



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover Picture: Flower buds of the Century plant (*Agave americana*), Adyar – J. Suresh

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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.

Presidential Address

To the 136th Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society
Adyar, 26 December 2011

Every Convention has a special atmosphere and we are all privileged recipients of this blessing. May we open our hearts and minds to receive this power and let it penetrate our being and our relations. Every Convention is not only an occasion to hear and receive, but also a time, unlike others, to turn ourselves to higher influences and let them raise us to greater heights.

We have also the opportunity to allow the blessings from the Great Ones to fill us, and the whole of Nature to bring teachings of the source of life and love.

May those who are the embodiment of Love immortal bless with their help and guidance this Society, founded to be a channel for their work. May They inspire it with their Wisdom, strengthen it with their Power, and energize it with their Activity.

I am happy to open this 136th Annual Convention of the TS.

When we look into ourselves we wonder about the gradual process of a material body coming to an end. Many people are afraid that this will be the real end. But perhaps we can know by whatever knowledge we have of Theosophy, or of some philosophy, that indeed we have only been concerned with a small part of life. The sojourn in other worlds may make us think, when we come back again to life at the physical level. Some part of what we are thinking, our thoughts of both what has passed and what may come, suffering and pain perhaps, make us realize what needs to be done — to bring a quality of tranquillity and peace in the physical sphere.

Our thoughts may make us a little more aware, especially now that the human being has more power and knowledge at his disposal. In the beginning he may be entirely self-centred. But he goes on until he discovers that there is a great world of marvel on every side in the natural sphere. To see this and act rightly in the face of the vast world around us, full of beauty, wonder, and the possibility of more opening to greater knowledge, is an incredible happening. How can we live, as we ought to be, aware in greater and greater measure of the beauty of life and the opening of our vision to greater experience? There is so much to think about. The small things of everyday life, although

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they need to be looked at and dealt with, matter only a little bit. The great thing is to see an ever larger space, and grow inwardly so that the existence of this physical body is of no importance.

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Arjuna realizes that Śrī Kṛṣṇa represents the Divine Life. He asks Kṛṣṇa: 'Who is the One without a second who is above all things; deign to tell me without reserve of Thine divine glory.' Then Kṛṣṇa points out how he is seated at the heart of all things and there is no end to his Being. 'Whatsoever is glorious, good, beautiful and mighty, understand thou that to go forth from a fragment of my splendour.'

This means that the qualities mentioned by Śrī Kṛṣṇa exist everywhere in manifestation, both in form and in consciousness. There is increasing perfection and infinite variety in the forms which emanate out of him. Human beings can study and partly know this perfection and something of the Cosmic Order through revelations of Beauty, Intelligence, Love and other divine qualities. HPB calls this 'the spiritual and psychic blending of man with Nature'.

The beautiful, for example, can be seen even in ordinary things, and what a man thinks below his level can be destroyed. So there are numerous people who do not hesitate to turn a part of the earth into material which will promote a large amount of money, or what people think is the equivalent of money. This is one of the important reasons why species after species disappears from existence. They are considered unimportant as

living beings and that they deserve this fate. Hundreds of varieties of insects and other small creatures are put to an end in this way.

But the words of the *Bhagavadgītā* tell us that this kind of attitude is not worthy of being regarded as spiritual. What is spiritual is to see the beautiful everywhere; the good and mighty are all around us, even in things which we may regard as dead. So the ordinary individual may go into a desert, forest or a piece of land which is nearby, and regard it all as useless or needing change. But in fact, what he sees is quite different. Everywhere in the desert and forest upon this earth the splendour and light of the divine shows itself. But we must have the eyes to see.

The eyes do not see except perhaps a little bit now and again. In one of Dickens' novels, there is a crude and unpleasant person who sees no good anywhere, but sometimes he feels an affection for the dog which is attached to him and follows him. This is a metaphor for the little bit of perception that even the 'worthless of human beings' have. Those who are more advanced see not only the wonderful qualities in Nature and in forms but also in consciousness, while the average person sees like the savage seeing a little bit of the loveable in the dog which follows him.

HPB with her extraordinary insight saw the hidden goodness even in characters which appeared crude to others. When she was asked why she met such people she replied that she could not help it. 'The

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spiritual and psychic blending of man with Nature' exists even in a person of no character and this could be seen by one who had advanced much above other human beings. It is to this hidden but essential factor that we have to look to know what our own future will be and what the Cosmic Order reveals to those who have begun to see.

This is true as David Bohm found by his study of the universe. He said, in his book, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, that Order and Unity are part of implicate order, which constitutes a fundamental reality. Man would be quite a different person if he discovers, or begins to discover, this characteristic, which shows part of itself in all of life. But we are so occupied by our ambitions, worry, and other things which belong to the personal self that we do not realize what actually exists. Only the enlightened people fully comprehend this fact; therefore, the world in which people are destroying everything, changing things according to their likes and dislikes and so on, is not real. Therefore, the world is māyā.

Māyā does not refer to what we understand. What we perceive and experience, is not total illusion, but since it converts and gives meaning to everything according to its own likes and dislikes, it is illusion. What we see is not what exists. The *Bhagavadgītā* says: 'Thyself indeed knowest thyself by thyself.' This means that when we have a false understanding of ourselves, everything else we think that we know is also not true. This knowledge is of paramount importance, and sooner

or later we have to come to it. This is all meditation: To know that even the smallest things that exist are resplendent with that element of divinity which makes them equal to the highest, that the lowest of things contain within, the divine element.

Laurence Bendit and his wife, Phoebe, write in one of their books that while looking at a handful of common earth they became aware of a great light shining through what seemed ordinary earth. It is the presence of divine glory and all enlightened people know this.

Arjuna asks how a person knows that immortal existence which lies at the heart of everything, from the earth which may appear dead, to the unlimited life, God. Then Kṛṣṇa says: 'I am the self, seated in the heart of all beings.' The whole of Cosmic Order reveals Beauty, Intelligence and Love. It is left to each one, to cleanse and uplift his nature so that he or she sees this and not the ordinary objects open to the psyche of every man of the world.

So, as Theosophists, part of our work is to become aware of this glorious nature which is omnipresent. How can this be done? We can discuss that; but first of all we must realize, at least intellectually, that in every particle of existence there is the divine element. It makes all the difference for a person to be aware of even a little part of that fact.

The teachings of Theosophy are extremely important for those who wish to understand the nature of life. The quicker their understanding takes place, the faster is the progress made towards a new life. For instance, Reincarnation and Karma

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are not teachings, they are a necessity which must become embedded in consciousness. Reincarnation makes one understand little by little; our experiences and circumstances teach us when we want

to learn. But they can be quick if we are in a position to grasp them, or slow. What we are saying is meant to help us to advance quickly and help those who are coming along.

* * *

The Indian Section, as pointed out many times, is the largest. We must therefore consider what is needed in other areas that remain small. The General Secretary of the Indian Section writes that of all living things man is perhaps the most unique, because of his thinking capacity which makes him more free than all living beings on earth. He says: 'It is a strange and ironical phenomenon that most of the problems in the world have been created by man.' So we have to understand whether man is really thinking of the problems facing him and other creatures in the right way. The Indian General Secretary also says: 'Behind the present crisis lies the crisis of moral and spiritual lives and it is only through the affirmation of what is right that we can give meaning to our lives.'

The sense of values is needed for good action to arise from right concepts. In the words of HPB: 'Every mean and selfish action sends us backward and not forward, while every noble thought and every unselfish deed are stepping stones to the higher and more glorious plan of being.' The Indian Section more than any other must concentrate on the regeneration of this country and the world.

Many Indian activities took place which we cannot, in a limited time,

describe, but we feel happy that the Section has been active both at the Headquarters and elsewhere. Adyar Day was observed on 17 February as usual and a good talk was given by Prof. Anjan Chakravathy. The eighty-eighth South Indian Theosophical Conference was also held as usual at Adyar and many members participated. A camp was held for study of *At the Feet of the Master* in October at the Section Headquarters to mark the centenary of its publication. A National Seminar on 'The True Path of Theosophy' was held in Hyderabad and the following points were considered: Why the Society was formed and how does it help humanity in its progression; and the responsibility of the members to themselves and to the world.

