



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover Picture: A baobab graces the Adyar garden – Richard Dvorak

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# THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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**The Theosophical Society** is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

**Theosophy** is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

# On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

## **Attachment and Freedom**

In the Theosophical Society, we talk about the great qualities needed to live a spiritual life. We hope in this way to make these qualities a part of our daily living. Generally we fail to do so. Therefore, we have to be careful that speculation does not take the place of realization. Further, real freedom is difficult to analyse or make into a subject of conversation. It has to be realized through daily living, by watchfulness, experimentation and reflection of a serious nature, at many intervals.

There are some people who believe that Krishnaji spoke about what was absolutely new, of matters that have never been spoken about earlier. I am not one of them. It is true that to many people what he said was new, but I think that much of what he spoke came from the fresh spring of his own understanding, his own state of knowing. Whoever speaks from what he himself has experienced is clear, and is always saying what appears new. His words have extraordinary force, but this does not mean that nobody has ever spoken of these things before.

The Eastern world has been deeply concerned with this question of freedom. Hindus, Buddhists, Jainas, and others who do not belong to any of these categories,

recognize the fact that freedom is not merely freedom from something outside; they do not waste much time on how to get or retain external freedom. Real freedom does not merely come from outside. It is part of our inner nature, and will emerge sooner or later. Modern man often seems to identify freedom with money to buy things, with travel, and being able to do what he wants in the particular environment in which he happens to be interested. In fact, modern man is obsessed with shedding any constraints that may affect him, and thereby he thinks he is free. But freedom refers to timeless being and cannot be easily obtained.

There is a famous statement in one of the Upanishad-s saying that both bondage and freedom are within the mind. The mind creates the fetters and then imagines that the problem is outside. If it realizes that this is not true, that it is creating the problems itself, then it can begin to understand and to free itself.

We compartmentalize when we believe that problems come from outside. This is one of the reasons why we have created suffering and promote attitudes of callousness, utilitarian attitudes, and have a society where we would like to experience the impossible, such as the calmness

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of being free of violence, aggression and so forth.

This century is perhaps noteworthy because everything is considered from the point of view of utility — animals, trees, people are all looked at as things which can give us satisfaction or something useful. If they do not, we deal with them with utmost indifference or cruelty. Our relationship with people generally involves gaining something emotionally, morally, or in terms of security. We attach ourselves to persons from whom we can derive something, gain a better position in life, emotional satisfaction, and so forth.

We are willing to take whatever we want at any cost, particularly those lives which are non-human. So we tear up plants and put them somewhere else, according to our fancy; we clip and shape them in so-called gardens as if they have no right to grow naturally. We teach millions of children in schools to cut up animals and various creatures and develop indifference to what they may feel, as long as we are satisfied with the result. Utilitarianism and callousness are cultivated and become part of our lives.

Indirectly the Buddha spoke about this. He said that thirst (*trshnā*) is the desire to get things — security, satisfaction, new experience, etc., all of which are productive of sorrow. He did not speak about love, but about the causes for the absence of love.

Krishnaji's approach was similar; he advised us to negate, to find out what gives rise to bondage. Can we find out what is not love? Perhaps it is sentimentality or

attachment to particular people because of emotional connections. The whole world believes that love is this connection and that attaching oneself to some people is a form of self-expression. But we have to notice that when there is attachment, sentimental relationship, or self-promotion through another, it can become anger, cruelty, frustration, etc. This is the reason why so-called love turns into animosity and hatred. What is normally called love is very complicated. It is more like turmoil.

### Love — Real and Unreal?

The exact synonym of the word 'love' has not been used much in India or the East. It is difficult to believe that they never thought or spoke about it. Very often certain schools of thought in the East have had as their central focus self-surrender rather than love. This is not equated with a physical or mental image and sitting in front of it making offerings. The words have to be taken more literally, in which case, it means letting go of the self. When it is not a construct of the mind, there is both freedom and love.

The two subjects have been treated in Buddhist countries where *karunā* (usually translated as compassion), and intelligence cannot exist apart. If there is no compassion, the intelligence is merely ordinary intelligence or cleverness. If there is no intelligence, the feeling is more open emotionally or sentimentally, but is not real love. Real love has intelligence as an aspect of itself. In one of her lectures,

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Annie Besant says that love is a form of knowing. When there is love there is the possibility of knowing what the intellect cannot know.

The Buddha pointed out that thoughts of love pollute the mind, while love itself cleanses and purifies. Krishnaji also spoke about this: 'The sense of time and space, of separation, of sorrow, is born of the process of thought.' It is only when thought ceases that there can be love.

So thinking about love or about somebody one is attached to is not love. Love has little to do with thinking about someone who is preferred over others. There are millions of people suffering. We might ignore them and be completely callous, and concentrate on one or two people and say that that person must not suffer, and must have everything good. Is this really love? Can one be indifferent to the world and life as a whole, and love at the same time?

We spoke about utilitarianism. Can we live in utilitarianism, that is greed, and love at the same time? So we have to ask ourselves if this is really love, in order to look purely without condemnation. Let the mind become 'free of the known' in order to know love. Looking purely is difficult, without wanting to enjoy possessions of any kind. Possession, actual or mental, is an obstruction. But if we look carefully then perhaps we see that what we imagined as love is only the self clinging to something and trying to get satisfaction.

Of course the great test is when death comes and there is the feeling that

everything has been lost. Madame Blavatsky says: When there is real love there is no sense of separation at all. Perhaps, the sense of separation is wanting to possess, appreciation, etc. These are indications that we are insecure. Some people seem important and others not.

Is there love when there is division? Love and freedom go together because both are related to the process of thought. Desire is thought. To experience something at the moment is not desire. We may eat something and feel it is sweet and nice. If we look at a beautiful thing and cannot feel the beauty of it, something is wrong. But thought remembers the sweetness as well as the beauty and projects it into the future and says, 'I will have it again'. This is desire.

One of the remarkable things that Krishnaji has pointed out is that the process of thought moving from here to there is time. When there is the sensation of something pleasant the mind holds on to the sensation; otherwise, it turns away from it. In Indian thought, freedom is freedom from names; that means labelling, categorizing, etc. The memory is connected with names and forms, from time and space. All this produces conflict. When there is not this inward freedom, conflict cannot be avoided. So perhaps, the important work we have to do is understanding. Trying to understand involves examination of all the subtle forms of compulsion which are acting from within. Perhaps we can say that it means looking objectively, honestly, clearly, in order to discover.

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### The Theosophical Attitude

It is often not easy to decide what to do, but it is necessary; to do one's duty here and now and attempt at the same time to have a living concept of where one is going.

There are many things which have to be put right in the world, not from a worldly point of view, but from the higher viewpoint. The position of women, for instance, is not at all what it should be. In the countries where they are supposed to be free, they are actually prisoners of a system or an idea. They are imagined to be free because they can do more or less what they want. But what they want is to rise socially. A few reach to important positions and some are free physically.

But are they free inwardly? Often they are merely following an existing pattern. Others live what they consider to be a free life and therefore become sexually caught. This happens when women are supposed to be pleasant and beautiful, so that men can enjoy them. Many women in western countries are caught in this and other pointless ideas so what the real purpose

of human life is, is not known.

In a vast part of the world, women are held subordinate, often almost as slaves. In various Muslim households, the women are confined to their houses and act only as the men decide. There is no belief in freedom for them. Poverty often imposes a narrow life on people, including children. Children are sold for paltry sums of money or put into some ordained pattern in the household. All these and similar situations should not exist in the so-called modern world, but this kind of view and condition is found to a surprisingly large extent.

We have only some glimpses into what actually exists and could be remedied by right ideas. But in many societies, the people believe, not in right ideas, but in following a tradition which suits them. So they have no real freedom to think and act. These are matters of which every Theosophist should be aware, and in his own way to whatever extent possible to try to remedy them. Do we simply think as everybody does, or do we have the courage to do what is right is an important question. ✧

He who binds to himself a joy  
Doth the winged life destroy;  
He who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

William Blake

# Towards a Sustainable India

N. R. NARAYANA MURTHY

IT is a great privilege to deliver this year's Dr Annie Besant Lecture for the Theosophical Society of India. Dr Besant was a reformist, secularist and a firm believer in India's self-rule. Her service to the cause of Theosophy is well known. Theosophy is extremely important to the human mind since, as Dr Annie Besant once said, it enlightens the minds of the thoughtful by unveiling to them the hidden causes of sorrow. There are many dimensions of sorrow for us — individual, societal and global. Today, I have decided to speak on a topic that is likely to cause sorrow to the whole of humanity if we do not act now, and that may threaten the very survival of humanity in the coming centuries — the sustainability of our planet.

