York where he specialised in corporate law (New York State Bar, 1872). A co-founder with H. P. Blavatsky and Henry S. Olcott of The Theosophical Society in 1875, he later became General Secretary of the American Section and Vice President of the International Society.

In this capacity he organised and presided over the Theosophical Congress at the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago during the 1893 Colombian Exposition. Through his writing and extensive lecturing around the United States, he helped make theosophy known and respected. He died in New York City on March 21, 1896 at the age of 44.

William Quan Judge served as editor of the periodical, *The Path*, from 1886-1896. Quoting from the first issue, April 1886, Judge gives a reason for producing the publication: "to try on the one hand to point out to their fellows a Path in which they have found hope for man, and on the other to investigate all systems of ethics and philosophy claiming to lead directly to such a path, regardless of the possibility that the highway may, after all, be in another direction from the one in which they are looking."

In 1895 a division occurred within the Theosophical Society Adyar, leading William Quan Judge, the then Vice President of the TS and General Secretary of the American Section, to form a separate organization. The majority of members stayed with Colonel Olcott and Annie Besant, but some followed Judge in setting up another theosophical society with headquarters in New York. Judge led this American group until his sudden death in 1896.

The journal of the American Section of the Adyar Society published this gracious and conciliatory obituary: "*On 21st of March William Q. Judge quitted this sphere of activity. The news saddened all for every heart kept a shrine sacred to the well-beloved co-worker of H.P.B. We remember only his virtues, which were many, his talents which were great, and we know that the good he did for the many years he laboured as the Vice-President of the T. S. and Secretary of the American Section will bless his name for all time. All honour to his memory.*"

In the October 1922 issue of *The Theosophist*, Annie Besant wrote:

"William Quan Judge [was] a much-loved friend and pupil of H.P.B. and the channel of life to the American Branch of the T.S. A highly evolved man, with a profound realization of the deeper truths of life, he built up the Society in America from small and discouraging

beginnings. No difficulties daunted him, and no apparent failures quenched his fiery devotion... He was beside H.P.B. through those early days, saw the exercise of her wonderful powers, and shared in the founding of the Theosophical Society. And throughout the remainder of her life on earth the friendship remained unbroken, and during the later years she regarded him as her one hope in America, declaring that, if the American members rejected him, she would break off all relations with them, and know them no more... His real work, the spread of Theosophy in America, was splendidly performed, and his memory remains a lasting inspiration... William Quan Judge must ever have his place among Theosophical Worthies.”

His books include:

The Bhagavad Gita with Essays on the Gita.

The Ocean of Theosophy.

Letters That Have Helped Me.

Practical Occultism: From the Private Letters of William Q. Judge, Ed. A. L. Conger.

Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge.