



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover Picture: Rock Pigeon near a decorative railing – Prof. C. A. Shinde

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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

My Karma is Myself

The Karma of everything one does is part of a greater Karma which is that of the world, as what is below points out; the whole process is one. Karma is not something from outside but what we ourselves create. Therefore, each one of us must do what is right from a larger point of view, as the words of Mr Jinarājādāsa point out. The Karma which we create is not an expression of some force or person other than oneself. Therefore, we must try to do even now what is right.

The saying is true that everything in life, what appears good as well as not so good, is our own responsibility. As we are told by all teachers, each one of us must learn the principle of Unity. The passage included from Brother Jinarājādāsa's writing stresses that we have to understand it fully and live it, which is the difficulty we face. Everything appears to be outside, different from oneself. This lesson is difficult to accept wholeheartedly, but this must happen. This is one of the reasons why the principle of Brotherhood is taught in the Society, and he who follows it, advances rapidly. It is of no use our saying that the other man made the mistake or that he is doing greater harm than ourselves. What is

needed is for every person to realize the immense work that he has to learn and the lesson he has to follow. We hope that the following passage will be one which is not for a moment's reading, but something which, being planted within, grows and subordinates everything less important:

'It is with us an axiom that the Divine and man are one. But it is also an axiom, though little realized, that man and the whole process of evolution, in which he is one factor, are also one. Normally, as the individual feels the pressure of evolution, he is apt to look upon that process as something imposed upon him from without. Thus it is natural for him to feel that all the difficulties of life — ill-health, poverty, limitations of every kind — are the adjustments of his Karma arranged for him by the Lords of Karma in order to help his growth. That is perfectly true. But the deeper truth is that all such arrangements are really the operations of his own will. He must realize that, in some mysterious manner, the adjustments by the Lords of Karma are adjustments made by himself, and decreed by his own will. Every event which happens to him, particularly those of a painful nature, must be recognized by

him, not only as the result of his own Karma and so by his decree, but further as an expression of his own self. "My father and I are one" must not remain merely an intellectualism; for the Unity exists not only in the realm of the Spirit, but also in that of matter.

'It is said in *Light on the Path*, "No man is your enemy; no man is your friend. All alike are your teachers." But these teachers, both friends and foes alike, are himself; and it is in reality he, through their instrumentality, who is teaching himself the principles of the Unity. The first glimpse of the true inwardness of all existence comes when the "without" and the "within", are realized as the two sides of one medallion, always inseparable in a unity, though each can be observed as separate.

There is a beautiful instance of this truth in a story which is narrated of a Hindu yogi who lived during the time of the Indian Mutiny. His constant meditation was of course to realize the Unity or God. One day he was meditating in a certain place, and about him were happening the violent events of the Mutiny. The British soldiers who were fighting the rebels came upon this holy man, but they did not recognize that he was a holy man, one trying to understand the nature of God, and not one of the rebels. The story relates that one of the soldiers rushed at him and bayoneted him. Yet as the soldier so rushed towards him, the yogi looked at him calmly and whispered to himself, "Even thou art He." He had waited long for the coming of the Lord,

and the Lord came in His own way.

'It is this same teaching of the Unity which we have in our Chain of Union: "There is a Peace that passeth understanding; it abides in the hearts of those who live in the Eternal. There is a Power which maketh all things new; it lives and moves in those who know the Self as One." The aspirant begins to live this teaching in his life only when he puts into practice the truth underlying the words: "Even thou art He." Every event in life, pleasant or unpleasant, every grief, every failure, in brief, all that we look upon as the not-Self, must be realized as in some mysterious way the Self indeed.

'But more than this still, each object and event must be realized, even if in the beginning only in imagination, as himself. The diversities of manifestation are embodiments of the Oneness, and there is no separation to him "who sees", between himself and the Oneness. "I am He" must not only mean that man and the Divine are one and not two; it must also mean that "I" am the rock, the plant, the animal, the sinner, the saint, each event of the day in my life and in the life of the world. Especially it must mean, since we are men and have human limitations, that what men object to as "unpleasant" — struggle, pain, disappointment, failure — are also the Oneness, and so "myself".'

Baby Boxes Growing in Numbers

The Guardian Weekly of 22 June 2012 has an article on 'Baby Boxes'; apparently unwanted babies are put into these boxes, mostly by the fathers of the babies.

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Outside the hospitals, a bell summons somebody in the hospital to take the child and see that it survives. This practice is said to occur in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, and so on. Many children — ‘many’ being relevant to the fact that these babies have none to take care of them — are left to the tender mercies of the hospital staff.

This has saved innumerable babies and many of them are looked after by foster parents. But there are important people claiming that the child has the right to know his parents. Can a small baby know the difference between real parents and loving ‘parents’ who look after them? The baby boxes are meant, they say, to help to identify the parents and establish relationship with them. In the first place, if they were not wanted, how can we expect the parents or one parent, presumably the mother, to be expected to care for the child after it has been rejected. Anyhow, the controversy seems to be going on, and looked at purely from the point of view of material interests.

Unfortunately, babies do not have the right to say what they want. In fact, being so small, they do not know what they want. Manfred Weber, Vice-Chairman of the European People’s Party, wrote a letter to *The Guardian*: ‘Although I am convinced that a child is best raised within an intact family, the safety of children is of higher priority than the desire to know their biological parents.’ In a Swiss poll in 2011, they found that 87% said that baby boxes are useful, and even very useful, and that every hospital should have

the advantage baby boxes can provide.

There is a claim apparently that frequently it is the male relative who is responsible, which raises the question whether the matter is looked at from the babies’ viewpoint at all. In countries like India, many newborn babies are abandoned, thrown into ditches or waste bins, or somehow got rid of. The mother is often not responsible; she is afraid of what people will say. In fact, she also needs protection many a time.

The view that every citizen has a right to know his origin is ridiculous, because the child may come to know in due course that the parents discarded it like a piece of waste paper. It, therefore, seems not right to stress the need of parents. The essential need is that the child should grow up in a loving and good environment. As long as the child is alive and looked after, we should be happy. It is not necessary or even right to interfere in a child’s feeling welcome and being looked after by loving grownups. We can fully agree with the Christian social union and Mr B. Posselt who represented it: ‘Our experiences with baby boxes here in Munich, for example, organized by a monastery, have been positive. . . . For me it is essential to protect and safeguard the life of children in extreme situations. All other problems can be solved with goodwill as long as the child is alive. It is not the decision of a United Nations Committee what we are doing to help born or unborn children.’

I have myself come into contact with more than one discarded child growing

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up within a family. They are happy and like well born children looking forward to a good life. They would not have been happy with the parent or parents who did not want them. To see them happy makes others happy also. The girl or boy does not care about where they were born and other circumstances which surrounded them at that time. The important thing is they are growing up nicely.

The Half-human Individual

The Law of Karma brings us back to birth in a physical body — sometimes in that of a man, sometimes that of a woman — to help consciousness to awaken and grow little by little. This was brought to our attention in a happy article by an academic in Cambridge University, which pointed out that there is a whole process of evolution taking place to take various situations to a higher level. So, the insect grows to the higher level, and to a still higher level, until the human stage arises and then the superhuman, about which we know very little. In this process of an expanding evolution, man is not yet fully a human being but only on the way. There is a great deal of the animal as yet in the vast number of people who have reached this stage of having a human physical body but carry many animal traits — some nearer the real human and some yet at the animalish level. Most are a mixture of the two.

The average human being nowadays is this mixture; the proportion varies from individual to individual so that nobody is exactly like another. Unfortunately, most of us do not know that some of the traits which we exhibit while we face the circumstances of the present are really left-overs of previous incarnations in pre-human lives which have been lived. The great human beings, like the Buddha, are free of past-life encumbrances. They are fully human, sometimes more than human.

If we could understand more clearly the whole process — that means, the evolutionary mode — we would understand better how one grows really, not simply as the physical form develops. If we could understand this, we would see that most human beings are still not up to the mark. So, evolution is an important subject which we have to understand as much as possible, not merely the present physical condition but the part it plays in spiritual awakening.

Those who are careless with children, or who are self-absorbed and neglect them, ill treat them, and even discard them for whatever reason, exhibit imperfection in their own being. It will take a long time for a person at this stage to grow fully human. If we could understand more of all this, the more we would find ourselves free of compulsion, growing with more of true happiness and not merely the so-called pleasures of a superficial life. ✧

The way to final freedom is within thy Self.

The Voice of the Silence

Evolution and Enlightenment

DEVIDAS MENON

Introduction

This is a ‘Theosophy-Science’ lecture on ‘Evolution and Enlightenment’, and it would be appropriate to begin, by defining the terms, *science*, *theosophy*, *evolution* and *enlightenment*.

Science (from Latin *scientia*, meaning ‘knowledge’) is a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of verifiable predictions and explanations, free from internal contradictions, about the universe. It assumes there is an objective reality shared by rational observers, and governed by natural laws, which is discoverable by systematic observation and experimentation. *Hard sciences*, such as physics, chemistry and biology, deal with the exterior, physical, sensorimotor world. Science would be put to considerable difficulty, if it were required to investigate and explain, for example, the moment of enlightenment of Gautama Buddha under the Bodhi tree, because this is a *subjective* experience belonging to the *inner* world — no less real to those who have experienced it, as is the *outer* world. This needs to change, and this can happen only if we expand the scope of science

to include both the objective and the subjective realities shared by equally competent observers; i.e., scientists need to experience enlightenment!

Theosophy refers to a state of inner *enlightenment* or ‘Divine Wisdom’ that a person can attain through intellectual and spiritual *evolution*. It is noteworthy that both ‘enlightenment’ and ‘evolution’ appear in this definition. Theosophy is also described as the wisdom underlying all religions when they are stripped of accretions and superstitions. In this respect, *theosophy* shares with *science* the pursuit of truth and the rejection of untrue beliefs that have gained ground during the course of human history.

Enlightenment in a secular context often means the ‘full comprehension of a situation’, but in spiritual terms, it alludes to a spiritual revelation or deep insight into the meaning and purpose of all things, a state of supreme knowledge and infinite compassion — a fundamentally changed consciousness whereby everything is perceived as a unified field.

Evolution refers to any gradual directional change. In the hard sciences, evolution is commonly referred to in a

Dr Devdas Menon, Professor, Dept. of Civil Engineering, IIT Madras, gave the Theosophy–Science lecture at Adyar in December 2011.

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biological or a cosmological context. But, in the context of spiritual enlightenment, it refers to the evolution of consciousness itself — which includes, but also transcends, the physical, biological and mental worlds. According to an old Sufi saying:

God sleeps in the rock,
Dreams in the plant,
Stirs in the animal,
And awakens in man.

Mystics worldwide have suggested that when such awakening manifests in the human being, it is as though consciousness becomes aware of itself, wonderstruck by its own creative unfolding.

Form and Emptiness

Our ancient traditions also had their sciences, which were in perfect congruence with their wisdom, sometimes referred to as the *perennial philosophy*. According to these wisdom traditions, both material and non-material worlds are pervaded with Spirit, and made up of the *five elements (panchabhootha)* — *ether, air, fire, water and earth* — which constitute any form. All creation is believed to emerge from ethereal Spirit, driven by a mysterious evolutionary impulse, manifesting progressively from the subtle to the gross, from idea to material reality. Whether physical, biological, mental, or otherwise, all are but different and wonderfully diverse forms of the same consciousness. All emerge from, subsist in and return to the same divine Source, the Ground of all Being, formless Spirit.

We live in a world of appearances that are continually changing, although we mostly believe that forms have a solid permanent reality of their own.

In today's science, we have a different understanding of 'elements' and believe that our understanding of the material world has significantly advanced. But scientists tend to agree with the ancient wisdom that the material world in reality is far different from what it appears to be. It is as though our brains are hard-wired to see things on the surface. Below this surface appearance, which we apprehend through our five primary senses, there are deeper layers of reality, which we need to penetrate in the quest for truth regarding ultimate reality; this quest is shared by both science and theosophy.

Even scientists need to take a leap in their imagination to enter the subatomic world, a world which was initially believed to be made up of tiny discrete particles (quarks and electrons) whirling about at unimaginably high speeds in large empty spaces. With the birth of quantum field theory, the tiny particles that make up matter are now regarded as excitations of an underlying unmanifest 'quantum field', in which anything is possible — where things emerge and things disappear with movements that cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty, and where everything is interconnected with everything else. The Buddha, some 2500 years ago, without the aid of any electron microscope or mathematical calculations, intuited this unmanifest ('unborn') field, which he labelled as *emptiness (śūnyatā)*, as being

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the absolute reality underlying all phenomena that are invariably changeable in nature. Our essential nature is a mysterious Void — not an empty one, but a pregnant Void — full of infinite creative possibilities. Our underlying field of consciousness has an infinite potential to bring into being, sustain and dissolve any form of existence, all forms being interconnected. As stated in the Heart Sutra, one of the most famous of the Buddha's teachings: *Form is emptiness; emptiness is form.*

Evolution of Matter, Life and Mind

A similar mystery reveals itself to us when we shift our gaze from the infinitesimal to the infinite — to the far reaches of outer space. Cosmologists have now worked out that, following the Big Bang, which is said to have occurred some 13.7 billion years ago, the universe emerged from practically nothing, giving birth to space and time. Ever since, the universe has been expanding. From nothing, everything emerged in a mighty explosion, and with subsequent cooling and consolidation, matter took form and cosmic evolution came into being. Ever since, there has been a tug-of-war between the outward expansion of the universe and the inward forces of gravity within matter, with galaxies and stars being born or getting dissolved. In fact, the galaxy that scientists observe through modern telescopes is not *as it is now*, but *as it was* some billion years ago!

In the immeasurably vast empty space of the universe, *life*, as we presently

understand it, exists only here, on our planet Earth, which, calculations indicate as having been born some 4.6 billion years ago. Mysteriously, conditions have appeared just right for the emergence of life in its various forms — from simple cells (3.8 billion years ago) to insects and seeds (400 million years ago) and all kinds of plants and animals, and finally to the anatomically modern humans (200,000 years ago). Scientists tend to believe that this emergence of life — which requires certain parameters to take on critical values, and which would have been impossible if there was a slight deviation in even one of these values — is nothing but a fortuitous coincidence. Scientists seem to have no qualms about living in a meaningless universe, and tend to discard any notion of Spirit, simply because it is not something that their rational objective minds can see or measure through their microscopes and telescopes. But perhaps, for the vast majority of humanity, there is something precious missing in these explanations, something that mystics worldwide have always intuited, and seen as the very basis for a meaningful existence.

Scientists have attempted, rather valiantly, to examine the 'hard problem' of how biological evolution led to the emergence of subjective experiences and mental phenomena, and how the development of the human brain, from the reptilian complex and limbic system to the neo-cortex, is correlated to increasing mental potentials and capacities. However, such an approach, which ascribes the emergence of consciousness to physical

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neuronic activity in the brain, has not yet succeeded in bridging the gap between mind and matter. Clearly, to gain a fuller and more complete understanding, science needs to reconcile with ancient wisdom, which perceives consciousness as the primary, albeit mysterious, source of everything — in which both *involution* and *evolution* are ongoing processes, linking both matter and mind.

In this context, it is relevant to recall the beautiful story of a dialogue between a wise *guru* (which in Sanskrit, literally means ‘dispeller of darkness’) called Uddālaka and his young son called Śvetaketu, as described in one of the ancient Upanishad-s. As was customary during those ancient times, Uddālaka sent away his son at the age of twelve to another *gurukula* for his education. When Śvetaketu returned home at the age of twenty-four after completing his studies, the alert father was quick to recognize that the young man, despite all the profound knowledge he had acquired from the Veda-s on self-realization, had still not awakened fully.

Seated below a banyan tree, Uddālaka questions Śvetaketu: *How did this huge tree come into existence?* The young man replies readily: *From the seed. But,* asks the guru, *how did the seed come into being?* The young man does not have an answer. So, the guru asks him to go and collect a fruit from the tree, break it open and take out a seed. Then he asks Śvetaketu to break open the seed and to look inside and report his findings. Śvetaketu dutifully reports that nothing

inside is to be seen. The father then points out to the son the miracle of life: *From this apparent emptiness, this huge tree has emerged. From the same Source, this whole universe, including you and me, has emerged. You are That (tat tvam asi), Śvetaketu!*

That spiritual essence is realized as being both transcendent and immanent in all forms of consciousness.

The Miracle of Existence

There have been scientists who had some degree of mysticism in their outlook. Albert Einstein was one such remarkably brilliant scientist. He had once remarked: ‘The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.’ On another occasion, he is reported to have said: ‘There are only two ways to live your life: as though nothing is a miracle, or as though everything is a miracle.’

We may have notions of having progressed spiritually and having read, learnt and practised a lot, but many of us tend to get flat and ritualistic or dogmatic in our practice, and we need to return, again and again, to the freshness and innocence of a *beginner’s mind*. One of the most powerful, and yet simple ways, of doing this, is to pause, every now and then, amidst all our activity, to simply wonder at the supreme mystery underlying everything. Notice the mystery! Breathe the mystery! Be the mystery! This is an important challenge especially for many of us, who find ourselves losing a sense of vibrancy and aliveness, as we age.

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This is especially true in religion, when we get caught, unconsciously, in our belief systems, and fail to see the omnipresence of Spirit. There is a wonderful story, made popular by Antony de Mello, a Jesuit priest, which illustrates this point, and is of relevance in the context of enlightenment. Once upon a time, there was a devoted priest called Father Benedicto, who had diligently served the Church for many decades and had absolute faith in the divine. He was in charge of a particular church when there was an unexpected deluge, and it rained for many days uninterrupted. As the waters rose, there was a struggle for survival, and people tried to escape from nature's fury by travelling to safer places on boats. The good priest climbed on top of his church and prayed for their welfare. When the waters reached the roof of the structure and came waist-high, one of the boats approached him and the people on board implored: 'Father, join us and save yourself!' Father Benedicto smiled at them and said: 'Please don't worry about me; the Lord will save me.' The waters climbed higher, and when they reached chest-high, yet another boat approached and the same scene was repeated. Father Benedicto was steadfast in his faith, and remained unmoved, even when the flood waters reached up to his nose, and he was likely to get drowned. A third boat approached him, but he valiantly refused and maintained: 'I have lived a pure life, devoted to the Lord. The Lord will surely save me!' Unfortunately for him, the Lord had other plans, and he got drowned.

When he regains consciousness, he finds himself in the clouds, standing in line to enter the gates of heaven. He recognizes Saint Peter at the entrance. Saint Peter, too, pays special attention to him, and says: 'Father Benedicto, welcome to heaven! But why are you looking so glum? You should be delighted to be here!' The good father responds: 'Yes, it is true; I feel betrayed that my prayers have not been answered. The Lord did not heed them.' Hearing this, Saint Peter smiles and says: 'What do you mean, dear Father? We sent you three boats!'