We live in a world which is grappling with ever-increasing social, economic, political and environmental challenges. Rising social unrest, low economic growth, rising geopolitical tensions, depleting natural resources and a worsening environment are affecting the basic quality of our lives. Therefore, we have a responsibility towards our future generations to create a sustainable world

where mankind can live in peace and happiness and in harmony with the environment.

Sustainability is a widely misunderstood concept and is often viewed narrowly as moderating human consumption patterns that affect our environment. At the broadest level, sustainability is a movement towards ensuring that every one on this planet thrives in harmony with the environment. It is about meeting the just and fair needs of the present generation without compromising the right of future generations to meet such needs of their own.

At another level, sustainability includes issues of extreme poverty and hunger, equitable distribution of resources like energy and water, security and peace, free and open trade, global warming, eradication of diseases, and democracy and human rights.

At a national level, sustainability is about the responsibility of the government to provide for the basic needs and development of its citizens for successive generations. Sustainable nations are able to provide their citizens with adequate food, water, energy and other resources,

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basic health care, education, security and equal opportunity for improving the quality of their lives. Lack of such sustainable progress results in an increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots. This gap leads to loss of hope and confidence in the future among various sections of society, leading to social unrest and rise in violence, vandalism, robbery and other desperate measures.

In today's lecture, I will focus only on one dimension of this huge problem. That is, how do we make sure that we give back this planet to our children in a better condition than we borrowed from them. Therefore, I will focus on preserving the quality of air and water, the two prime requirements for human beings.

We live at a time when mankind is consuming natural resources at a pace faster than the Earth's ability to replenish them. The profligate lifestyle in developed nations and the desire to imitate that lifestyle among developing nations is putting unsustainable pressures on our planet. We consume natural resources at 50% more than the sustainable level. Countless species have become extinct while many more have become endangered. The carbon footprint has grown elevenfold in the last forty years. With the human population likely to touch nine billion by 2050, 50% more than what it is today, we will need the equivalent of two planets to meet the natural resource consumption needs and to absorb the CO<sub>2</sub> waste. Most importantly, an estimated 70% increase in food production is necessary to feed this growing population. Improving living

standards in developing countries has resulted in higher demands for pulses and proteins by a larger population. If everyone on earth consumed as much as the average American, we would need 4.5 Earths to achieve sustainability instead of the current 1.5.

The latest annual global carbon report released by the global carbon project shows that global carbon emissions from fossil fuels rose 2 percent in 2008 to a record high of 1.3 metric tons per person. And just the US, China and India together contribute to 50% of those emissions. The report also shows that the growth rate in carbon emissions from coal and other fossil fuels continues to outpace natural carbon neutralizers, or 'sinks,' such as the oceans and vegetation.

The annual growth of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> was 1.8 ppm in 2008, slightly below the average for the period 2000–2008 of 1.9 ppm per year (parts per million). This increase brought the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration to 385 ppm in 2008, 38% above the concentration at the start of the industrial revolution (about 280 ppm in 1750). The present concentration is the highest during the last two million years. We have been experiencing an increase in the frequency of heat waves and heavy precipitation. There is also an alarming decrease in water resources due to climate change in semi-arid areas, such as the Mediterranean Basin, western United States, southern Africa and north-eastern Brazil.

China has already overtaken the US as the world's largest energy consumer,

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having consumed 2,252 million metric tons of oil-equivalent in 2009. The US consumed 2,170 million metric tons of oil-equivalents the same year.

India, despite being a low per-capita carbon emitter, is the world's fifth largest emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>. According to recent McKinsey estimates, India's GDP is likely to touch USD 4 trillion by 2030 while the population is estimated to grow to 1.3 billion in the same period. A consequence of this growth figure is the surging demand for resources and consequent impact on the environment. The demand for power is likely to increase more than fivefold from 700 Twh (Terra Watt Hour) in 2005 to 3800 Twh by 2030. The power sector will, thus, be the biggest emitter, generating more than 50% of the emissions. Emission of greenhouse gases is estimated to increase from 1.6 billion tonnes in 2005 to about 6.5 billion tonnes in 2030 based on demand-growth estimates.

Sustainable resource usage models are critical in a country like India where 37% of the population lives below the poverty line. With 44% of our population still without access to electricity, our energy consumption even for basic daily needs will grow much faster than that of developed nations. Further, climate change is likely to reduce the quantity and quality of India's natural resources and adversely affect the livelihood of its people. With an economy closely tied to its natural resource base and climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, fishing and forestry, India may face a

major threat because of global warming.

Let me get to the global water situation. One billion people currently do not have access to clean drinking water. Three billion people do not have access to water for sanitation. And it is only getting worse. By 2025, twice as many people as today will face water scarcity.

India gets on an average 1197 mm of rainfall every year. This amounts to a total precipitation of 4000 billion m<sup>3</sup>. However, 3000 billion m<sup>3</sup> of this is lost due to runoff, and only 1000 billion m<sup>3</sup> is available as surface and groundwater sources, amounting to 1000 m<sup>3</sup> per year per capita water availability. We are already consuming 75% of utilizable resources. The regime for the extraction of groundwater is either not regulated or not implemented properly. Our irrigation and farm practices are inefficient and we have inadequate sanitation and industrial waste discharge methods. Many parts of India are water-stressed today. India is likely to be water-scarce by 2050. In ten years' time, India's edible oil deficit is estimated to touch 17.7 million tonnes or double its imports in 2009. Its sugar deficit is estimated to touch 40 million tonnes or five times the recent deficit. Overcoming these deficits through domestic cultivation requires enormous quantities of water.

Let me now talk about what the multilateral agencies, national governments, corporations and individuals have been doing to make our planet sustainable. The United Nations Climate Change Conference was held recently in Cancun, Mexico. At this conference, delegates

from over 194 countries reached a consensus on several important measures for tackling climate change. For the first time, the US along with China and all other major emitters anchored their national pollution targets in a formal UN agreement. Together, the 'Cancun Agreement' locks in emission reduction targets for 80% of global emissions. This is a huge step in the right direction.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or FCCC), an international environmental treaty, has committed signatories' governments to a voluntary 'non-binding aim' to reduce atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. The treaty provides for updates (called 'protocols') that would set mandatory emission limits. It supports action around managing climate change risks, funding to spur green economic growth, reducing emissions from deforestations and transfer of climate-friendly technologies. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) is a CEO-led, global association of some 200 companies dealing exclusively with business and sustainable development. This council has created a Global Water Tool (GWT) for multinational companies to make informed decisions on water usage. It has launched the 'Energy Efficiency in Buildings' project that aims at producing a roadmap for reaching energy self-sufficiency in buildings by 2050.

The Indian government has taken constructive measures to tackle the problem. At the last G-8 Summit at Heiligendamm, Prime Minister Dr

Manmohan Singh made a commitment that India's per-capita carbon emissions would not exceed the average per-capita emissions of the developed countries. The National Action Plan on Climate Change, initiated by Dr Manmohan Singh in January 2010, identifies measures that promote our developmental objectives while containing carbon emission within agreed limits. The national action plan covers eight broad focus areas including solar and wind energy, sustainable habitat, water and sustainable agriculture. Industry bodies like CII, FICCI, and TERI have been publicizing the importance of reducing carbon emission. Initiatives that aim to reduce our carbon emission include the metro-rail in large cities, meeting 10% of total transport fuel needs from bio-fuels by 2017, the use of CNG for all public transport in polluted cities like Delhi, stringent emission norms like the Euro IV fuel standard, lower excise duty on smaller cars, and the introduction of electric two-wheelers, cars and buses. Today, India has one of the lowest per-capita emission intensity in the world. We are targeting a further emission intensity decline of 20–25% by 2020 on 2005 levels, as per Jairam Ramesh, Environment Minister of India. This is laudable, given our huge developmental imperatives.

Let me now talk a little about what corporations are doing. Since Unilever began measuring its water use in 1995, it has reduced its total water usage in manufacturing consumption by almost 60 percent. These achievements were

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largely due to water recycling and conservation efforts, as well as improved processing techniques and product innovations. Just one plant in Unilever (Canada) has reduced the plant's annual production of greenhouse gases by 23,000 tons, its electricity use by 23 percent, and its natural gas consumption by 46 percent.

As early as 1974, Honda became the first company to launch a low emission and fuel-efficient vehicle, the Civic CVCC6. In the 1970s and 1980s, Honda consistently improved the fuel efficiency of its cars. Honda was also the first company to sell hybrid cars in North America and also the first to get its fuel cell cars certified by the US government.