The General Secretary, Brother S. Sundaram, visited several places in the vast country and gave talks. He was supported by various people, Messrs N. C. Ramanujachary, C. A. Shinde and P. K. Jayaswal among others. They, of course, spoke in many other places. The Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, and Bro. Pedro Oliveira were the main guests at many conferences and Federation meetings.

The Section had to surrender a small part of its land to the city of Varanasi to improve the traffic, but while this may be

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regretted, at the same time it vastly improved the Capital Fund of the Section. We are told that important matters were discussed at the Headquarters and this was very fruitful.

In Pakistan, the TS is functioning minimally at its Headquarters in Karachi, owing to the political conditions. In Sri Lanka, work goes on at the Headquarters in Colombo and a few other places but conditions have been difficult.

The American Section is still by far the largest after the Indian Section, and increased its membership to 3328. They produced a large number of video as well as audio cassettes for Lodges to make use of. This year, a special video entitled *Milwaukee Memoirs* was produced, as a tribute to Miss Joy Mills who began her career in Milwaukee. She is one of the Section's oldest members.

The Section has development work on its website all the time, while the archivist continues to expand resources to reach a larger number of people. A big project of the Section was the installation of a Security Camera system in the main building and the bookstore. The Section is very happy to receive favourable reports on the Dalai Lama in Chicago, hosted by it.

It may be realized that there are various ways in which to present the work: one of them is to gather everything about a particular area but another is to put all the Sections together in a continent. This time we are going to try the latter. But alas! We do not have the report from Canada to get the American area completely. So, we will pass on to Puerto Rico where the

work is continuing in spite of many difficulties. Much of their Headquarters was occupied until recently by Alice Bailey admirers. We are not against them or anybody else, but obviously they do not belong to our Society. They were merely using it for their own benefit. This was to such an extent in Puerto Rico that it became a problem, but it has been solved. They left and the work is going on 'with confidence and enthusiasm'.

Visits from Nelda Samarel and Juliana Cesano in Dominica were appreciated, and they hope to have them again. It is reported from the Dominican Republic that the Theosophical Society is slowly growing there. They had a public lecture by Juliana Cesano with fifty members. Much help was given by Mrs Magaly Polanco. They are looking for an adequate and secure land where they can have a National Centre.

The Cuban Section also had many difficulties because the Government of the country is in the hands of communists who are anti-religious, but in spite of that in January last, the Convention of the Society took place. The building in Havana seemed to be in danger, like many other buildings, of being taken over by the Government, but that problem has been overcome. In spite of all the difficulties the Section has nearly 600 members.

Brazil has had new life put into it, with an increase in numbers instead of a fall; this year the membership is twenty-three above, the previous one showing a total of 730. The number of Lodges and

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Groups is fifty. Special attention has been given to Lodges, Study Groups and unattached members, who have received support for their work. About 1,500 copies of their magazine are brought out.

The Theosophical Summer School was held in January on the theme: 'The Wisdom of the *Bhagavadgītā*'. It had 150 members as participants and Mr and Mrs Oliveira were the main speakers. The regional meetings are also being stimulated with the result that a small number of younger people have joined. The Department of Culture concentrated on planning and coordination, and efforts have been made to render the activities to be known more by the public.

In Costa Rica the report says that there was a small decrease in membership, but there are four Lodges and one Centre of Studies. We can hope for improvement in this country since there were three Lodges earlier and they have been able to increase the total number.

The Lodge in Chile was suspended for a few months after the earthquake, but they could repair the damage caused to the building. They are also concentrating on electronic communication in addition to various other activities. The news from HPB Lodge in Cochabamba is in Spanish. I am unable to understand for the present what is taking place in Bolivia. But probably they are doing all right.

Peru has been trying hard to keep going well. There are twenty-three members; and in spite of difficulties, work goes on seriously. HPB Lodge studied CWL on the inner life and three other books, and

their magazine continues to be published. They are pleased with their victory in the second stage of the court case about the land. In Uruguay, which used to be a Section, there is for the last two years a reduction, but they are carrying on.