Now, that is a truly meaningful story, especially for the elderly, including scientists and theosophists — because many of us tend to believe that we have seen and know all that there is to be known. The truth is that we hardly know anything! We are like the space occupied by the earth in the universe — close to zero! We must have the humility to acknowledge this, and to look for newer ways of regenerating ourselves spiritually, because the truth is that all spiritual practices, no matter how sophisticated and inspiring at the beginning, tend to flatten and deaden with time. It takes a great deal of self-awareness and humility to see this and to awaken the sparkle in us that can see the wonder and mystery and the presence of Spirit everywhere and at all times!

To see the extraordinary in the ordinary, moment to moment, is at the heart of being enlightened! It comes from a steady integral practice that evolves and matures, as one grows older.

Evolution of Perspectives

One of the sure signs of spiritual evolution, according to ancient traditions, is the increasing ability to empathize with multiple perspectives, so that the sense of ‘otherness’ that separates us from our brothers and sisters and all sentient beings gradually vanishes.

In this connection, it is worth recalling the beautiful ancient story of the *six blind men and the elephant*, which originates from India. It is very relevant because it reminds us as to how wedded we tend to be to our own views and beliefs, without realizing that other perspectives, including those that may be diametrically opposite to ours, may well be equally valid. According to this story, once upon a time, six blind men decided to visit an elephant, of which they had heard much. Each person felt one part of the elephant and quickly came to a conclusion about the elephant. The blind man who felt the elephant’s trunk was quick to exclaim: ‘I know this elephant! It is a serpent!’ This, of course, was contradicted by the others — for the one who felt the tusk was convinced that the elephant was a spear; the one who touched the ear knew that the elephant was a fan; the one who felt the leg thought it to be the trunk of a tree; the one who patted the solid side of the elephant was certain that it was a wall; while the sixth blind man who felt the tail believed the elephant was a rope! Were they being untruthful? No, they were all right, given their limited perspectives — but only partially right, and in an overall sense, all far removed from the whole truth!

It takes wisdom for us to acknowledge that we too — scientists and theosophists included — are blind and that we do not have the wherewithal to see reality in its entirety! We all come with our different initial conditions and make strong judgments about practically everything we perceive with our limited senses, looking for compatriots who agree with our perceptions and quarrelling endlessly with, or holding in disdain, those who hold completely different perspectives. If we are truly interested in discovering the truth, we must be willing to give up, at least temporarily, the positions to which we tend to cling so tenaciously, and to explore, with genuine empathy and curiosity, other perspectives. If we were to be the blind men in the story, we should at least ask: ‘Why is it that my brothers are so convinced about their views regarding the elephant? Let me explore.’ Then, giving up our hold on the part of the elephant we have touched, we can walk around, and feel what our brothers have felt, and then the wisdom will dawn: ‘Oh, now I understand why they felt this way, and they are right too!’ More important, we make the great and humbling discovery: ‘The elephant (big picture) is much more than all these views put together! It remains a supreme mystery!’

Clearly, it is desirable to have a holistic perspective, and it is important for science and theosophy to recognize this. For indeed, as Einstein pointed out: ‘Science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind.’ Perhaps, the reality today is that much of science is

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lame and much of religion is blind; each seems to have provoked the malady in the other.

For some reason, we all tend to cling to our individual perspectives. It is as though the clinging defines our very identity! According to ancient wisdom, that very clinging or grasping is the biggest obstacle to our enlightenment and spiritual evolution. We need to let go to be free and to allow us to see higher truths.

Scientific Resistance to Religion

History has borne witness to the dangers posed by religion in the absence of science. The so-called Age of Enlightenment (or Age of Reason) came into existence in the late seventeenth century in Europe, primarily as an anti-religious movement. The intellectuals wanted to liberate people from the dictates of state religion and the herd mentality. Science flourished because it succeeded in explaining so many things that had been previously attributed to God. To this day, scientists tend to be deeply suspicious of religion, simply because many religious believers try to impose their beliefs on others, and invoke all kinds of threat, including damnation. The great divide between science and religion is much in evidence even today. Science has sprinted ahead with mind-boggling successes, while religion, as popularly practised, has remained pretty much where it was.

Peter Russell, in his wonderful book called *From Science to God*, gives expression to his predicament regarding religion, in the wake of scientific discoveries:

Copernicus had shown that we were not the centre of the universe. Astronomers had found no evidence of a heaven up in the sky. Darwin had dispelled the idea that God created the earth and all its living creatures in six days. And biologists had proved virgin birth impossible!

Which story should I believe? A text whose only authority was itself, and whose proclamations had little bearing on my everyday reality? Or contemporary science, with its empirical approach to truth? The choice was obvious. I dropped out of conventional religion. The universe seems to work perfectly well without divine assistance.

We must realize that there is a substantial justification in such a perspective. If today, many in our young generation continue to feel likewise with reference to conventional religion, it is perfectly justifiable. Yet, it is an incomplete and naive perspective. The challenge for us is to speed up such awakening in our young men and women, rather than condemn them or block their questioning. Indeed, a rebellious spirit can be very helpful — provided it is supported by a genuine aspiration to reach for truth through the evolution of consciousness.

We must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Unfortunately, that is exactly what seems to have happened in modern science and education. To this day, religion tends to be identified with belief in the literal truth of ‘accretions and superstition’ in various religious texts, which are treated largely

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as Santa Claus by scientists; this is the bathwater. But the essence of religion, the core of the wisdom traditions — that is the precious baby that we seem to have thrown out in the world today, and we can see all around us the ill effects of such an approach in life.

In India too, which once boasted of having great world-famous universities like the one at Nalanda, we seem to have completely forgotten our rich traditions of respecting the integration of science and theosophy. We seem to have abandoned this holistic approach in favour of a Western model of education. Lord Macaulay, who had a big say in the creation of modern education in India, had this comment to make of our ancient knowledge: ‘A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.’ We believed it then. We still believe it!

Of course, there are many reasons as to why scientists continue to be highly suspicious of any kind of spirituality — simply because there is so much counterfeit spirituality and quackery in vogue today.

The Beautiful, the Good and the True

The Western world has also contributed its share of wisdom to the world. Noteworthy is the contribution of Plato, the disciple of the philosopher Socrates, who referred to three sectors of human realization: *the beautiful, the good and the true*. The *beautiful* refers to a sublime individual inner experience — the subjective experience. The *good* and the

true extend to the inter-subjective and third person domains, as the former refers to the well-being of all and the latter refers to truths in the verifiable objective domain (to which science belongs) as well as the subjective and inter-subjective transpersonal domains. The essence of all three — the true, the good and the beautiful — (*satyam, śivam, sundaram* in ancient India) have been perceived by wise men to be fundamentally the same. They have maintained that it is necessary to develop all three, in order to perceive the whole reality.

Unfortunately, in the modern world, we have tended to give far more importance to objective truths than subjective ones. This can seriously impair our evolution — because it is not just science that needs to be developed, it is also morals and aesthetics or art. We need a coherent development in all three sectors.

Indeed, even spirituality is perceivable in all the three sectors. For example, when we stand in wonder before Nature — which is a third person perspective — we experience *nature mysticism*. In conventional religion, when we stand in awe and devotion before our concept or image of God — in a second person perspective — we experience *deity mysticism*. Finally, when we are in a state of *witness consciousness*, and the subject dissolves into what is perceived, and we see and experience everything as one — in a first person perspective — we experience *formless mysticism*.

We live in times where our scientifically trained graduates have no

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difficulty in recalling Newton's three laws of motion, but have no clue about the four noble truths of the Buddha. This has resulted in a lopsided development. Indeed, as Thomas Merton says:

Of what avail is it if we can travel to the moon,
If we cannot cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves.
This is the most important of all journeys
And without it, all the rest are useless.

The Paradox of our Time in History

The consequence of such lopsided development is easy to see everywhere. It has been beautifully captured in these words of the American humorist, George Carlin:

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider freeways but narrower viewpoints. We spend more but have less; we buy more but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge but less judgement; more experts, yet more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, drive too fast, stay up too late, get up too tired, watch TV too much, love and pray too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life, not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon

and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a neighbour. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudices. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait.

These are the times of fast foods, and slow digestion; big men and small character; steep profits and shallow relationships; two incomes, but more divorce; fancier houses, but broken homes; more entertainment, but less happiness . . .

Despite all the material progress we see all around us, thanks to science and technology, during the last century in particular, we also bear witness to an increasing shallowness in our lifestyles and relationships and the conflicts that inevitably arise on account of this. In this connection, the Arbinger Institute has published two wonderful books called *Leadership and Self-deception* and *The Anatomy of Peace*. Their central message is that we all often tend to get trapped 'in the box', whereby we lose focus on all our noble intentions and aspirations and shift to defending our ego-selves at any cost. Our hearts are then 'at war', instead of being 'at peace', and in this process, we end up conveniently blaming others and the system for the situation we frequently find ourselves in. We tend to treat others as objects, instead of as humans like ourselves, having similar cares and concerns, and our views get distorted, in order

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to justify our positions. Here are some wonderful quotations from these books, which we will do well to reflect upon:

People who come together to help an organization succeed actually or end up delighting in each others' failures and resenting each others' successes . . . We withhold information and resources from one another, try to control one another, and blame one another.