Infosys aims to be a responsible global organization working towards the greater common good by setting global benchmarks for a sustainable tomorrow. We have worked to minimize waste, the consumption of electricity and fresh water, and helped preserve our natural habitat. Our Green Initiatives Group has focused on developing infrastructure to meet our needs while ensuring sustainable environmental practices. In the last two years, we have achieved 17% reduction in per-capita electricity consumption. All new buildings in our Indian campuses are being designed to meet the Gold Standard of Leadership in Energy and Environment and Design (LEED). Our employees across the globe have volunteered their personal time in contributing to society through various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Our Eco groups have worked assiduously to raise

environmental consciousness among Infosysians. We have also worked with government policy makers to promote renewable energy at some of our office locations.

Infosys' objective is to reach 100% water sustainability. We provide sensor-based faucets, low-flush toilets and low-flow showers to conserve water. Rooftop rain water is captured for drinking and human-touch purposes. Ground water runoff is captured for landscaping purposes and is stored in onsite lakes or underground water tanks. We use the latest technology in recycling water. Such treated water can be used for human touch but we are currently using it for flushing and air conditioning. The balance is used for landscaping.

Waste management is a critical component to reduce our impact on the environment. E-waste is returned to suppliers or to authorized recyclers only. A sound solid waste management system is in place. Paper waste is recycled and reused as notepads. Food waste and kitchen waste are sent to nearby piggeries. We discourage the use of non-biodegradable substances on campus. We work with suppliers to take back package material.

I have spoken about sustainability from the global, national and corporate perspectives. However for any of these actions to succeed, each one of us has to fulfil our personal responsibility. We have to reduce carbon emission, use less water for our daily needs and produce less waste.

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### Conclusion

This is the only planet in our galaxy which is fit for human life, thanks to an atmosphere that distributes sunlight across it and screens all harmful radiation, the availability of water, flora and fauna, a convenient temperature band for life, and ideal gravity for performance. Therefore, every one of the six billion citizens of this planet will have to work hard to preserve this planet and pass it on to the next generation in a better condition than we took it. Let us remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi — that our planet has

enough to cater to all our needs but not enough to cater to our greed.

I will conclude with the words of beloved Annadurai who would attack superstitions and religious exploitation but exhorted us to hold on to the spiritual values of society with the slogan, '*Onrae Kulam, Oruvane Thevan*' meaning 'One race, One God'. I would go ahead and add 'One Planet' to that list. Let us wake up to the fact that we have to share this one planet with our children and future generations. Let us leave them a legacy that they will be proud of. ✧

**From Gautama Buddha down through the whole line of patriarchs to Bodhidharma, none preached aught besides the One Mind, otherwise known as the Sole Vehicle of Liberation. Hence, though you search throughout the whole universe, you will never find another vehicle. Nowhere has this teaching leaves or branches; its one quality is eternal truth. Hence it is a teaching hard to accept.**

Huang Po

# Spirituality

MARY ANDERSON

WHAT is spirituality? We speak of a ‘spiritual’ atmosphere, a spiritual person, a spiritual book, etc. — and of a quality called spirituality.

Obviously spirituality has to do with spirit. And what is spirit? This word has many meanings. It is used in the plural for the so-called ‘spirits of the dead’ in spiritualism, which, as HPB tells us, are not our ‘dear departed’ at all, but mostly their astral or *kāma-mānasic* corpses! Here the word ‘spirit’ is applied to what is really psychic and not spiritual.

But the deeper meaning of Spirit is found in St Paul’s description of man as spirit, soul and body. This can be understood in different ways, depending on the different meanings given to ‘soul’. HPB tries to clarify matters by referring to the ‘animal soul’ (*kāma*), the ‘human soul’ (*manas*?) and the ‘spiritual soul’ (*buddhi*).

In everyday parlance, people mean by ‘soul’ either the ‘immortal soul’ referred to in Christianity or, as the term ‘soul’ is used by psychologists, that which is also known as the ‘psyche’.

If by ‘soul’ we mean the ‘immortal soul’, then ‘Spirit’ would refer to the Monad, that is, the Divine Spark,

Ātma-Buddhi; the ‘soul’ would be the reincarnating Ego, *buddhi-manas*; and the ‘body’ would mean the personality, that is, the physical body and our consciousness when in incarnation in that body, a consciousness which includes our emotions and desires, *kāma-manas*.

But if, on the other hand, by ‘soul’ we mean the psyche, then Spirit would refer to the Monad, the Divine Spark, Ātma-Buddhi, *plus* the reincarnating Ego, the spiritual soul or *buddhi-manas*; ‘Soul’ would refer to our consciousness when we are in incarnation, that is, *kāma-manas*; and the ‘body’ would mean the physical body, including its etheric counterpart and its vital energy.

In Theosophical terminology, Spirit is mostly taken to mean Ātmā. The word ‘Spirit’ comes from the Latin ‘Spiritus’, meaning breath. The word Ātmā also comes from a root meaning breath.

It is said in the Upanishad-s that Ātmā is Brahman. Thus, Spirit refers not only to our true (spiritual) selves, but also to the Absolute, God, the true self of all.

Ātmā has two aspects. HPB explains this as follows:

‘Ātman is the Universal All’ (*The Key*

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to *Theosophy*). 'Ātmā, the "Higher Self", is neither your Spirit nor mine, but like sunlight shines on all.' So there is only one Ātmā, pure spirit. On the other hand, she points out that Ātmā 'becomes the Higher Self of man', although 'only in conjunction with *buddhi*, its vehicle, which links it to the individuality (i.e., *buddhi-manas*).

Thus, Ātmā or Spirit is a mystery. It is both universal and in a sense individual. But its being universal means that all things, all beings are One at the spiritual level. Thus spirituality has to do with the oneness of all things. It has been defined as follows, objectively and subjectively, that is, as a fact and as the realization of that fact: 'The merging of all things in the Divine Unity is Spirituality of a most refined character' and it is 'The realization of the One in the many' (HPB in I. Hoskins, *Science of Spirituality*, p. 23).

Outwardly we live in a world of diversity, in the world of the many. We perceive wonderful abundance in nature: no leaf is like another. Inwardly also, psychically, we live in a world of diversity, in the world of many. We consider individual human beings to be different from each other. We see others as different from us. Above all we see ourselves as different from others!

But, according to Theosophical teachings, that diversity in nature and in us originated in unity, is an expression of unity and will return to unity. The movement of evolution is from the One to the many and back to the One. It is indeed

breath, the outbreathing and the inbreathing of the One.

Oneness or unity may seem far away to us who are on the periphery, so to speak. But in truth that Oneness is at the heart of all beings and all objects and is their true nature. The Oneness is expressed in Nature in balance, adjustment, provided Nature is left to herself and man does not interfere. For example, when there is overpopulation in some species, harmony is restored through the birth of fewer offspring. Perhaps this is happening also in the human kingdom, which is overpopulating the earth. In some countries it is reported that men are becoming impotent.

But humanity has distanced itself from Nature. Its attitude is anthropocentric, that is, humanity puts itself in the centre of things. In the West, the purpose of nature has for many centuries been considered to be to serve and to benefit mankind, partly due to tendentious translation and misunderstanding of and undue emphasis on the biblical injunction: 'God said unto them (to man and woman), Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (Gen., 1:28). The words 'subdue' and 'have dominion' are ugly terms and have done much harm.

Not only is this anthropocentric attitude rampant, undue importance being given to man, but each individual among us has become at least to some extent egocentric. Each one tends to place himself or herself

## Spirituality

in the centre. Humanity is not only anthropocentric, but also (individually) egocentric. Each one sees Nature in general and other species and other individual humans as not only different from but also less important than 'I'. This anthropocentric and egocentric attitude results in selfishness, in dislike of and a superior attitude towards other species and other human beings, as communities and as individuals. All this leads to disrespect for life and to violence.

When we look at the havoc this has caused it seems we have reached the zenith of diversity or rather the nadir of the involution of spirit into matter. We may well ask, 'Can things get worse?' Perhaps they can if scientists continue to experiment with life, with genes, etc., without knowing what the consequences will be, and if politicians and extremists continue to incite people to violence for personal ends.

But some day the turning point must come. Perhaps it has begun already in small ways, just as the rebirth of the sun comes in the darkest night of the year.

What can we as individuals do to hasten the return towards the perception of oneness, which is spirituality?

We can only, and we must, begin with ourselves. Self-observation leads to self-awareness and self-knowledge. When we find ourselves thinking that a certain person has certain faults, can we say to ourselves, 'Perhaps this is the case, but does not every failing also have positive aspects?' The proverbial meanness of the Scots may be better than wastefulness!