The Theosophical Society in West Africa celebrated seventy-five years of work and marked it by a public lecture by Dr Kwadwo Tutu. It is good to know that they want many more such lectures. The total number of members is 243, and plans are afoot to step up activities. *The Theosophist* goes to several libraries and universities. The Ivory Coast is struggling along because of war conditions. But a resumption of activities is taking place and they hope that with peace the work can continue.

East and Central Africa is spread out in four countries and the guest speaker, Miss Mary Anderson, gave talks at all the Lodges. Nairobi Lodge has a rich collection of books of interest. Various types of programmes to attract new people have been tried. In Kitwe, the new Lodge building has been opened. Public lectures were organized in Nairobi and also members' meetings. In Kitwe and Mufulira, work has been carried on in spite of difficulties as there are only five Lodges, but efforts are being made to revive some of the others, so that the Section can continue to be important. The TOS work was carried on and something is done for the different kingdoms.

In South Africa, five Lodges are active. One of the members, having studied Theosophy, has returned to Lubumbashi

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where he wishes to form a Lodge, for which he has received help from East Africa and other places.

The Theosophical Society in Ireland is growing steadily and slowly, from 'strength to strength'. During the past year, Belfast Lodge held regular meetings, starting initially with meditation. Phoenix and Coleraine Lodges are going on with regular meetings. In May, North and South Ireland members met together and had a programme.

The English Section had a good Summer School, we are told, and Mr Bhupendra Vora delivered the Blavatsky Lecture. Several well-attended weekends took place in the Section. The main centre of activities is the Headquarters where work goes on throughout the year. A distance learning unit has been started with 134 students, which some of the students found very helpful. A similar course will be run in the next year also. The English Section says it is working hard. Wales has four Lodges and a Centre with a total membership of ninety-five.

One of the problems that must be faced in several places is the belief that correspondence or regular exchanges by post, can replace personal contact, which in my opinion is not true. It is only personal contact which can develop universal brotherhood in reality, not merely on pieces of paper although they may contain fine words.

The European work goes on in various places but the number of members varies very much. In Slovenia, there are four Lodges and sixty members. Schools of

Theosophy took place in two venues, but of course, with a small attendance. The annual meeting was held in Celje, and they have started a website, with the result that some new bookshops have been selling theosophical books.

The Italian Section is by far the largest in Europe. They concentrate on a good fraternal relationship, service and meditation. The General Secretary quotes the words of HPB: 'Search for the Paths. But, O Lanoo, be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step learn to discern the real from the false, the ever fleeting from the everlasting. Learn above all to separate head-learning from Soul-Wisdom, the "eye" from the "Heart" doctrine.' What wonderful words which all of us Theosophists need, to guide us!

The Section has been celebrating the 105th Anniversary of National Unity when HPB's connection with Mazzini and Garibaldi was brought to the fore. It is reported that the financial situation of the Section is 'balanced and positive'. The Italian Section has now the possibility of circulating volumes in English, thanks to an arrangement with TPH, Adyar. The Section worked with France and Switzerland to organize a seminar in Ascona which was attended by more than a hundred members and sympathizers. The General Secretary says that constant touch with Adyar enables it to function better. The TOS in Italy is very active and has helped the general work of the organization a great deal.

The work in Iceland was centred on

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Krishnaji's statement: 'You are the world and the world is you.' The Section has changed its name, to which is attributed the influx of new members of whom there were twenty-two. Their newsletter continues to come out three times a year and the magazine *Gangleri* twice a year, going to about 500 subscribers. There were several new publications including *Light on the Path*.

The French Section has public lectures twice a month, in Paris and Marseilles. Seminars were organized at the Headquarters and the annual Convention had as its theme 'Truth is a Pathless Land'.

In Greece, their magazine, *Ilisos*, has been printed regularly and three books were reprinted. A Theosophical study group named *Hermes Trismegistus* has been started in the city of Thessaloniki. The Lodges have been generally doing well. In Croatia, they have had visits from Slovenian members and Miss Mary Anderson. Their magazine has been brought out for the eighth year.

In Germany, they had the theme 'The Journey is the Goal' for the Summer School. There are altogether 111 members. In Belgium, they have eighty-eight members in eight Lodges. The new Headquarters building has been renovated and a house-warming took place with about fifty people present. The Section celebrated its centenary and hopefully the membership will increase.