When I'm blaming A or B or department XYZ (and suggesting that all our problems will be solved if only they straighten up), I'm doing it because their shortcomings justify my failure to improve.

Evolution of Consciousness

The vast majority of us are living fragmented, inauthentic and unawakened lives. Clearly, we need to nurture considerable self-awareness to even be aware of this and how we unconsciously get stuck in these unhealthy habit patterns. We need also to have a firmer commitment to the ideals of the true, the good and the beautiful, in the interest of our own personal and collective well-being. In order to do this, and to have our hearts at peace, filled with compassion and wisdom, we need much more than what science can provide us. We need an integral spiritual practice.

In addition to the obvious problems related to our subjective worlds, we are facing an imminent crisis in the external world, threatening our very survival. Indeed, it is paradoxical that the same science that has enabled us to live more

comfortable lifestyles, compared to the previous generations, has also unleashed an environmental disaster. This, of course, is no fault of science. It is clearly because our progress in external development has not been matched by a similar progress in our inner development. We have missed out on the deeper spiritual realization of how integrally we are connected with the rest of nature, and the reality that individual well-being is not achievable at the cost of our collective and universal well-being.

In this connection, Albert Einstein had these wise words to remark:

A human being is a part of the whole called the Universe — a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison.

We are rapidly running out of conventional energy resources to sustain our unsustainable lifestyles and we have polluted our planet to such an irretrievable degree that what the future has in store for us is something that even scientists are unable to predict. What we need in these difficult times, in addition to more intelligent science, is a conscious evolution in our consciousness. Indeed, as Einstein himself pointed out, we need solutions from a higher level of consciousness to

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resolve problems that we have created at our current level.

Although there have been several studies that attempt to map different stages of human consciousness, perhaps the simplest way is in terms of three broad classes: the *pre-conventional*, the *conventional* and the *post-conventional*. We may have, as a society today, by and large, progressed from the pre-conventional or egocentric level to the conventional level (which is ethnocentric, and for some, even world-centric). What we need to progress to is a post-conventional level, where our concerns and self-identity expand to a universal stage. This points to a transcendental maturity, enabling us to learn, to live, to love, to relate and to play in truly fulfilling and creative ways.

It is not enough if only a few individuals consciously aspire for such evolution in consciousness; there is a need to make shifts collectively. We are already witnessing the dangers posed by terrorism, for example, in a world where weapons of mass destruction can fall into the hands of a few ethnocentric fundamentalists and so can wreak havoc. In the words of integral philosopher, Ken Wilber:

Nobody at a world-centric level of moral consciousness would unleash the atomic bomb, but somebody at a pre-conventional egocentric level would quite cheerily bomb the hell of pretty much anybody who got in his way. Until the modern era, this problem was limited in its means because the technologies themselves were quite limited. You can inflict only so

much damage on the biosphere, and on other human beings, with a bow and arrow. Now, for the first time in history, it has become possible and even likely to have a global man-made catastrophe: an atomic holocaust or ecological suicide.

Simply put, our problem is that while science has zipped into the post-conventional stage of development, the inner world of humanity is still stuck at the conventional (and in some pockets, pre-conventional) level. We can, of course, wait for the slow evolutionary process of nature to take us forward. But we are running out of time, and cannot afford such a luxury. Indeed, there have been some horrible predictions about how life on this planet is likely to come to an end, as we have perhaps already crossed the *tipping point*. We need to face these *inconvenient truths* and come to terms with the possible potential dangers of new technologies related to ‘advancements’ in genetic engineering, robotics and nanotechnology, which are now being unleashed at a global scale.

An evolutionary crisis of this nature can mean one of two things: either a *breakdown* or a *breakthrough*! Which of the two is more likely? We do not know! All that we know is that we have a choice — whether to awaken consciously or not. Each one of us has to lift our consciousness levels individually, and also work to enable this in others. The challenges facing us are so complex that we need to truly and deeply awaken to find creative solutions. This is our collective responsibility. May we live up to it! ✧

The Wisdom of Patañjali and Krishnamurti

RAVI RAVINDRA

IN my reading of the *Yoga-sutra-s*, I have been influenced by many sacred texts, especially the *Bhagavadgitā* and the gospels, both canonical and non-canonical. There are two sages who have been sources of great inspiration and clarity for me. They are Madame Jeanne de Salzmann (who was responsible for the teaching of Gurdjieff after his death) and J. Krishnamurti. Their teachings have been constant reminders of the existence of higher levels of being and the possibility of connecting with these.

All great masters are original, not necessarily novel. They are original in the real sense of the word — they are close to the origins. They each express truth in their own quite unique way. Krishnamurti spoke of an *intelligence beyond thought*. He insisted that we need to go beyond knowledge. Although we usually think of knowledge as being a good thing, Krishnamurti emphasized the point that thought is the source of the problem, not the source of the solution. And Patañjali maintained that the movements of the mind, including all right knowledge,

are the source of the problem. There is much in common between Patañjali and Krishnamurti, but each one expressed their insights in a unique way.

Sutra I.2 Yoga is establishing the mind (*chitta*) in stillness.

The literal translation of this *sutra*, ‘Yoga is the stopping of the movements (*vṛtti-s*) of the mind’, speaks of the process of yoga to reach the aim of ‘establishing the mind in stillness’. An accomplished yogi’s mind has a quality of deep silence. Krishnamurti embodied this stillness of the mind. On one occasion, I asked him: ‘What is the nature of your mind, Krishnaji? What do you see when you look at that tree?’ He was silent for a while and then said: ‘My mind is like a mill-pond. Any disturbance that is created in it soon dies, leaving it unruffled as before.’ Then, as if reading what I was about to ask, he added with the most playful smile: ‘And your mind, sir, is like a mill!’

The sages have said that when the mind is silent, without distractions, the original state of intelligence or of consciousness,

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far beyond the capacity of the thinking mind, is present. That intelligence is more aligned to direct perception than to thinking or reasoning. There is a reminder from Krishnamurti: 'Don't think; look!' It calls us to a perception of the intelligence beyond thought. We may well say that Yoga is for the purpose of cultivating direct seeing, without imaginings. Yoga leads to gnosis, a knowledge which is quite different from rational knowledge. In fact, Patañjali prefers to call the Real Knower, the Seer.

Sutra I.3 Then the Seer dwells in its essential nature.

Sutra I.4 Otherwise the movements of the mind (*vṛtti-s*) are regarded as the Seer.

The essential nature, or the true form of the Seer, or the Seer's own form, is Purusha, the Transcendent Being. Purusha is steady attention without distractions, Conscious Energy or Pure Awareness. When the distractions are removed, the Seer resides in its own true nature. The true Seer is Purusha who knows *through* the mind. The purpose of Yoga is to refine the mind, so that it can serve as a proper instrument for Purusha. When thinking enters, the mind brings its expectations and its projections; then we cannot see reality as it is.

On one occasion, I had asked Krishnamurti what he thought of something we had been looking at. He said: 'Sir, K [that is how he often referred to himself] does not think at all; he just looks.'

In the Indian tradition, the emphasis has always been on seeing, but it is a

perception beyond the sense organs, an enlightenment beyond thought, an insight from presence. The real knower is not the mind, although the mind can be a proper instrument of knowledge. The mind needs to become free of the distractions which occupy it and prevent true seeing. The *Yoga-sutra-s* emphasizes the need to quiet the mind so that there can be more and more correspondence with the clear seeing of Purusha. Only a still mind can be attentive, and only a still mind can be the dwelling place of Purusha in its own true form. There is a quality of attention and seeing which can bring about an action in ourselves which allows a radical change to take place naturally, from the inside.

Patañjali begins with the attitude that attention is the main concern of Yoga. Otherwise the Seer — which is above the mind — is misidentified with the instrument of seeing. Steady attention is the first requirement of letting the Real reveal itself to us. The Real is always revealing itself everywhere, but in our untransformed state we are not receptive to this revelation. All the sages of humanity are of one accord in saying that there is a level of reality pervading the entire space, inside us as well as outside, which is not subject to time. The sages call it by various names — such as God, Brahman, Purusha, the Holy Spirit, Allah. However, we are not, in general, in touch with this level because we are distracted by the unreal, by the personal and by the transitory.

I once asked Krishnamurti about the nature of this attention, what he himself called *total attention*. I said to him: 'What

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I find in myself is that attention fluctuates.’ He said with emphasis: ‘What fluctuates is not attention. Only inattention fluctuates.’ We can see from this brief dialogue that for Krishnamurti, attention is the ground, like Purusha, and it does not fluctuate. My question implied that attention can be distracted and can fluctuate — clearly a misidentification of the Seer with the distracted mind.

Sutra II.1 and II.32 both emphasize the importance of *svādhyāya* which is self-study, self-inquiry, self-knowledge and self-awareness. *Svādhyāya* is one of the *niyama-s* and is a part of Kriya Yoga in the *Yoga-sutra-s*. Self-inquiry is emphasized in the whole of the Indian tradition, but gradually *svādhyāya* has come to refer to a study of sacred scriptures. However, there would hardly be any point in reading the sacred literature unless it helps one to come to a clearer and clearer self-awareness. Krishnamurti emphasized that the most important thing was to study the book of oneself in one’s own life. He was not at all interested in recommending a study of what the sages had said.