And are not these failings, if they indeed exist, only virtues which have been exaggerated or have degenerated? Miserliness may be thrift exaggerated. Brutality may have originated in courage. Sentimentality may be love gone astray. Moreover, can we see that tendencies which we think we perceive in others and which we condemn in them are also present in us? How often do we project onto others what we know is in us but do not wish to condemn in ourselves?

Being watchful in this way, that is, aware of our own shortcomings, self-aware — is a first step. A further step follows: resisting the tendency to join in abuse of others. In *At the Feet of the Master* we find this advice regarding gossip: 'See what gossip does. It begins with evil thought, and that in itself is a crime. For in everyone and in everything there is good; in everyone and in everything there is evil. Either of these we can strengthen by thinking of it, and in this way we can help or hinder evolution . . . If you think of the evil in another, you are doing at the same time three wicked things: You are filling your neighbourhood with evil thought . . . (thus) adding to the sorrow of the world. If there is in that man the evil which you think, you are strengthening it . . . But generally the evil is not there, and you have only fancied it . . . (And) you fill your own mind with evil thought instead of good . . . (and become) ugly and painful . . . instead of beautiful and lovable . . .' (pp. 65–7).

We should not join in verbal abuse of others and should even intervene, but

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in a calm and friendly, even humorous spirit. However, if we are angry, it may be better to say nothing. Even silence can be a rebuke.

All this has much to do with the observation and knowledge of our outer or lower self. It can lead to knowledge of our Inner or Higher Self. If the outer self, having been unmasked, is silent, the inner may manifest. If consciousness of diversity disappears, consciousness of unity prevails. If selfishness disappears, love prevails. Of course the higher and the lower self are one, they are *us* at different levels. And they are not different from the lower and higher self in all humans.

Regarding Self-knowledge with reference to our true inner or Higher Self, we know only in theory that we are *Ātmā* and that *Ātmā* is Brahman. This is dangerous, if we forget for one moment that all other humans, all other creatures are also *Ātmā* and Brahman as much as we may be. Yet even a little of this knowledge may protect against great danger (as is said in the *Bhagavadgītā*). The concept of the inner oneness of man's true nature with the true nature of all may help us not to swim with the current of anthropocentricity and selfishness, also in the forms of gossip, nationalism, consumerism, etc.

Man's true nature often reveals itself early in his life and early in his evolution before it is spoiled by the development of the mind and by conditioning through the human environment. Scientific studies have proved that little children are

naturally attracted to other children, whatever may be their family origin, their colour, etc. Perhaps we did not need scientific studies to tell us this! But we like to have things 'scientifically proved'! However, little children soon learn from their parents and teachers to distance themselves from others, to distrust them, even to hate them.

Many so-called primitive peoples also show spontaneous goodwill towards strangers, until they learn to distrust these strangers — due to the latter's bad behaviour, dishonesty, etc. So it was with the Amerindians.

Apart from young children and unspoiled peoples, ordinary citizens often spontaneously tend to accept others in spite of differences of nationality, creed, social standing, etc., were it not for politicians, warmongers, profiteers, etc., who stir them up. I have been told in Israel of many cases of friendship and of mutual aid between Jews and Arabs. But extremists on both sides influence people's attitudes and actions.

We should strive wherever and whenever we can not to swim with the current, at least to passively resist the tendency towards division and to work in this way for increasing realization of the Oneness and the inclusiveness of all. This oneness is spirituality and it is this alone which will save the world in its present dire straits. Spirituality, the realization of the Oneness of all, is ultimately the most practical thing in the world! ✧

**Separate not yourself from the community.**

Mishnah, Abot 2.4 (Judaism)

# Plato and the Origins of Theosophy

RICARDO LINDEMANN

WITH the Academy of Plato in Athens (founded c. 387 BC), a place was founded to irradiate wisdom to the world, liberating men from ignorance, the cause of evil. Through Alexander the Great who had Aristotle, a disciple of Plato, as his teacher, the rationality of Greek thought irradiated much of the entire world. At Alexandria, the Greek word *Theosophia* was created in the third century of our era, by Neoplatonists such as Ammonius Saccas (c. AD 175–242) and his immediate disciples, particularly Plotinus, Longinus and Origen. But the real meaning of the word ‘philosophy’ originally linked to Pythagoras as a ‘love or aspiration for wisdom’ was already distorted or lost.

Pythagoras (Samos c. 580 BC–c. 500 BC) was the first Western philosopher to uphold the doctrine of reincarnation and, as a consequence, also vegetarianism as a way of compassion for life as a whole, which seems to indicate some influence by Hinduism and Buddhism. He seems to have gone to India just during the period of the flowering of Buddhism. Bishop C. W. Leadbeater (1847–1934) also said:

‘Pythagoras travelled through many of the countries of the Mediterranean basin, studying for some years in Egypt, where he was initiated at Sais. He was also initiated into the Eleusinian, Kabeiric and Chaldean Mysteries, and thus was thoroughly versed in all the hidden knowledge of the ancient world. In addition to his travels round the Mediterranean, Pythagoras journeyed to India, where he met the Lord Buddha and became one of his disciples. He spent some years in India, and it is reported that he had the high honour of an interview with the next World-Teacher.’ About an even more ancient connection with the East, Madame H. P. Blavatsky said: ‘Theosophy is the equivalent of Brahma-vidyā, divine knowledge.’<sup>1</sup>

Anyway, it is a fact that Plato upheld the concept of reincarnation. His masterly words were: ‘The responsibility is with the chooser — God is Justified.’<sup>2</sup> His famous book is a work dedicated to the quest for justice, and rationally we would find a lot of difficulty in any idea of divine justice without accepting reincarnation and

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Nemesis. For example, if in the same family were born an Olympic athlete and a physically deficient person, or a genius and a mentally deficient person, and if those extreme differences are not attributed to Karma from former reincarnations, we would logically need to attribute them to the will of God, but then divine justice would seem to be absent. Obviously, the Laws of Karma and Reincarnation are mutually interdependent.

Madame Blavatsky comments about Karma and its correspondence to Nemesis:

With the early Greeks, 'from Homer to Herodotus, she was no goddess, but a *moral feeling* rather', says Decharme; the barrier to evil and immorality . . . But, with time, that 'feeling' was deified, and its personification became an ever-fatal and punishing goddess. Therefore, if we would connect Karma with Nemesis, it has to be done in the triple character of the latter, viz., as Nemesis, Adrasteia and Themis. For, while the latter is the goddess of Universal Order and Harmony, who, like Nemesis, is commissioned to repress every excess, and keep man within the limits of Nature and righteousness under severe penalty, *Adrasteia* — 'the inevitable' — represents Nemesis as the immutable effect of causes created by man himself. Nemesis . . . is the equitable goddess reserving her wrath for those alone who are maddened with pride, egoism, and impiety. . . . In short, while Nemesis is a mythological, exoteric goddess or *Power*, personified and anthropomorphized in its various aspects, *Karma* is a highly philosophical truth, a

most divine noble expression of the primitive intuition of man concerning Deity.<sup>3</sup>

Even in the Holy Bible we can find the manifestation of the Divine Law of Karma: 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'<sup>4</sup> Also the case of reincarnation of Elijah, the prophet of the Old Testament, in the body of John the Baptist is clearly confirmed by the Lord Christ: 'Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. [Which means that he was not initiated into the Mysteries, and so was still unable to remember his former lives by himself.] And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. [Symbolically, the highly Initiated one who conquers perfection in advance of the race does indeed take the kingdom of heaven by force, even by violence, as a holy battle against his lower ego.] For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it [i.e., if you are able to believe it], this is Elijah, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'<sup>5</sup> The comment of Bishop Leadbeater, of the Liberal Catholic Church, is also very clear: 'Orthodox commentators explain that Christ did not literally mean what He said on this occasion; that He merely meant to say that John the Baptist was a type of Elias, was the same kind of man as the earlier prophet.

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It must be remembered that Christ was familiar with the popular opinion [for example: John 9:2]. He knew quite well that the people were speculating about Himself; that some said He was Elijah, others that He was Jeremiah or another of the ancient prophets reincarnated [Matthew 16:13–14]. He was well aware also that the return of Elijah had been prophesied [Malachi 4:5] and that people were expecting it [Matthew 17:10–13], and so He must have known [John 16:30] how His hearers would take what He said. He made a clear and unequivocal statement. If He did not mean it, it amounted to wilfully deceiving people, and we know He could not do that. Either Christ said it or He did not. If He did not say it, what becomes of the inspiration of the gospels? And if He did say it, then reincarnation is a fact, because there is His statement that John the Baptist was Elijah in a new body.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, Origen (AD 185–253) was a priest and even one of the Church's Fathers, and founder of Patristic Philosophy who sustained the idea of reincarnation in his book *De Principiis*,<sup>7</sup> as he was also a Neoplatonist, as mentioned before. Unfortunately, the Emperor called Justinian I (AD 483–565) interfered in the matters of the Church and convoked the Council of Constantinople II where Origen's doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul was denied through an anathema<sup>8</sup> on 5 May 553, which was thereafter generalized, making it impossible for the doctrine of reincarnation to be accepted in Christianity after the sixth century.