In the Netherlands, there are 386 members and a close relationship with the International Centre at Naarden. J. J. van der Leeuw's *The Conquest of Illusion* was

translated and a paperback version was presented to all members. The Theosophical Society in Finland is doing well. There are 437 members. Theosophy has been in Finland for more than a hundred years. The Society runs a Centre in Kreivila in the South-West. A book was published, entitled *Truth and Life of Yrjo Kallinen*, a Theosophist who was Defence Minister of the country, and founded three Lodges. This has given some publicity to the Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society in Sweden also has long-standing members but is not doing so well. Stockholm continues to have study groups, and weekends are organized when possible. There are many problems in Norway. Isis Resende from Brazil visited the Lodges in Bergen and Oslo.

The Presidential representative in Hungary says that the number of members is thirty-nine. Many of the members live in different places in the country but they are carrying on.

The Society has sixty-two members in Ukraine in four Lodges. Seminars have been held in several places, but there is hope that the work will progress.

Singapore Lodge has 366 members but all have not renewed their subscriptions. The principal source of the income for the Lodge is membership subscriptions and also book sales. Meditation courses, study of *The Mahatma Letters* and *The Key to Theosophy* and other lectures took place. Thirty-six members of the Lodge participated in the International Convention.

The report from Abraham Oron, Israel, is full of enthusiasm. Members went out

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into Nature once every two months for Study and Meditation. An inter-religious convention was held in May with 140 participants. Four courses of Theosophy were conducted. Three active study groups meet once a month. The magazine *Or* (Light) has been regularly published.

The Australian Section's report has come from the retiring General Secretary at the very end of her term. We therefore do not know how far her suggestions will make headway. The Section's website has been redesigned. There are now 1133 members. The Retreat Centres in Queensland and New South Wales are proceeding well.

The TOS has now many active centres throughout the world. It intends to make a little impact with material towards the work of the world organization, the UN. It has enlarged and improved its initiatives.

The School of the Wisdom proceeded to organize programmes which were appreciated. Dr V. V. Chalam conducted the first one with many occasions for meditation. The second one was three weeks long and dealt with topics of importance. It was led by Prof. C. A. Shinde. The third one was conducted by Mr Ricardo Lindemann from Brazil and dealt with interesting connections between Astrology and Theosophy.

The Olcott Education Society has five units of which the largest is the Olcott Memorial High School which has been regularly improved. The two annual

reports of the school and the TS must be compatible with each other; this has become necessary because the Olcott School is settled in the Society's premises, so also the Social Welfare Centre, the HPB Hostel and the Animal Welfare Centre. It is also proposed to run the Vocational Training Centre in the compound. A beginning has been made by shifting initial work to Damodar Gardens and by having a training programme in electrical and plumbing work.

The Besant Scout Centre helped 1,500 children, by providing camping experience in the compound of the Theosophical Society. An open shelter for multi-purpose use has been added to the camping site.

The last twelve months have brought higher royalty compared to the previous year to the Theosophical Publishing House. It is proposed to increase the subscriptions of the magazine. Three new editions and eleven reprints were brought out during the past year. Manpower constraints affect all our work and make a difference. The Adyar Library and Research Centre suffers from lack of competent scholars and we hope the situation will improve in our favour in the next few years.

* * *

This ends my report and I offer my warm good wishes to everyone present and also to every one of our members.

RADHA BURNIER

Theosophy and Current World Problems

ANTONIO GIRARDI

The truth is not in India or any other country. The truth is here, where you are. Do not look for it elsewhere. The truth is here, where you are, along with your pain, your suffering, your despair, *and your unhappiness*.¹

(J. Krishnamurti)

I WOULD like to start this account by paying heartfelt homage to the great pioneer of the Theosophical Society, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, whose eminent role acquires increasing importance every day. These three considerations from different scholars, are evidence of this:

The Theosophical Society, which she founded, has been the greatest supporter of occult philosophy in the West, and the single most important road to oriental teachings for the West. (J. Gordon Melton, 1991)