Self-inquiry is the heart of the yoga of Krishnamurti. He said:

Without self-knowledge, experience breeds illusion; with self-knowledge, experience, which is the response to challenge, does not leave a cumulative residue as memory. Self-knowledge is the discovery from moment to moment of the ways of the self, its intentions and pursuit, its thoughts and appetites . . . When we do not know ourselves, the eternal becomes a mere word, a symbol, a

speculation, a dogma, a belief, an illusion to which the mind can escape. But if one begins to understand the ‘me’ in all its various activities from day to day, then in that very understanding, without any effort, the nameless, the timeless comes into being. But the timeless is not a reward for self-knowledge. That which is eternal cannot be sought after; the mind cannot acquire it. It comes into being when the mind is quiet, and the mind can be quiet only when it is simple, when it is no longer storing up, condemning, judging, weighing. It is only the simple mind that can understand the real, not the mind that is full of words, knowledge, information. The mind that analyses, calculates, is not a simple mind. (*The Book of Life*)

Wisdom comes when there is the maturity of self-knowing. Without knowing oneself, order is not possible, and therefore there is no virtue . . . What is important is not how to recognize one who is liberated but how to understand yourself. No authority here or hereafter can give you knowledge of yourself; without self-knowledge there is no liberation from ignorance, from sorrow. (*The Book of Life*)

Sutra II.9 *Abhiniveśa* is the automatic tendency for continuity; it overwhelms even the wise.

Although *abhiniveśa* is sometimes translated as a ‘wish to live’, it is closer to a ‘wish to continue’, or a ‘wish to preserve the status quo’. *Abhiniveśa* is what is technically called ‘inertia’ in physics, as in Newton’s First Law of Motion (also

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called the Law of Inertia) according to which a body continues in a state of rest or of motion in a straight line unless acted upon by an external force. *Abhiniveśa* is the wish for continuity of any state and any situation, because it is known. We fear the unknown and therefore we fear change which may lead to the unknown. In fact, this fear is of a discontinuation of the known, simply because the unknown, if it is truly unknown, cannot produce fear or pleasure. Freedom from *abhiniveśa*, from the wish to continue the known, is a dying to the self, or a dying to the world, which is so much spoken about in so many traditions. It has often been said by the sages that only when we are willing and able to die to our old self, can we be born into a new vision and a new life. A profound saying of an ancient Sufi master, echoed in so much of sacred literature, says: 'If you die before you die, then you do not die when you die.'

During a conversation about life after death, Krishnamurti said: 'The real question is "Can I die while I am living? Can I die to all my collections — material, psychological, religious?" If you can die to all that, then you'll find out what is there after death. Either there is nothing; absolutely nothing. Or there *is* something. But you cannot find out until you actually die while living.'

Dying daily is a spiritual practice — a regaining of a sort of innocence, which is quite different from ignorance, akin to openness and humility. It is an active unknowing; not achieved but needing to be renewed again and again. All serious

meditation is a practice of dying to the ordinary self.

Here it is helpful to quote a remark of Krishnamurti:

That which has continuity can never renew itself. As long as thought continues through memory, through desire, through experience, it can never renew itself; therefore, that which is continued cannot know the real. (*The Book of Life*)

Sutra III.3 *Samādhi* is the state when the self is not, when there is awareness only of the object of meditation.

Samādhi is a state in which the 'I' does not exist as separate from the object of attention. It is a state of self-naughting, the state spoken of in Buddhism as *akinchana*, a state of freedom from myself or a freedom from egoism. There is no observer separate from the observed, no subject separate from the object. Only the knowledge gained in such states of consciousness can be called 'objective' in the true sense of the word; otherwise, it is more or less subjective. Even scientific knowledge which has been considered to be objective because it is inter-subjective, amenable to verification by competent researchers everywhere, is not objective in the sense of being completely free of subjectivity.

In *samādhi* the seeing is without subjectivity. Attention in the state of *samādhi* is free attention, freed from all constraints and all functions. Attention in this state is not conditioned by any object, even very subtle ones, such as ideas and feelings. The three stages of meditation

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— *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇa*, *samādhi* — are like those of a warrior, lover and beloved — in the movement from the ego to the Self. The stage of *samādhi* is that of being the beloved. Then Puruṣa, Conscious Energy and Transcendent Being, is the sole initiator; all the elements of Prakṛti in a human being — body, mind, feelings — are completely relaxed and receptive. In this context a few suggestive remarks of Krishnamurti are in order:

We must put aside all these things and come to the central issue, how to dissolve the ‘me’ which is time-binding, in which there is no love, no compassion.

When there is love, self is not.

To be absolutely nothing is to be beyond measure.

Sutra III.4 Total attention (*samyama*) is when *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* are together.

Samyama, total attention, is realized when all three forms of attention — *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* — are practised together at the same time. This seems to be much like the ‘total attention’ spoken of by Krishnamurti. In this state the splendour of insight emerges, and the person sees the suchness, the thing-in-itself (*‘Ding an sich’* of Immanuel Kant), of whatever the attention of *samyama* is directed upon.

Sutra III.12 *Ekāgratā parināma*, transformation towards one-pointedness, is the stage of transformation in which activity and silence are equally balanced in the mind.

The sages who have undergone this kind of radical transformation have a different quality of mind. It seemed obviously true in the case of Krishnamurti. I was struck by the special nature and quality of Krishnamurti’s mind; so I often asked him about the particularities of his mind. He frequently spoke about the religious mind and its innocence, freshness and vulnerability. He would often suggest that he was just like everybody else and not someone special. But I was never convinced of this.

On one occasion, when I persisted in asking about the nature of his extraordinary mind, he said: ‘Sir, do you think the speaker is a freak?’ Freak or not, he certainly was extraordinary and unusual. As was mentioned earlier, his mind was like a mill-pond; any disturbance that was created in it by an external stimulus soon died down, leaving it unruffled as before. Patañjali tells us that the whole difference between an ordinary person and an accomplished yogi is in the quality and depth of the silence of mind and how soon this silence returns after an external impression is received.

Krishnamurti once said during a conversation with me that the intelligence beyond thought is just there, like the air, and does not need to be created by discipline or effort. ‘All one needs to do is to open the window.’ I suggested that most windows are painted shut and need a lot of scraping before they can be opened, and asked: ‘How does one scrape?’ He did not wish to pursue this line of inquiry and closed it by saying:

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‘You are too clever for your own good.’

Patañjali provides practical help in preparing the body–mind so that the window of our consciousness can be opened. Purusha is just there; it does not need to be created; it cannot be created; however, a purification of the instruments of perception in Prakṛti allows Purusha to reveal itself. In practice, it was equally true for Krishnamurti, with his great emphasis on bodily sensitivity, emotional receptivity and freedom from thought leading to a stillness of the mind. In his own life he practised yoga and engaged in chanting and meditation, and in general led a disciplined life in complete harmony with all the *yama-s* and *niyama-s* mentioned by Patañjali in *sutra-s* II.30 and II.32. But, in general, he did not wish to provide a prescription for someone else. He so much emphasized that one cannot ascend to Truth but Truth can descend to one.

Many years ago, I had written an article called ‘Letter to J. Krishnamurti’ on the invitation of the editors of *A Journal of Our Time*. I had attempted to say where my own difficulties lay in trying to follow what he had been saying for so many years. This small article had ended with the following: ‘I am troubled because I do not know how to reconcile the call I hear from your distant shore with the realities where I am. It is clear that a bridge cannot be built from here to There. But can it be built from There to here?’ A couple of

years after the article had been published, there was an occasion for me to spend some time with Krishnamurti, at Ojai in California, the place where he felt most at home. We had a long and intense conversation in the evening, and we were going to meet again at breakfast the next morning. I asked that he read my little article and respond when we met in the morning. I was eager to know what he would say. He said he liked the last sentence, and added: ‘A bridge can be built from There to here.’ He would not say much more about it, except to imply that that is what he had been talking about all these years.

All true teachings offer bridges from There, where Truth and Freedom are, to here where we are. The *R̥g-Veda* describes the subtler and higher realms as those of *satyam*, *ṛtam* and *br̥hat* (Truth, Order and Vastness) or *satyam*, *ṛtam* and *jyoti* (Light) or *satyam*, *ṛtam* and *amṛtam* (Eternal Life). For Patañjali, the subtlest state is that of Kaivalya, freedom without measure, the Aloneness of the power of seeing. In this state, the pure unbounded Purusha remains forever established in its own absolute nature (*sutra* IV.34). For Krishnamurti, There is the realm of Truth, Beauty and Love; and here is the domain of thought, time and sorrow. Self-inquiry without the self is what can reveal to us that the Eternal is not away from time or life, but can be perceived within time and in daily life. ✧

**The more you talk and think about it,
The further astray you wander from the truth.**

Zen Master

Henry Steel Olcott among the Buddhists in Japan

DANIEL ROSS CHANDLER

AN outstanding achievement of Henry Steel Olcott's presidency of the Theosophical Society was his epoch-marking and epoch-making excursions among the Japanese Buddhists which permitted him to unify the Buddhist community. Perhaps this historic adventure commenced during the winter of 1888, when a Japanese Buddhist visiting Adyar, Zenshiro Noguchi, requested Olcott to conduct a Buddhist revival in Japan. This enthusiastic emissary from 'the land of the Rising Sun' considered the Colonel from the United States as 'the Bodhisattva of the Nineteenth Century'. Accompanied by Noguchi and Anagarika Dharmapala, Olcott reached Kobe, Japan, on 9 February 1889. The next day, the Colonel stood in a Jodo temple before a statue depicting the Ameda Buddha and recited *pansil* Sinhalese-style in Pāli. On 19 February in Kyoto, he organized a convention composed of monks representing Japan's different Buddhist movements and solicited financial assistance and logistical support for his speaking engagements throughout Japan. The Colonel attempted to reconcile these differences that promoted separation by presenting the

precipitating incidents as trivial and unimportant. He admonished the monks to restore and purify the Buddhist religion, initiate an anti-missionary counter-offensive combating evangelistic Christians, and dispatch teachers and professors committed to spreading the Buddhist religion. Concluding these remarks, he stated that he would terminate his Japanese excursion and return immediately to India unless a non-sectarian committee was established and charged with assuming responsibility for coordinating his speaking engagements. The Convention approved this arrangement.