Even the Pope Vigil preferred not to attend the Council, justifying his absence by pretending to be sick, as he was indicted by Emperor Justinian I. Perhaps, this was the biggest mistake in the history of Christian philosophy, because the exclusion of the doctrine of reincarnation created ultimately the doctrine of eternal damnation in hell, which has generated much injury and suffering difficult to evaluate in Western history.

It is indeed amazing that this decision of the Council was taken inside the Cathedral of *Hagia Sophia*, built by Justinian I, and it was conquered by the Turks just 900 hundred years after that Council, though it is difficult to speculate if there could be a karmic connection between those events. Although, this means that the doctrine of reincarnation was at least for five centuries tolerated and not denied in Christianity.

Ironically, it was a Byzantine Emperor who destroyed one of the main contributions of Neoplatonist thought to Christianity, which was the doctrine of reincarnation. As a consequence, the doctrine of eternal damnation in hell is one of the most contradictory concepts of traditional Christianity: that God is Merciful, or that Christianity is the religion of pardon and compassion, as Lord Christ himself teaches us. It is too contradictory and unjust to pay eternally, for a mistake committed in one life. If even a human father is able to pardon his son giving him a second chance how can it be understood that a Divine Father could be so cruel as to condemn his sons to eternal damnation.

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There is evidence of the existence of an esoteric teaching in Christianity as well as an exoteric one, as Lord Christ said:

Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see, and do not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.<sup>9</sup> And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things, to His disciples.<sup>10</sup>

Madame Blavatsky also mentioning and even defining the Mysteries observed they were:

generally kept secret from the profane and uninitiated, in which were taught by dramatic representation and other methods, the origin of things, the nature of the human spirit, its relation to the body, and the method of its purification and restoration to higher life. Physical science, medicine, the laws of music, divination, were all taught in the same manner.

Also the main teachings of karma and reincarnation were emphasized in the Mysteries, and in esoteric Christianity it could not be so explicit in its exoteric aspect, because the emphasis of Christianity is pardon and compassion.

It is very important to mention that the teachings of the Mysteries were not mere speculations or beliefs but were obtained,

after a long course of purification and preparation of initiations, through ecstasies as a main method for research in the field of supersensorial knowledge. Mme Blavatsky defines this according to Occult Science or Gupta-Vidyā, as follows:

The Secret Doctrine is the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages, and its cosmogony alone is the most stupendous and elaborate system . . . but such is the mysterious power of Occult symbolism, that the facts which had actually occupied countless generations of initiated seers and prophets to marshal, to set down and explain, in the bewildering series of evolutionary progress, are all recorded on a few pages of geometrical signs and glyphs. The flashing gaze of those seers has penetrated in the very kernel of matter, and recorded the soul of things . . . It is useless to say that the system in question is no fancy of one or several isolated individuals. That it is the uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally . . . How did they do so? It is answered: by checking, testing, and verifying in every department of nature the traditions of old by the independent vision of great adepts; *i.e.* men who have developed and perfected their physical, mental, psychic, and spiritual organizations to the utmost possible degree. No vision of one adept was accepted till it was checked and confirmed by the visions — so obtained as to stand as independent evidence — of other adepts, and by centuries of experiences.

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More updated information can be obtained as follows: *Introduction to 'Occult Chemistry': The Amazing Phenomenon of ESP of Nuclear Structure and Subatomic Particles*<sup>11</sup> by M. Srinivasan, PhD; *Self-culture — in the Light of the Ancient Wisdom*<sup>12</sup> and *The Science of Yoga*<sup>13</sup> by I. K. Taimni, PhD, all published by The Theosophical Publishing House, Chennai.

The conditions of life after death was also one of the main teachings in the Mysteries, as C. W. Leadbeater mentions in *Glimpses of Masonic History*:

The myths of the exoteric religion of the country were taken up and studied in the Eleusinian Mysteries, as in the Mysteries of Egypt. Among those relating to the life after death was that of Tantalus, who was condemned to suffer perpetual thirst in Hades: water surrounded him on all sides, but receded from him whenever he attempted to drink; over his head hung branches of fruit which receded in like manner when he stretched out his hand to touch them. This was interpreted to mean that everyone who dies full of sensual desire of any kind finds himself after death still full of desire, but unable to gratify it. Another story was that of Sisyphus, who was condemned always to roll uphill a huge block of marble, which as soon as it reached the top rolled down again. That represents the condition after death of a man full of personal ambition, who has spent his life in making plans for selfish ends. In the other world he goes on making plans, and working them out, but always

finds at the point of completion that they are but a dream.<sup>14</sup>

Madame Blavatsky also mentioned in *The Key to Theosophy*:

It does not require metaphysics or education to make a man understand the broad truths of Karma and Reincarnation . . . the masses adopted Buddhism with enthusiasm, while, as said before, the practical effect upon them of this philosophy of ethics is still shown by the smallness of the percentage of crime amongst Buddhist populations as compared with every other religion. The chief point is, to uproot that most fertile source of all crime and immorality — the belief that it is possible for them to escape the consequences of their own actions. Once teach them that greatest of all laws, *Karma* and *Reincarnation*, and besides feeling in themselves the true dignity of human nature, they will turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger.<sup>15</sup>

It is amazing how these conclusions are similar to those of Plato in the dialogue about justice in *The Republic*. Blavatsky even considers the Theosophical principles to be applied for social amelioration, as follows:

Let me briefly remind you what these principles are — universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Law of Karma; Reincarnation. These are the four links of the golden chain which should bind humanity into one family, one universal Brotherhood.<sup>16</sup>

Another important teaching of the

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Ancient Mysteries was the perfectibility of the human being. The existence of Perfect Men or Mahatmas, as well as their Great Brotherhood, is a logical conclusion, if one accepts or understands the Laws of Reincarnation, Karma and Evolution. It is beautifully expressed in the traditional words:

There is a spiritual dynasty whose throne is never vacant, whose splendour never fails; its members form a golden chain whose links can never be torn asunder, for they draw back the world to God from whom it came.<sup>17</sup>

Also the Lord Christ said as a special commandment: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, Christianity could

have had a real Neoplatonist development but for the arbitrary interference of Justinian I, excluding the thoughts of Origen and consequently Reincarnation from its teachings, denying freedom of thought on interpretation of the scriptures with all its terrible consequences coming even into the obscurity of inquisition in the medieval age. Unfortunately, Justinian also closed the Academy of Plato in AD 529 and the last place where the Egyptian Mysteries were still active around AD 550.

So, we are here with this great challenge to restore the Greek philosophy and even its Ancient Mysteries to their glorious splendour, restoring their concepts of justice and responsibility for the welfare and amelioration of human life and ultimately for the liberation of human consciousness. ✧

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# On Meditation

SAMDHONG RINPOCHE

THE use of rhythmic breathing has been recommended for several reasons. First of all, it oxygenates the body and thus helps to keep it in better condition. It helps to quieten the system and remove restlessness in it which is connected with the restlessness of the mind. When that restlessness becomes pronounced, the person indulges in various involuntary actions like shaking the head or biting the nails. Another cause for body-restlessness is unsuitable food. That is why it was said that food must be of the *sāttvic* type which creates calmness and clarity.

Certain Buddhist schools teach breathing techniques as a focal point of energy. But again, one must not mistake the means for the end. Breath control cannot be part of meditation itself. If one is concentrating on a purely physical thing like the respiration, one is not meditating, because meditation is the awakening. But watching the breathing and not allowing the energy to dissipate itself are useful aids. It is a beginning, certainly, but it will not be very successful for those who do not do the work themselves that we have seen to be so essential.

The question has also been asked

whether the will is necessary for concentration. Nobody is able to concentrate by simple will power because all the habits and tendencies of the mind are in other directions. There is a great deal of automatism built into the mind. Many contradictions exist within it, and much of a person's life has been spent in going along with them. We cannot live a completely worldly, mechanical life and then all at once leap into a state of concentration and proceed at once to meditation in *samādhi*.