The importance of Theosophy in modern history should not be underestimated. The works of Blavatsky and others have not only inspired lots of generations of occultists, the movement has had a remarkable role in giving the colonized peoples of nineteenth century Asia back their spiritual heritage. (Robert S. Ellwood, 1989)

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky is definitely among the most original and perceptive minds of her time. Buried in the disorderly volume of her two greatest works lies the rudimentary form of the first philosophy of psychic and spiritual development appearing in the modern world. (Theodore Roszak, 1975)

Somebody stated that theosophy and spiritual research are not capable of explaining and, above all, resolving the world problems of the present times. One could actually say it is the opposite, that history has shown us that the tools that are defined as 'practical'; for example, the economy, politics, sociology, have not in the past, or today, been capable of resolving the problems of humanity. We have to ask ourselves the reason why.

The historical moment we are living in seems rich with possibility, but also with problems — it is useless listing these; we all know them well.

Mr Antonio Girardi is General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Italy.

Theosophy and Current World Problems

This account reflects history to some degree, with its swings and roundabouts that comprise hopes and falls, generous impulses and fears, love and negativity. We cannot say that the current problems of humanity are more or less serious than those in the past.

In reality, the problems of human beings — at least for the part of history that we know about — have basically stayed the same, and the exhausting development of levels of consciousness have not led to that collective development that the Sages in every era had hoped for.

Suffering and pain are present in the life of every individual and community. Maybe we should ask ourselves what the hidden meaning of this is for humanity. The Buddha tried to provide an answer to this issue by identifying a cause of suffering in the impermanence of everything.

The problems of humanity are basically the result of ignorance, fear and selfishness. These, in turn, are the offspring of the dominating sense of 'separateness', namely a fragmented perception of reality.

Man and humanity can solve their problems only by reflecting on the complexity of life, its Unity, and its spiritual reality. The Theosophical approach is woven around the awareness of this, as a possible positive response to the situation, based on the freedom of research and the concept of the Unity of Life.

In a written piece by Sri Ram, published recently in the Italian Theosophical magazine, the *Rivista Italiana di Teosofia*,² there is a valuable declaration:

Unity and diversity are both summarized by Brotherhood, which is a concrete, comprehensive relationship. Brotherhood recognizes differences, such as occur in a family, but never forgets unity. This Brotherhood is the key to solving all our problems; it is a pure relationship, because in it there is no possession. Possession implies enjoyment and inevitably leads to conflict.

The concept of a pure relationship is of extraordinary importance, because in our three-dimensional world the perception of problems and their unfolding take place in a spiritual and temporal dimension. Indeed we could say that the reality that we perceive as three-dimensional and temporal is the 'site' of 'problems'. At least until a higher understanding intervenes there is no base to the Unity of Life and the consideration that 'a real relationship has to allow every difference to be shown in its unique splendour'.³

In current times the reality of each day shows us, in various aspects, how humanity is really closely connected in its various components, regardless of cultural differences, geographical location, or political inclinations. Just think about how easy it is to travel, about the so-called 'information highway', the Internet, etc. Think about the Chernobyl incident in our recent past, which dramatically involved many countries and millions of people who speak different languages, have different values, live in countries that are thousands of kilometres away. In this case too, Life, however difficult it may be,

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clearly wanted to demonstrate its global character.

It is easy to think yet again about the amount of force with which this idea of Unity of Life was confirmed in *The Mahatma Letters* and *The Secret Doctrine*.⁴

The unity of all forms and possibilities, feeling, even existentially, part of everything, a fraternal way of imagining existence, leads us near to that which, after all, is one of the most mysterious, fascinating aspects of man — total communal living and the close connection between individual social aspects, between singular and plural, between individual catharsis and rich cultural, racial and family heritage.

Deep down in man an explanatory and collective consciousness naturally exist side by side, and both are only arbitrarily divisible. We can also observe how, in explaining many problems which human beings find themselves facing at various levels (psychological, existential, political, social, etc.) and finding their solutions, great symbolic force holds the Buddhist formulation of the Four Noble Truths (the Truths of Suffering, of the Origin of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, the Path to the Cessation of Suffering) and the Noble Eightfold Path.