Henry Steel Olcott commenced his four-month campaign: he stimulated the strong spiritual sentiment deeply rooted within the Japanese national character. No country and no historical period, he contended, needed religious reformation more than the Japanese Buddhists. The Colonel's spirited speaking evoked enthusiasm among the Japanese Buddhists; excitement ensued among the Christian evangelists. Estimating that twenty-five hundred persons attended each lecture during the seventy-six speaking

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engagements, Olcott calculated that he addressed about two hundred thousand persons during his initial visit to Japan. The speaker had penetrated an indescribably beautiful island-complex rich in an ancient Asian culture and suffused with a Buddhism badly needing renewal.

Japanese religion was not a monolith. Japanese Buddhism, a sectarian movement within Japanese religion, was characterized by diversity rather than uniformity. Individual monks inspired important movements. The enormous cultural changes transpiring in Japan during Henry Olcott's generation affected the religious situation profoundly and initiated opportunities. Japanese Buddhism required purification and unification. As the President-Founder representing the Theosophical Society travelled through Japan, he discovered that these varied movements within a fertile spiritual culture contain perceptions disclosing a pervasive unity that secures expression through a diffused but coherent philosophy. From Olcott's perspective, this unity is distinctly theosophical. When Colonel Olcott traversed Japan, he observed a historic transition, discovered himself standing upon the cusp separating a period that was rapidly disappearing and an emerging dispensation struggling desperately to develop. By uniting these divergent Buddhist movements with a common council and a statement expressing consensus about essential Buddhist teachings, the venerable 'white Buddhist' from Adyar aspired to provide a formidable foundation providing stability amid

enormous cultural change. Colonel Olcott arrived in Japan equipped with the specific qualifications required for commencing, actualizing and completing an extraordinary endeavour that posterity would recognize as an unprecedented achievement.

Japanese religious culture represented a spiritual gold mine waiting to be mined. Among the glimmering gold were the Buddhist concepts describing divinity, humans as creatures destined for immortality, and the Bodhisattva or 'future Buddha' ideal emphasizing universal compassion. The devotees embracing Tendai Buddhism professed that all people possess the Buddha-nature and have the capacity for actualizing that inherent ability. The Tendai Buddhists encouraged tolerance and open-mindedness that nurtured encyclopaedic culture, and these adherents acknowledged that all Buddhist scriptures provide progressive revelations clarifying Buddha's perspective.

This excursion yielded some powerful memories which Olcott describes in his *Old Diary Leaves*. Having travelled from Saigon for Hong Kong, the Colonel observed the Chinese people preparing to celebrate the Chinese New Year on 1 February. After watching this colourful celebration, he continued his voyage to Shanghai. On 6 February 1889, when the ship moved towards Kobe, he and the other travelling Theosophists surveyed snow-covered mountains while nearing the Korean coast. On 8 February, the ship manoeuvred through the island-dotted Sea

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of Japan. Colonel Olcott reached Kobe and saw a stunning spectacle that he described vividly in his *Old Diary Leaves*:

On the pier, ranged in a line, were a number of Buddhist priests of all the sects, who saluted me with that exquisite politeness for which the nation is celebrated. Of course, the first thing to strike the eye of one familiar with the appearance and dress of the bhikku-s of Southern Buddhism was the entire contrast in the costume of the Japanese monks. Instead of the yellow robe, the bare head, leg, arm, and foot, here we saw them clothed in voluminous garments with huge drooping sleeves, their heads covered in most cases, and the feet protected by tailor-made socks, and sandals with wooden or other soles. . . .

There are parts of Japan where snow falls to the depth of eight feet, and on some of the mountain peaks the snow never melts. Clearly, then, the robes of India, Burma, and Ceylon are quite unfit for the northern lands where Buddhism flourishes. Forming a procession of jinrickshas, and supplying us with one each, and taking charge of our luggage, they took us to the most ancient temple of the Ten Dai sect, crowds of priests and people following, where I was formally welcomed, and made a suitable reply. In the evening I held a conversation which ran into a lecture. . . .

After a second lecture, the next morning we left for Kyoto by train, and I found a multitude of well-wishers awaiting me in the station, and crowding the street in front. We were escorted in procession to

Nakamaraya's Hotel, whence, after a rest and some refreshments, I was taken to the great Choo-in Temple of the Jodo sect, and in the 'Empress's Room' held a reception until nightfall. The display of costly lacquered screens and panels, artistic bronzes and paintings on silk was magnificent. (IV, pp. 98-99)

Colonel Olcott's first visit in Japan produced numerous memorable occasions and yielded invaluable insights. The Theosophist's public speaking engagements were extensive, strenuous and rejuvenating. One morning when he attended an impressive ceremony in Choo-in Temple where six hundred Buddhist monks had gathered, he stood before a high altar bearing a statue depicting Buddha. When the High Priest requested, Olcott chanted the Pancha Śīla in Pāli while an intensely interested audience remained standing. The Colonel savoured the novelty inherent in the immediate situation: a white, Western, English-speaking man participating in a Buddhist ceremony and standing where no person resembling himself had stood previously. In February, he lectured on Buddhism before approximately two thousand persons assembled in the spacious preaching-hall of Choo-in Temple. The next day, he attended a grand reception hosted in a principal temple where he addressed an estimated six hundred students, teachers and monks. Another address was presented the following day before an appreciative audience in Kyoto. On 15 February 1889, he reached Osaka and spoke before the Prison Reform

Henry Steel Olcott among the Buddhists in Japan

Society. The next day, he lectured in the Cho-sen-ji Temple and at the Nam-ba-mido Temple. Olcott returned to Tokyo on 18 February.

When financial problems developed, he declined an offer from one group who volunteered to assume his expenses. Believing that accepting would be injudicious, he concluded that independence and impartiality were imperative in remaining uncompromised among the nine principal movements.

An awesome occasion coronated Olcott's excursion and actualized his intended purpose which occurred after he sent invitations addressed to the head priests representing the Buddhist movements to convene in a Council. It assembled in the beautiful Empress's room in Choo-in Temple on 19 February 1889. The conference appeared unprecedented in Japanese history; never had the priests representing these different movements convened in a common convocation. The Colonel's steadfast, uncompromised conviction that he could assist in uniting these sectarian contingencies had been strengthened when he had experienced the spontaneous, enthusiastic greeting when landing in Japan, and subsequently, when large audiences attended his speeches. Olcott remained insistent that his visit not become exploited for the advantage accrued to any single movement. He was convinced that his decision to remain impartial in working with these movements proved helpful in influencing several leaders to attend the convocation. Some priests had been

determined not to subscribe to any proposal that might diminish their importance and influence. Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves* indicates:

The sun shone bright for our meeting, and its reflected light made every point of gold in the lacquered panels to sparkle, every sheeny surface in the embroidered satin decorations to blossom out in its lovely hues. . . . I was invited to take the seat at the top of the long table, but respectfully declined, saying that as I held no official rank in their order, no proper place could be assigned me; as an outsider and a layman, it would be more respectful if I sat at the small table with my interpreter. Second point scored, the first one being the arrangement of seats according to age, it being a fundamental principle among the Orientals to yield precedence to age. (IV, pp. 109–10)

When these tactical preliminaries were completed, the Colonel requested that a Japanese translation of a salutatory letter from Sumangala Thero be read before these prominent Japanese Buddhist priests; that a similar statement from the principal priests representing both Sinhalese Buddhist movements be read; and that this assembled audience hear his address, which Colonel Olcott read in English. In this speech, he attempted to bridge the chasm that had separated these Northern and Southern movements for so long. The address was a bridge-builder not simply among Japanese Buddhists from different movements but across the passing centuries when their community remained divided.

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Colonel Olcott emphasized that his purpose was not to profess the teachings espoused by any sectarian movement; instead he strove to promote greater understanding among the twelve Japanese competing consistencies. Because communication had collapsed so completely among the Northern and Southern Japanese Buddhists, neither school knew what the other school professed. The Colonel respected every participant as a Buddhist and a brother pursuing a common purpose; each was recognized as a sincere, intelligent and broad-minded Buddhist committed to a common good. Olcott proposed a programme: in the Buddhist countries, these priests should purify and rejuvenate Buddhism, prepare elementary and advanced textbooks for educational purposes and expose the falsehoods in the criticism raised against the Buddhists. Teachers and missionaries representing Buddhism should be sent to Europe and America. Olcott proposed that scholars should critically study Buddhist literature, both ancient and contemporary, and determine which is authentic and authoritative. He also proposed that a council should be created and determine common canon; the decisions determined should be published and circulated. It was serving the Theosophical Society to volunteer to assist these Japanese Buddhists to become more cooperative in pursuing their common purpose. The speaker credited Buddhism's spread through Christian countries to Buddhism's intrinsic worth, consistency with modern scientific knowledge, spirit

communicating kindness and love, embodiment of justice and logical construction. The Colonel was pleased that prominent authors and recognized philologists had written sympathetically about the Buddha.