Other means are used for focusing the energies — pure sounds or words which have a particular meaning. But the question must be whether by using such a thing as sound as a focus, we can achieve that greater awareness that leads to awakening. The danger lies in a practice becoming a routine, for routine and habit are counterproductive so far as the awakening is concerned. When you get into a habit, it means that you can do something without the mind functioning except at a minimal level. Reflexes build up in the mind and in the emotions and we are not aware of them. Many emotional and thought reactions are of that

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kind; they are purely mechanical habits in which there is neither awareness nor intelligence. There is no possibility of awakening along this path. The use of sound then can become a deadening process. Similarly, you can go on repeating your mantra, feeling that the repetition itself is going to achieve something.

You may start off by using sound, but a time comes when you no longer need it; it is a means, not an end. The Buddha used the illustration of a man who employs a boat to cross a river, but when he reaches the other side he does not go on using it.

Bringing the attention to a focus by listening to a sound or by concentrating on the meaning of a phrase, or by using any other kind of aid should all be means to gather the energy and to help bring about an awakening. They should not put one to sleep.

People also use an image, either a physical image or an image held in the mind, to help to keep the energy from flowing out in all directions. The average person finds it difficult to hold a mental image, for his mind begins to run off on all kinds of things. But if he has done the necessary work on himself he will be better able to hold the image, especially if it is of something which naturally attracts him, or draws his devotion. And after a time he can begin to penetrate much deeper.

That is why meditators place so much emphasis on devotion. But we must understand the nature of the devotion they speak of. To begin with, it is not personal; it is not attaching oneself to someone and

looking for his notice, his blessing, his protection. This selfishness and sentimentality is too often mistaken for devotion. Devotion demands nothing — neither rewards nor favours. We cannot bribe some holy person into giving us what we do not merit by offering a candle or a coconut. That is all rather childish.

Devotion entails awareness of something which is spiritually pure and noble. When we consciously find ourselves in the presence of beauty and greatness, it helps us forget our small self. The sense of the personal self becomes less strong. Complete devotion is complete loss of self; it is self-surrender. And this is very helpful in holding our energy.

The use of that image depends of course on the person. An image of Jesus or the Virgin Mary will not work for a Buddhist because these personages do not convey anything to him; they do not attract him. He would naturally hold the image of the Buddha in his heart. It is for this reason that a number of teachings never prescribed what the image should be. The Hindu tradition uses the word *ishtadevatā*: *ishta* means that which is according to your heart.

**Question:** Madame Blavatsky puts concentration before meditation. She quotes one of her teachers who said that the best thing is to concentrate on the image of the Master as if living in one's heart, in order to lose all sense of bodily existence in the ONE thought. Is the concentration of the mind and will, then, the first step to attain meditation?

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**SR:** You must remember that this was said to Theosophists. I do not know where the passage comes from, but I presume that the questioner has quoted it correctly. To 'hold the image of the Master' in a Theosophical sense can apply only to Theosophists. Someone with a totally different background will not be helped by suggesting an image of what Theosophists believe to be the Master. If an image is recommended as a focus of energy it should be, as has been said, one which is after each person's heart.

And the image used must be a symbol of truly spiritual qualities if it is to be a focus of concentration leading to meditation in the right sense. If a person concentrates or focuses on something which does not have spiritual qualities, this will not lead to the

awakening we are interested in.

The total awakening, the culmination of meditation, is called *samādhi* in yoga and has been defined or described in many different ways. It is the realization of unity; it is a state of illumination, because to realize that unity is illumination. It has been defined as non-duality, as the natural state. That is a very interesting description because we usually think it natural to be divided; differences and duality are the distinguishing marks of the world in which we live. That is why we consider it normal for a person to be jealous, natural to be lonely, natural to be angry under certain circumstances. All this arises from the sense of difference. But what is truly natural is the realization of Unity in which there can be only harmony and love, peace and purity. ✧

**Hold fast, all together, to God's rope, and be not divided among yourselves. Remember with gratitude God's favour on you, for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by his grace you became brethren.**

**Let there arise out of you one community, inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: those will be prosperous. Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs: for them is a dreadful penalty.**

Qur'an 3:103-5

# New Year's Day on the Ganges

J. L. DAVIDGE

Arise! The breath of life hath come back to us — the darkness is gone! Ushas hath opened a path for Surya, the Sun, to travel; now our days will be lengthened. Singing the praises of the brightening morn, the priest, the poet, ariseth with the web of his hymn. Bounteous maiden, shine upon him who praiseth thee; spread upon us the gift of life and children, thou who givest heroic sons and wealth of kine and horses. . . . Mother of the gods! Revelation of the glory of the Infinite! Banner of sacrifice, magnificent Ushas, shine forth — arise! Shower thy blessings upon our prayers, and make us chief among the people.

Hymn to the Dawn, *Rg-Veda*, I.113

IT was still moonlight and chilly when we strolled down to the ghats, half an hour before daybreak. The river was already awake, yogis and priests and beggars were bathing and intoning mantram-s, temple gongs were sounding, pipes playing to the dance, and the whole religious paraphernalia for which Benares is unique was ushering in a new day.

The waters shimmered with the colours of rosy dawn. Opalescent tones were rushing fanwise up the sky. Redder grew the clouds and the river.

Behind us, as we watched the east, rose a cliff of palaces and temples. Just below our feet sacred cows were shuffling along the terrace, temple monkeys playing and friendly birds feeding. Lower down devotees rapt in adoration, hatha yogi-s

with the physique of a god doing their 'daily dozen' — the dozens running into hundreds — and pilgrims casting oblations to Mother Ganga. Yet nothing here seemed incongruous, so saturated is the whole river-front with the spirit of worship. Buying a few flowers as an offering we went down to the water's edge, dipped our hands in the sacred stream, and waited to greet the Sun.

The hush of a great expectancy, as of some significant rite impending, seemed to become audible and objective. Then fell a silence, as the first pencil of light flashed across the water, and the disc of our Lord the Sun slowly rose, golden and majestic, moved to a cosmic rhythm by the divine Scene-shifter behind the clouds. Ganga rippled with gold.

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Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, March 1937.

## New Year's Day on the Ganges

But the Sun was more than the Sun to the tens of thousands of worshippers of innumerable sects and castes doing *pujā* — It was Brahmā-Vishnu-Śiva, the ineffable Three in One, which they saluted with intonations and sacred words. Our inevitable salutation was the Gāyatri, which brought an unexpectedly magical response, as though the Spirit of the Sun had shot his refulgent beams into our minds to enlighten our understanding, as the golden orb across the river was lighting up the world.

Holy Benares was unconscious for the most part of our New Year's Day as a religious festival, steeped in its own hoary forms of worship, and waking like this every day, year after year, century after century. For us it was not only the dawn of a day, of a New Year, but the dawn of a new life, a landmark on the horizon of experience, one of those moving and deepening experiences which mark an incarnation, every day to be reawakened, if so we will have it — in the Holy Benares of our hearts. ✧

**There is no greater mystery than this — viz. ourselves being the Reality we seek to gain reality. We think that there is something hiding our Reality and that it must be destroyed before the Reality is gained. It is ridiculous. A day will dawn when you will yourself laugh at your past efforts. That which will be on the day you laugh is also here and now.**

Sri Ramana Maharshi

# Strengthening the Link

AGNES GAASEMYR

THE link is that which keeps all the parts together. There is an outer and an inner side to this work — and both have many parts. But first there must be a link. Talking about the Theosophical Society I sometimes feel like the Ents in the phantasy epic of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. They are those whom everybody thinks have disappeared a long time ago, if they have ever heard of them. Some remember them mentioned in an old song or story, and now they discover that they exist and that their language, to an outsider, is like a song.

The link is there, and we do come together, and our language is slightly different — as we talk from a Theosophical point of view; and our talk is like a song as it is harmonious and resonates at different levels. It is beautiful and serene, and brings with it an understanding of the deeper levels as well as of the first note. It affects our outer and inner being, and we say: 'Listen to the Voice of the Silence', 'Listen to the song of life. Look for it and listen to it first in your heart.'

It is important that people come to hear this song that speaks the truth about what

it is to be a human being, and about evolution — so optimistically.

How can they come to hear about us? In the US they have researched how members have come into contact with the TS, and it has been found out that mainly through friends and relatives. So what we say and do in our everyday life is important. We may also consider making new friends.

As N. Sri Ram (our former International President) says in *The Real Work of the Theosophical Society*:

This confrontation of facts means a very great deal, it is holding ourselves together, containing oneself, submitting oneself to the discipline of truth, receiving the truth into oneself without going off in side directions. So the word objective can mean a condition of very great receptivity and depth. One has to be objective with regard to the whole of Nature. It is possible thus to come to an inner condition of pure knowing, not mixed up with any notions — in which everything which is external to oneself is reflected in its true nature in that inner condition. One's whole nature can become a polished mirror of truth.