Humanity is certainly aware of its problems, but much less so of the causes. To this effect Eternal Wisdom has given us many tools of understanding and awareness; we just have to think about the principles of karma and reincarnation.

How fascinating the experience is of

taking ourselves beyond a level of consciousness to a level of intuition, and beyond the reality of an existence which has been conditioned too much, on a three-dimensional plane, by impermanence and the domination of an illusory 'me'. A 'me' limited and full of 'mental impressions' always has to achieve results (be they spiritual or material), to confirm superiority and difference compared with others.

What is the path then for being fully aware of everything? To answer this question, in the absence of direct experience in this regard, I will leave it to the great German mystic Meister Eckhart:

First of all you must abandon yourself — by doing so you abandon everything. To be truthful, if a man abandoned a kingdom or the whole world and maintained himself, he would not really have abandoned anything. If however a man has abandoned himself, even if he has kept riches, honour or anything else, he has already abandoned everything. . . . Therefore watch over yourself and abandon yourself there where you happen to be: this is more important than anything. . . . You must know that there is no man so detached in this life that he can no longer give himself up.⁵

The words of Meister Eckhart recall the completeness of the teachings of J. Krishnamurti which state:

In the secret recesses of the mind the truth has been put aside by symbols, words and images; there is no mystery there, they are just agitated thoughts. In the resulting awareness and actions there is wonder,

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appreciation and pleasure. But the mystery is something else. It is not an experience to identify, store and remember. Experience is the death of that incommunicable mystery; to communicate you need words, gestures and expressions, but to enter into communion with 'that certain something', the mind and all of your being stay at the same level, time and grade of intensity for that which is called mysterious. This is love. With this the entire mystery of the Universe is revealed.⁶

Careful observation therefore, abandonment of self-image and the great sense of the sanctity of Life are needed. But how can we connect all this to the possible solution of social and existential problems, at least dialectically?

There is no doubt that the universe of an individually free man cannot do anything other than lead to, naturally and as a direct consequence, an improvement in the whole social structure; it also seems reasonable to suppose that it is precisely from an individual that the basis for new human consciousness must start. It is precisely due to this that I believe that the value of Utopia can be stated again in the present day.

Throughout history there have been, and there still are, examples of experience that have borne witness to the possibility and beauty of living based on mutual respect, freedom of action, and constructive work.

Utopia accompanies man and fantasy reasserts it. This word does not therefore appear so much in its meaning as 'a place

that does not exist', as in the meaning of 'good place'.

The place that is not there could, in summary, also be a dimension which is always active where consciousness casts a glance at the supreme good.⁷

Many experiences are witness to the precious value of 'courage in doing' and the 'possible Utopia'.⁸

History has shown us that politics and economics, science and religion in themselves, have not been able to solve the problems of humanity. This is the case because the dimension of their means was ruined due to fear of the 'objectives', often without a sufficient ethical basis. However, it is possible that it answers to many of today's problems in the world as they exist. These very answers pass through the awareness of the holistic and therefore global dimension of humanity's reality.

It is then from the individual that the journey towards the realization of the Brotherhood, a philosophical, real dimension at any point, begins. A dimension that involves various levels of Life and the Individual — our body and emotions, our thoughts and dreams, and all our relationships.

In reality it is in relationships that there has to 'be' the Brotherhood, which at any point is a condition that involves the personality and the soul, and which is realized in the present, in the 'here and now', well beyond the pleasure that makes us consider someone or something in terms of likeability or otherwise.

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The Brotherhood is connected to the Unity of Life and guarantees, in its multi-faceted forms, the possibility that the 'pure relationship' exists, with an ethically solid basis, which is capable of 'illuminating' the tools for living individually and collectively. In this respect the Theosophical approach is also an approach that is full of hope and strength.

I would like to conclude with an extract from *The Voice of the Silence* by H. P. Blavatsky:

The path that leads on is lit by a single fire, by the fire of daring which burns in the heart. The more you dare the more you will obtain. The more you fear, the more the light will fade — and it is only this that can guide you.⁹

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**If you try to be somebody by being like everybody . . .
you'll be a nobody.**

Anonymous

The World is the Extended Self

MARY ANDERSON

WHAT do we mean by the ‘self’?