Under an agreement formalized during this momentous meeting when the Buddhist council was created, arrangements were made for Colonel Olcott to address audiences assembled in the temples maintained by every Japanese Buddhist movement. Provisions were allocated, permitting him to lecture before every class and to all people wanting to hear his speeches about the Buddhist religion. Stemming from the unusual situations encountered, especially memorable moments arose when the Colonel surveyed the gigantic statue depicting the Buddha situated at Nara, considered the largest in Japan; travelled thirty-four miles across rugged roads in rickety jinrickshas, reaching a mountain town where no European had reached; and shooting the raging rapids when navigating the Origawa River.

When Olcott returned to Kyoto during late March or early April, he estimated that since 9 February he had presented forty-six lectures during the forty-one days that had followed. When he presented his seventy-sixth and final lecture in Japan on 27 May, he estimated that he had addressed about one hundred and eighty-seven thousand, five hundred people. Olcott was ashore for one hundred and seven days, during which he visited thirty-three towns and cities. The Colonel

Henry Steel Olcott among the Buddhists in Japan

exercised influential leadership among the venerable Japanese Buddhist priests, who served as the spiritual guides and teachers for thirty-nine million Buddhists and as the incumbent residents administering seventy thousand temples.

As Colonel Olcott's extraordinary excursion neared an inevitable conclusion, on 5 May 1889, the 'white Buddhist' said farewell to the assembled Japanese high Buddhist priests, encouraged these spiritual leaders to maintain the Central Committee for conducting and coordinating Buddhist activity, and emphasized the mutual advantages inherent in cooperating for greater unification. On 27 May, when he presented a final lecture ending his first visit to Japan, the speaker paused momentarily in a doorway and surveyed a stunning, sprawling Japanese city and a glistening, sun-drenched harbour. Bathed in radiant sunshine, this ancient island empire, called 'the source of the sun', was breathtaking with its majestic, snow-capped mountains that towered towards the blazing sun.

Returning to India, Olcott convened at Adyar a convention attracting Buddhists from Ceylon, Burma, Japan and Chittagong. Intending to establish a Buddhist fellowship or confederacy, he attempted to persuade these participants to develop a common detailed statement expressing a consensus on Buddhist principles. During this important international initiative, Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhists studied their teachings, reformulated their essential principles and expressed the essence that

Olcott employed in developing a fourteen-point statement expressing a culminating consensus. The draft that Olcott wrote was approved by these Buddhists.

Persistently and passionately, Olcott worked to terminate bickering, cultivate cooperation and strengthen fellowship among the factions within Buddhism. Tirelessly, he laboured to mitigate divisiveness among the Theravāda and Mahāyāna schools within Buddhism. Having achieved agreement among Buddhists in Ceylon, he reached Rangoon on 21 January 1891, addressed a monastic council in Mandalay on 3 February and secured confirmation that a fourteen-point statement effectively described the Buddhist religion professed and practised in Burma. A primary purpose was translating doctrinal consensus into concerted cooperation. The Colonel recommended that an international committee, representing and supported by Buddhists, be founded and charged with spreading the Buddhist religion. Encouraged with the evident success achieved in Burma, he returned to Ceylon on 18 February 1891. Olcott persuaded the High Priest, Sumangala, and five additional Buddhist monks to endorse the fourteen-point statement expressing growing consensus in Ceylon where Colonel Olcott was revered as a national hero and champion promoting the Buddhist religion. Seven prominent Buddhists granted Olcott permission to receive adherents into the Buddhist religion.

With a Buddhist platform approved among the Theravāda Buddhists residing

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in Burma and Ceylon but lacking an endorsement from the Buddhists embracing the Mahāyāna position, Colonel Olcott departed again for Japan from San Francisco on 8 October 1891, and reached Japan on 28 October 1891. The Colonel's colleagues residing in Ceylon failed to inform the Japanese Buddhists that Olcott was coming; numerous monks had departed from Kyoto to provide earthquake relief. The Colonel assembled some representatives and commenced discussions. Attempting to secure an endorsement from Mahāyāna Buddhists in Japan, and having attained approval from the Theravāda Buddhists in Ceylon and Burma, Henry Steel Olcott became described as 'the father of Sinhalese Buddhists' and 'the apostle serving Asia'.

During these negotiations, he was advised that only an outsider, a foreigner, could secure support for a proposed platform expressing a Buddhist consensus. Olcott was informed that this leader must be a sincere Buddhist. Although he anticipated encountering some difficulty with the Northern Buddhists, the Colonel discussed the proposal with the highly influential priest, Shaku Genyu San. Finally, during his nine-day residency in Kyoto, this determined 'white American

Buddhist' secured the signatures from eight leaders among the movements. Shaku Genyu San endorsed the platform, representing the General Committee that included the nine movements. The Colonel secured what Motwani described as the 'unity of Buddhism throughout Asia, an achievement so far unparalleled in the history of Buddhism' (p.15). Kirthisinghe concluded:

It can be safely asserted that the name of Colonel Olcott is honoured in Hindu-Buddhist Asia from India and Ceylon to Japan, more than that of any other American who has ever lived. (pp.19–20)

For Prothero, Colonel Olcott, the first American of European descent who formally converted to Buddhism as an expression manifesting universal religion, contributed a lasting legacy, including his labours in Sri Lanka as a leader inspiring the Sinhalese Buddhist Revival, and in India as an ardent advocate for the Indian Renaissance. Prothero describes Olcott as an indefatigable reformer and culture-broker between East and West, who developed a new spiritual creation called 'Protestant Buddhism', a 'creative creolization', blending American Protestantism, traditional Theravāda Buddhism and additional cultural influences. ✧

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The Adyar Library and Research Centre (125th Year)

THE Adyar Library was founded on 28 December 1886 by Henry Steel Olcott, the Founder-President of the Theosophical Society, as an integral and basic part of the Theosophical Society. The main aims of the Library as laid down by Olcott were:

1. To establish a nucleus for the comparative study of Eastern and Western philosophies and religions;
2. To revive Oriental Literature;
3. To rehabilitate the true Pandit in public esteem;
4. To promote a higher moral sense and spiritual aspiration among Asiatic youth; and
5. To inculcate mutual regard between the learned of the East and the West.

This aim of the founder, to make a judicious combination of excellence in Eastern traditional scholarship and the best traits of modern research methodology and textual criticism, still remains valid.

The Adyar Library was originally located in the Headquarters building of the Theosophical Society, on the banks of the Adyar river. There were two rooms to the east of the Great Hall for books and manuscripts, and a long room on the river front was used as a Reading room.

As early as 1888, Friedrich Max Müller, the German-British Orientalist and

Philologist (1823–1900), wrote to Olcott suggesting that the Theosophical Society should specialize in Upanishadic literature. In the early years, an edition of Minor Upanishad-s and a descriptive catalogue of the Upanishadic literature were published. Later, authentic texts of all the 108 Upanishad-s with the Advaitic commentary of Upanishad Brahmayogin were published, and English translations on the basis of the commentary have also been issued for most of them.

A research journal called *Brahmavidyā* — *Adyar Library Bulletin* was started in 1937, and 73 volumes have been published; and 203 volumes of books including descriptive catalogues of the library manuscripts, critical editions and translations of important texts in philosophy, literature and music in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Tamil have been published.

The Library moved into its new building in February 1967. The plinth area of the ground floor is 980 sq. metres. The building is provided with spacious and airy workrooms and with separate stacks for the Oriental and Western sectors, manuscripts and periodicals. Two rooms for the manuscripts have been air-conditioned.

In recent years, the Library has been modernized, improving its various services and preservation methods through air-conditioning, reprographic facilities,

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microfilming, scanning and digitalization, fumigation, lamination, binding and mechanical cleaning. A special system of classification based on the decimal system is being used and a comprehensive alphabetical card index system has been evolved to help scholars.

A major part of the Library's research collections of rare and important manuscripts covering different areas of knowledge and learning remain still unexplored or not fully utilized and awaits competent and devoted scholars as well as further financial resources to fulfil its role in Indological research.

At its inception the Library had books in many languages with many rare manuscripts acquired by Olcott and others. By

1937, the stock had grown in the Eastern Section to 7,000 Oriental manuscripts and 14,000 printed books, while the Western Section had grown to 39,000 books. At present, the Library has a collection of more than 3,00,000 printed books and 18,700 manuscripts.

The Adyar Library publishes books in three Series, namely: The Adyar Library Series, The Adyar Library General Series, and the Pamphlet Series.

The year 2011–12 marks the 125th anniversary of the establishment. Presently, Dr K. N. Neelakantan Elayath is the Director and Prof. C. A. Shinde is the Librarian, who work under the guidance of the International President of the TS, Dr Radha Burnier. ✧

The very air of Theosophy is charged with the spirit of enquiry. It is not the 'sceptical' spirit, nor is it the 'agnostic'. It is a real desire to learn and know the truth, as far as it is possible for any creature to know it who is so limited by his capacities and so biased by his prejudices as is man. It is that which has raised the Theosophical Society above the level of all other aggregations or organizations of men, and which, so long as its Fellows abstain from dogmatizing, must keep it on an altogether higher plane.

H. S. Olcott
Applied Theosophy, *The Theosophist*, June 1889

Blessed Are Those Who Suffer

N. S.

THIS is a blessing we all share as the human life is suffused with suffering from birth to death. Yet this shared suffering very often is itself a cause of conflict and thus engenders further suffering — if we do not recognize suffering for the blessing that it is.