In the President's Message to the 126th

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Mrs Agnes Gaasemyr, a long-standing member, is the Organizing Secretary of the TS in Norway.

## Strengthening the Link

International Convention, Radha Burnier, our International President, said:

Just as there is an enormous difference physically between a micro-organism and man, there is also a difference in the powers of consciousness at work through them. Within the human community also there are great differences in intelligence, awareness, and capacity to love, for the whole flow of life from the earliest stages is a blossoming of faculties of consciousness. The 'Path' begins when, through self-awareness and understanding, the individual takes care that nothing

blocks this unfoldment. On the other hand, he or she adopts a way of life that harmoniously assists the consciousness within to unfurl in all its beauty and blend itself with the whole universe. 'To grow in deep understanding is to tread the Path.' Only then does one become a real Theosophist.

So the inner link is there to be strengthened, and it is important that it be unbroken especially in times like ours so that we can give a realistic and optimistic outlook and an invitation to be consciously part of the oneness in our evolution. ✧

**The difficult things of this world must once have been easy; the great things of this world must once have been small. Set about difficult things while they are still easy; do great things while they are still small. The Sage never affects to do anything great, and therefore he is able to achieve his great results.**

**He who always thinks things easy is sure to find them difficult. Therefore the Sage ever anticipates difficulties, and thus it is, he never encounters them.**

Tao Te King

# Theosophy as the Path

SVITLANA GAVRYLENKO

ON the very first page of *The Secret Doctrine* Helena Petrovna Blavatsky determined the key to understanding Theosophy as the synthesis of science, religion and philosophy. Moreover, in the emblem of the international Theosophical Society is a motto: ‘There is no religion higher than Truth’, which every true Theosophist keeps loyally in his heart. All these serve as the reason for calling Theosophy, as its first followers did, the foundation of the religion of wisdom.

The high status that Theosophy is endowed with gives grounds to consider it as real spiritual teaching. It allows anyone who has adopted its key principles to penetrate deeper into the secrets of Nature and oneself, to become an explorer of evolutionary forces and a co-worker of the divine Plan. That is why we shall speak about those factors that give us the possibility to consider Theosophy as the spiritual Path.

In a wide sense a Path, or an evolutionary path, is deemed as a life path, a destiny. Written with capital letters, the Path is understood to be a conscious move under the influence of the main inner incentives.

At the individual level this Path is triune and includes:

1. Comprehension of the world and the causes of that which is taking place, cogitation, study, research.

In this sense, Theosophy is understood as a certain knowledge, a teaching about the Universe, the human being, an invisible world, hidden laws and potential forces of Nature, set out in books and taught through lectures and seminars.

2. Comprehension of oneself, of one’s own qualities, possibilities, the opening and mastering of one’s inner world, inner space; a cognition of the God dwelling within; and fostering inner qualities of restraint, control, introspection, self-discipline.

Many writings, letters and instructions by the TS founders indicate that an everyday life should be organized in accordance with high ideals, meditations, prayers and practical introspection to achieve inner silence. This is an integral part of the Theosophist’s life.

3. Necessity of service, possibility of realization, practical application and implementation of our world view on life.

The recent multiple problems of

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**Dr Svitlana Gavrylenko** is the President of Ankh Lodge, Kiev, Ukraine.

## Theosophy as the Path

humanity provide wide possibilities for charitable activities, both at individual and collective levels. The hidden side of things and latent forces in a person can be cognized only in the field of service.

The special timeliness of the renewed truth that is being transmitted is worth underlining. Theosophy has been given at the moment of the change of epochs, the change of the rays' energies. The teaching of the ageless wisdom has new clothing, appropriate to our present perception, to the level of human development.

In her article, 'Spiritual Progress' (*The Theosophist*, May 1885), H. P. Blavatsky describes essential characteristics of the spiritual Path:

Whatever differences are to be found in the various presentations of the Esoteric Doctrine, as in every age it donned a fresh garment, different both in hue and texture to that which preceded; yet in every one of them we find the fullest agreement upon one point — the road to spiritual development. One only inflexible rule has been ever binding upon the neophyte, as it is binding now — the *complete* subjugation of the lower nature by the higher. From the Veda-s and Upanishad-s to the recently published *Light on the Path*, search as we may through the bibles of every race and cult, we find but one only way — hard, painful, troublesome, by which man can gain the true spiritual insight. And how can it be otherwise since all religions and all philosophies are but the variants of the first

teachings of the One Wisdom, imparted to men at the beginning of the cycle by the Planetary Spirit?

The true Adept, the developed man, must, we are always told, *become* — he cannot be made. The process is therefore one of growth through evolution, and this must necessarily involve a certain amount of pain.

Again, the idea of growth involves also the idea of disruption, the inner being must continually burst through its confining shell or encasement, and such a disruption must also be accompanied by pain, not physical but mental and intellectual . . .

The Society was founded to teach no new and easy paths to the acquisition of 'powers'; and that its only mission is to re-ignite the torch of truth, so long extinguished for all but the very few, and to keep that truth alive by the formation of a fraternal union of mankind, the only soil in which the good seed can grow. The Theosophical Society does indeed desire to promote the spiritual growth of every individual who comes within its influence, but its methods are those of the ancient R̥shi-s, its tenets those of the oldest Esotericism; it is no dispenser of patent nostrums composed of violent remedies which no honest healer would dare to use.

The teaching of Theosophy is a system; it is not limited to only one aspect or orientation towards some circle of followers. Any unprejudiced researcher can easily ascertain that this is true.

Robert Bowen said that the teaching

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of Theosophy has a few basic provisions:

1. Fundamental unity of all beings.

This unity does not mean the generally accepted concept of unity, for example, as when we speak about the unity of a nation or the army or about one planet connected with another through magnetic lines, etc. The essence of the teaching has deeper meaning — all being is *a whole*, it is not simply a collection of things linked together. Per se, there is only *One Being*.

2. The second idea that should be followed is that there is *no dead matter*. Every finest atom is alive. It cannot be otherwise, as every atom in its essence is Absolute Being.

3. The third basic idea to be realized is that a person is a microcosm. Therefore, all Celestial Hierarchies exist within a person. Actually, there is neither macrocosm nor microcosm, but only ONE EXISTENCE. Things seem to be great or small only when seen with the limited consciousness.

4. The fourth and the last of the key ideas necessary to keep in mind, is conveyed in the Great Hermetic Axiom. Actually this axiom summarizes and synthesizes all others.

As is the Inner, so is the Outer;  
as is the Great so is the Small;  
as it is above, so it is below:  
there is but One Life and Law;  
and he that worketh it, is ONE.  
Nothing is Inner, nothing is Outer;  
nothing is Great, nothing is Small;  
nothing is High, nothing is Low, in the  
Divine Economy.

Whatever chapter you study in *The Secret Doctrine*, you should always correlate it with these fundamental ideas.

Thus, this teaching of truth embraces basic issues of being, and offers a kind of vertical inspiring component to consciousness that usually operates in the horizontal plane of reflection.

N. Sri Ram, in his book *The Real Work of the Theosophical Society*, determined the main tasks of Theosophy in a modern world:

Sometimes it is said that we are in a transition time and we have to move from *kāma-manas*, the mind which is influenced by desire, to *buddhi-manas*, the mind which is truly enlightened, which is able to perceive and it is this perception which is more important than thought. One must first perceive either at the physical level or any of the inner levels; then one can build upon it a system of thought. The change that has to take place is that the intellect which merely plays with ideas has to be so changed, so enlightened, infused with a certain pure quality, that it becomes an instrument of the pure Knower and is not just the crude intellect which merely works out various sequences of facts. It has to be an intellect which knows the quality of a thing, and does not merely deal with quantities and numbers by comparison. Sometimes people quote from one of the Mahatma letters: ‘The crest-wave of intellectual advancement must be taken hold of and guided into Spirituality’ (*LMW*, vol. I). How can you lead an intellect which is dogmatic, neutral with

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regard to moral issues, incapable of any aesthetic appreciation, an intellect which is cold and hard, into spirituality? It has to be first melted, transformed and shaped into a pliable and sensitive instrument which can probe the inner truth of things. It becomes then an extension of the Spirit belonging to that nature of man which is essentially a nature of love, of openness, and sensitivity, non-egoistic and non-possessive. The intelligence of such a nature is luminous and penetrating. Also, when this nature manifests itself, life assumes an extraordinarily beautiful aspect; all quarrels, resentments and grudges come to an end. Then each man will meet all others as brothers in truth. In this way alone there can be a new era, a new world.

