

**ANCIENT IDEALS IN  
MODERN LIFE:  
FOUR LECTURES**

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Ancient Ideals in Modern Life: Four Lectures by Annie Besant

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ANCIENT IDEALS  
IN  
MODERN LIFE

FOUR LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH  
ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE THEOSO-  
PHICAL SOCIETY, AT BENARES,  
DECEMBER, 1900.

BY  
ANNIE BESANT

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*From the library of  
Frank D. Clarke*

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## FOREWORD.

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In the following lectures I have endeavoured to discharge the duty incumbent on the spiritual Teacher—however humble the grade—of holding up the ideal to be aimed at, of reproving the evils of the day, of indicating the path along which the ideal may be approached. The task is one beset with difficulties, but not for that reason may it be avoided; cowards shrink back, appalled by obstacles; heroes overcome them.

At the dawning of the twentieth century, India stands near the parting of the ways; one way leads downwards to death, the other upwards to life. Many of her noblest children are hopeless of her future, and would let her expire peacefully rather than prolong the death-passage by remedies deemed useless. Others, loving her well but ignorantly, would, in the effort to save her, cast aside to the winds all her traditions, and seek by modern western medicines her cure—but really her death. Others, yet again, believe that before her there dawns a new era of spiritual life and of material greatness, and would seek to revive her ancient ideals and wed to them all that is best in

modern life. Of these am I, who have spoken these discourses, as a first contribution to that end. For I am a humble servant of the great Masters who declared that they would welcome any who would aid them in the task of regenerating India, and I would fain have humble share in that mighty endeavour.

Hitherto in my lectures, during seven years, I have been content to raise the old ideals before the eyes of India and of the world, and to seek to inspire the Hindus with love and reverence for their ancient faith. The work has not been unfruitful. The impulse given to Hinduism by the teaching of H. P. Blavatsky and the work of Colonel H. S. Olcott has been strengthened, and the part played by the Theosophical Society in the revival of Hinduism is admitted by friends and foes alike. But I have observed with regret, though without surprise, that evil has trodden close on the heels of good, and that while religion has been vivified, abuses and superstitions have also shown more vitality. Hence the duty becomes incumbent on me to speak as plainly against these abuses and superstitions, as in favour of the ancient faith. I may not let them be confounded with the Truth I teach, nor may I stand as endorsing them because reproclaiming the immemorial Dharma.