Because it is shared by all, it makes our connectedness more tangible and visible, more real. It offers us a possibility to realize that as long as one of us is suffering, no one can be perfectly happy. It invites us to step out of our limited selves to feel and ease a pain we do not directly experience. It may teach us humility — a lesson we cannot have enough of.

The realization of the common plight of humanity may actually offer redemption if it can wake us up to the only possibility: love. Love's absence makes us all suffer — may we find it in ourselves and so heal the world.

Altruism

What is our true self? Is it in the name we were given, in the place where we were born? Is it an identification with a family or a nation? Is it the training and profession we pursue in the world? Is our self in the personality, is it in the body

that allows us to ponder this question? When we say 'no' to all these, and to countless other illusory selves that separate man from man; when we experience the suffering in the wake of this separation — then the possibility of glimpsing the true self may open for us.

Realizing the one, true, universal self in all life forms, in every human being, allows us to relate to all with altruism. This action of unconditional love that originates from the source of wisdom is the purest form of relating, where all division has ended.

When we see all as one, as the universal Self, altruism is the only way of relating to the true Self.

Those Who Climb the Ladder Must Start with the First Step

This ladder is infinite across space and time, already forming a bridge between innumerable lifetimes. It has no beginning and no end.

Yet on a vertical ladder there is just enough space for one person at one level. There is little room to lend a helping hand for those who need it. And most importantly, the upright ladder suggests a hierarchy and with that, a looking up to

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or looking down on fellow travellers — instead of looking inward, in awareness of our own footsteps.

So let us tilt the ladder until it forms a bridge between the known and the unknown, to take us across the abyss of ignorance. Let us end the measuring and comparing of ourselves and our fellow travellers and make space for everyone all the way of our shared journey towards the light of Truth.

Besides minding our steps with unceasing awareness, there is help and encouragement to be offered to those of us who are tired or timid. We proceed with the certainty that every being is going to make this journey and eventually reach the light.

Humility

This is when we see the outer and the inner as one; and with discernment, obey the laws of its different aspects — breathe the air, hold our breath under water; strive in the physical realm, keep awake and go beyond strife in the spiritual; when all the while we are in awareness of being inescapably included and aware so that everything and everybody is included; when we see that more rice definitely stills more hunger but more words do not necessarily offer more wisdom; that the more has lost its meaning here, and so has effort; where there is no name to separation, and reality finds its way home to wholeness in nothingness; when there is just the seeing. ✧

Abu Huraira reported God's Messenger as saying, 'There is none whose deeds alone would entitle him to get into Paradise.' Someone said, 'God's Messenger, not even you?' He replied, 'Not even I, but that my Lord wraps me in mercy.'

Hadith of Muslim

THE 137TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

The 137th International Convention of the Theosophical Society will be held at the International Headquarters, Adyar, from 26 to 31 December 2012.

All members of the Society in good standing are welcome to attend as delegates. *Non-members may attend by obtaining permission from the President. Requests for such permission, together with a recommendation from an officer of the Federation, should be sent to the Convention Officer before 15 November 2012.*

REGISTRATION FEES	<i>India</i>	<i>Other Countries</i>
Members	Rs 75	US\$ 50 *
Members under 21	40	...
Non-members	150	...
Non-members under 21	100	...

ACCOMMODATION CHARGES (SHARING)

(From 24 December 2012
to 1 January 2013 inclusive)

	<i>India (Members)</i>	<i>India (Non-members)</i>	<i>Other Countries (Members)</i>
Accommodation with mat	Rs 100	Rs 200	...
Accommodation with cot	175	400	...
Leadbeater Chambers (including service, furniture, and bedding, but no blankets)	3,000	6,000	US\$ 130 *

(Half rates will be charged for children under ten. No charge for children under three.)

* (or Euro or Pound Sterling equivalent)

ACCOMMODATION

Factors considered in allocating accommodation are active membership, health, age, priority of registration, size of family, etc. Rooms and bathrooms cannot be made available for anyone's exclusive use. Non-members and young persons should be prepared to stay in dormitories. No special facilities can be provided for members who are ill or for women with babies. Mosquito nets and bedding will not be available. No kitchens are available. Ordinary medical attention will be available for minor complaints but there will be no provision for serious or infectious illness. Such cases will have to be shifted from the compound.

Accommodation is available for delegates from 24 December 2012 to 1 January 2013, both days inclusive, but can be guaranteed only to those whose registration and accommodation payments are received *before 1 December 2012*. Delegates from India requiring accommodation should send *both the registration and accommodation charges together, but not before 1 September 2012*.

Please note that in the event of cancellation there will be no refund of registration fees, but other charges will be refunded if application is received before *10 December 2012*.

All communications and remittances should be addressed to the Convention Officer, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020. Remittance by bank drafts, duly crossed, should be made *payable to the Treasurer, The Theosophical Society, but sent to the Convention Officer*. Money Orders should be sent only to the Convention Officer. No cheques other than those drawn in Chennai will be accepted.

Mrs KUSUM SATAPATHY
International Secretary

Theosophical Work around the World

India

On 9 July 2012, Mrs Radha Burnier was the Chief Guest as well as the Guest of Honour at a Seminar organized by the Sant Nirankari Mission at Chennai. The theme of the Seminar was 'The Revival of Universal Brotherhood and Humanism'. Addressing the gathering of two hundred delegates, Mrs Burnier said that Universal Brotherhood is often confused as being the brotherhood of people of the different religions, communities, castes, and so on, whereas the word 'Universal' itself implies the brotherhood of all life, including little creatures, and the love and concern of human beings also for these creatures. It is the realization of the unity of all creatures. Moreover, although we talk about Universal Brotherhood, it should be realized in our hearts by the quality of love to all.

Royalaseema Theosophical Federation:

In celebration of its Centenary, the Royalaseema Theosophical Federation held a Conference on 14 and 15 July in Hyderabad. The theme of the Conference was 'Perfection through Perception', and Mrs Radha Burnier was the Chief Guest. She inaugurated the Conference and later gave a Public Talk titled 'Undivided Consciousness'. Mrs Burnier said that the ending of a centenary is the beginning of a new one and stressed the need for

members of the TS to contemplate Theosophy in the new phase. Talks were also given by Bro. M. P. Singhal, the Vice-President of the TS, Bro. S. Sundaram, the General Secretary of the Indian Section, Mrs Manju Sundaram, and other prominent members of the Federation and Section. Talks were given in both English and Telugu, and translations were made available immediately for the delegates. More than one hundred delegates registered for the Conference; however, the number attending the inauguration was about 150. Bro. K.V.K. Nehru made a PowerPoint presentation in Telugu, and CDs of this presentation were distributed free of cost to the delegates. Bro. Nehru's presentation is available in six different languages on CD. Several Theosophical books have been translated into Telugu, and Mrs Burnier released three of these, as well as other books, at the Conference.

Some of Our Travels: by Bernice Croft

One of the good decisions I made more than thirty years ago was joining the Wellington Branch of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand. This decision has had a marked influence on my life. In 2001, I was invited to work at Adyar, and for ten years served as Secretary to International President Radha Burnier. During this time, I accompanied President Radha on travels within India and world-

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wide. Earlier this year, I received an e-mail from President Radha asking if I would be available to travel with her.

The first stop was at Krotona in the Ojai Valley, California, where we stayed for about twenty days. This magnificent Centre is set in approximately forty acres of rolling country, with huge mountains in the distance which were veiled in a blue haze each morning. The main structures at Krotona are made up of a large hall, library and bookshop which are built around a water feature, an ES Administration building, and residences which are surrounded by rose gardens. A few years ago, a member who lived at Krotona left a donation, and this was used to create a 'Garden of Connections'. A large piece of sloping land was landscaped, large boulders were placed strategically with a central feature being a Buddha statue with water pouring from the top of the head. On each stone a plaque representing the world religions was placed. Birds, bees, rabbits, ground moles and many species of animals can be seen in this garden as well as in other parts of Krotona, just going about their life. The gardens are beautifully maintained.

During our visit, President Radha attended an ES Retreat, various meetings, walked along the road near her accommodation, and on the final evening attended 'A Spring Recital for Violin' by Carmelo de los Santos, a Theosophist who was born in Brazil. I was able to attend two sessions of the Spring Programme hosted by the Krotona Institute

of Theosophy on 'Cooperation and Communion'. One of the advantages of attending this series was that I was able to bring back recordings to my Lodge in New Zealand.

From Krotona, we travelled to Olcott, the American Headquarters of the Theosophical Society where President Radha was warmly received by President Tim Boyd. There she met sixty-five workers and volunteers who gathered in the auditorium. President Radha spoke on the work of the Society, answered questions, and later photographs were taken alongside the magnificent flowering rhododendrons. During our stay at Olcott, President Radha's niece and nephew and members of their families hosted a family gathering.

Our next journey was to No. 17 Tekels Park, where we stayed at the Esoteric Centre. Again there was an abundance of wildlife, birds and squirrels foraging for food daily, and eagerly awaiting hand-outs from the kitchen. Our meals often took some time as we watched the antics of the various species of wildlife. One evening, a large red fox came right to the courtyard beside the dining room.

St Michaels at Naarden, Holland, was our final destination, where we stayed in a big country house built in 1912.

My overall impression of this trip was that the Society is well managed in the Centres we visited, with dedicated members living and working towards the dissemination of Theosophy, one of the highlights being that some members have offered to come and work at Adyar. ✧

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