This is the task of building the Antahkarana, a rainbow bridge connecting our lower nature with our higher Self. This task should be realized by every human being during the earthly trip. The same task must be carried out by humanity as a whole. To assist in this process in the period of the third millennium, both at the individual and common level, the guiding link — the Theosophical teaching — has been given.

During all the 135 years of its activity, the TS has kept the space — the field of experience based on individual instructions for aspirants, who entered this Path. The classic guiding words, whose roots can be traced back to ancient times are contained in The Golden Stairs; these are guidelines for a traveller on the Path to make a successful ascent and check the rightness of the direction.

### Golden Stairs

Behold the Truth before you: A clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for one's co-disciple, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, a loyal sense of duty to the Teacher, a willing obedience to the behests of Truth, once we have placed our confidence in, and believe that Teacher to be in possession of it; a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defence of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the Secret Science (*Gupta-Vidyā*) depicts — these are the Golden Stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom.

If these lines are read attentively, it is possible to perceive guiding words:

- to master the manifestations of one's personality,
- to structure one's soul nature, and
- to form true spiritual aspirations.

A lot of detailed recommendations for those entering the Path are contained in C. W. Leadbeater's books. For example, in *The Masters and the Path* he gives HPB's recommendations to be applied at the initial stage, a preparatory period before real Chelaship:

1. Perfect physical health;
2. Absolute mental and physical purity;
3. Unselfishness of purpose, universal charity, pity for all animate beings;

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4. Truthfulness and unswerving faith in the law of Karma, independent of the intervention of any power of Nature — a law whose course is not to be obstructed by any agency, not to be caused to deviate by prayer or propitiatory exoteric ceremonies;

5. A courage undaunted in every emergency, even by peril of life;

6. An intuitional perception of one's being the vehicle of the manifested Avalokiteśvara or divine Ātmā (Spirit).

7. Calm indifference for, but a just appreciation of, everything that constitutes the objective and transitory world, in its relation with, and to, the invisible regions.

In the same book the author underscores widespread obstacles and hindrances interfering with a successful move towards the intended purpose:

There may be many reasons. . . . Sometimes a person, asking that [why the Master does not use him], has some prominent fault which is in itself quite a sufficient reason. Not infrequently, I regret to say, it is pride. A person may have so good a conceit of himself that he is not amenable to teaching, although he thinks that he is. Very often in this civilization of ours the fault is irritability. A good and worthy person may have his nerves all ajangle, so that it would be impossible for him to be drawn into very close and constant touch with the Master. Sometimes the impediment is curiosity. Some are surprised to hear that that is a serious failing, but certainly it is — curiosity about

the affairs of other people, and especially about their occult standing and development. It would be quite impossible that a Master should draw near to himself one who had that failing . . .

Another common hindrance is readiness to be offended . . .

Self-centredness is only another form of pride, but it is very prominent at the present day. The personality which we have been building up for many thousands of years has grown strong and often self-assertive, and it is one of the hardest tasks to reverse its attitude and compel it to acquire the habit of looking at things from the standpoint of others. One must certainly step out of the centre of his own circle, as I explained in *The Inner Life*, if he wishes to come to the Master.

It sometimes happens, however, that those who ask the question have not any particular outstanding defect, and when one looks them over, one can only say: 'I do not see any definite reason, any one fault which is holding you back, but you will have to grow a little all round.' That is an unpalatable thing to have to tell a person, but it is a fact; they are not yet big enough, and must grow before they will be worthy.

One thing which often prevents people from coming into touch with the Masters is lack of faith and will.

Those, who have already gained some experience following the spiritual Path, testify to the deep and essential changes that take place slowly, unnoticed, but

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reflected in all aspects of the life — in the perception of the world, the method of cooperation, qualities of self-expression. The radical changes that take place are caused by the movement along the Path. The effect of this alchemic process, taking place in the soul and reflecting in all manifestations is defined by the Theosophists as the Inner Revolution.

Mrs Radha Burnier characterizes this process as follows:

I cannot find another concept that could better express the purpose of the Theosophical Society than the 'spiritual revival of humanity' — the inner revolution, which purifies the mind. If we are not aware of it, then attempts to realize the purpose of the Society can become only the source of errors and lead into a blind alley. It should be noted with regret that in the Society there are too many Lodges and groups, whose understanding of the work of the Society is evidence of the lost direction. Only that refers to Theosophy, which is related to the move from the present limitations and errors of the mind to the wisdom with proper behaviour as its result. The engrossment in secondary tasks, for example, the study of the methods of improving physical health,

the study of mental phenomena, etc., do not help humanity to gain a wiser mode of life, although having their own field of application.

It is worth concluding this narration about the Path with the lines that come from HPB's pen. These notes were discovered in a box in her writing bureau after her passing on 8 May 1891:

There is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road, and it leads to the very Heart of the Universe: I can tell you how to find those who will show you the secret gateway that opens inward only . . . For those who win onwards there is reward past all telling — the power to bless and save humanity; for those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.

Dear friends, we did not choose each other when we decided to follow this Path, but we chose this Path. We follow it together and none of us will overcome it alone. Let us trust each other, help and support each other. Let us study to understand clearly without words the needs of others and to stretch out a hand to each other. This is our universal debt and our intransient joy. ✧

**As oil in sesame seeds, as butter in cream,  
As water in river-beds, and as fire in the friction-sticks,  
So is the Self (Ātman) apprehended in one's own self,  
If one looks for him with true austerity (*tapas*).**

*Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*

## *Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom*

LIVING in religion (as I can speak by experience) if one is not in a right course of prayer and other exercises between God and our soul, one's nature groweth much worse than ever it would have been, if one had lived in the world. For pride and self-love, which are rooted in the soul by sin, find means to strengthen themselves exceedingly in religion, if the soul is not in a course that may teach her and procure her true humility. For by the corrections and contradictions of the will (which cannot be avoided by any living in a religious community) I find my heart grown, as I may say, as hard as a stone; and nothing would have been able to soften it but by being put into a course of prayer, by which the soul tendeth towards God and learneth of him the lesson of truly humbling herself.

Dame Gertrude More

# Theosophical Work around the World

## United States

Through its website the Theosophical Society in America has recently announced that it will host an event with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 17–18 July 2011. The detailed programme will be announced later. In April 2011 the National Headquarters in Wheaton will feature, among other programmes, a series of talks on the Theosophical classic *At the Feet of the Master*. Speakers include Mr David Bruce ('Discerning between the Real and the Unreal'), Mr Timothy Boyd ('The Uncoloured Mind'), Mr Pablo Sender ('Six Virtues for Daily Living') and Ms Juliana Cesano ('The Everlasting Web of Love').

## Israel

The Theosophical Society in Israel is organizing a Convention on 12–14 May 2011 at the Neve Shalom Village near Jerusalem. The theme is 'The Spiritual Quest and Interreligious Brotherhood' and will be explored by speakers and religious scholars from Israel and abroad. Subjects of talks include 'Many Shades, One Truth', 'Divine Wisdom and Human Brotherhood', 'Theosophy and the Comparative Study of World Religions', 'The Way to the Beloved in the Sufi Tradition' and 'The Mystical Experience in Christianity', among others. The Convention will also include panels, interreligious prayers and musical events.

## India

The World Sanskrit Book Fair, held at Bangalore from 7 to 10 January 2011, was a first of its kind for the city and attracted thousands of visitors. Scholars from a number of Sanskrit Universities and Sanskrit Academies participated in it. The Delhi Theosophical Federation, with the assistance of the Karnataka Theosophical Federation, put up a stall at the fair for the sale of Theosophical books which were supplied by TPH Adyar. As a result of this initiative and during the space of four days 1,271 TPH books were sold and also 466 books from the Adyar Library and Research Centre. As a result of such unexpected sales a number of titles will need to be reprinted.

## Australia

Dr David Lorimer, Programme Director of the Scientific and Medical Network, England, and Vice-President of the Swedenborg Society, visited Australia in February 2011. He addressed the Theosophy–Science Seminar held in Melbourne on 19–20 February, speaking on 'Evolving Consciousness and Creating the Future' and 'Consciousness and the Universal Mind: Synchronicity and the Law of Attraction'. He also participated at an event held at the Canyonleigh Centre in New South Wales, 25–28 February, on the theme 'Living in Harmony with Nature'. ❖

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**Date refers to the date of formation**

\* Regional Association

† Presidential Agency

▲ Lodge attached to Adyar

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