‘Self’ is a reflexive pronoun. It refers back to the subject, for example, to ‘me’. It reflects the subject, as when we say ‘I see myself in the mirror’ or ‘a self-made man’, meaning one who has made himself in the sense that he owes his status, his fortune, etc., to himself, to his own efforts. The word ‘self’ may also emphasize the subject, as when we say ‘Only you yourself can do this’ or ‘I saw it myself’. If we are anything, we are ‘ourselves’. When we feel out of sorts we may say ‘I am not myself today’.

But ‘self’ can have different meanings. If we look in the mirror, we say ‘I see myself’, but what we see is a physical body. If we are hungry or cold or in pain or comfortable, we describe what we call ourselves as hungry, cold, in pain or comfortable. But in such a case, is it not the body that is all these things?

We may see ourselves in many other different ways. If we are happy or sad, we feel it is ourselves who are happy or sad. And if we have solved a problem, we may say: ‘I found the solution myself’ and think how clever that self is. But in moments of inspiration, perhaps listening

to music or enjoying the peace of nature, or filled with affection or devotion or in a state of meditation, we may consider ourselves inspired and have a wider vista of that ‘self’.

So is what we refer to as the ‘self’ always the same self? And if we believe in reincarnation, we may ask ourselves ‘Is it the same self that reincarnates as in the last life?’

So the ‘self’ can mean many things, especially when we go deeply into a spiritual philosophy like Theosophy. Thus the system has sometimes been adopted of writing the word ‘self’ in three different ways: in small letters, to refer to our everyday conscious *self*; with a capital ‘S’, to refer to the spiritual *Self* and in block capitals meaning the one divine *SELF*.

Let us consider the meaning of each in turn:

Written in small letters, the *self* refers to what is called in Theosophical terms the personality, our little, more or less selfish everyday self, consisting of our physical body, the visible tip of the iceberg, all the rest being invisible, including that physical body’s vitality and the vehicle of that vitality, plus our everyday

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consciousness, our psychic or psychological consciousness, that is, our everyday thoughts combined with our feelings. This is what is known as *kāma-manas* in Sanskrit or the desire-mind, the impure or selfish mind, and also the so-called logical mind. All this, the physical body and our psychological nature, constitutes what is called in Theosophical terms the *personality*. The word 'personality' comes from the Latin *persona*, meaning the mask worn by actors in the classical Roman theatre. The personality is indeed a mask which we wear most of the time. Sometimes we are indeed aware that we are wearing a mask. This mask, however, lasts for one incarnation only, just as the actor in the Roman theatre wore his mask only during his performance. Our incarnation is merely one performance in or as the mask provided for that performance. But we identify ourselves with it. However, tomorrow or in the next life, we shall wear another mask, perhaps in a sense the child and certainly the heir of the previous mask.

This 'self' is but a ray of the 'Self', taken to refer to the Spiritual Self, which we sometimes call in Theosophical terms the Higher Self, the Individuality, the Spiritual Ego or the Soul — in Sanskrit *Buddhi-Manas*. It is the spiritual mind, free from desires and stormy feelings, the Higher Mind, the pure mind, the unselfish mind. It is at the same time pure wisdom and pure love. This Self is mostly unconscious in us. It endures from incarnation to incarnation — as long as we are subject to incarnation. When we are no longer

subject to incarnation it dissolves or rather flows back into its origin, into the SELF, as the river flows into the ocean of which it is a drop or the ray of light returns to its source.

That ocean or that source of light is the SELF. It is Spirit or, in Sanskrit, *ātmā*. It is not 'my' spirit or 'your' spirit, but is universal and divine: *ātmā* is *brahman*. As the sun is the heart of our solar system, so is *ātmā* which is *brahman* the heart not only of all human beings but also of all living beings, even of what we consider dead matter. It is the One without a second, the One which is the All. It is *sat*, pure being, what Mme Blavatsky calls not just Being but Be-ness. It is the divine dwelling in everything.

But normally we are conscious only at the level of the personality, of the 'self'. However, we are not only that personality. The difficulty is that we have forgotten who we are and, like a good actor, we identify ourselves with the part we are playing in this life. Our real being, our spiritual Self and ultimately that divine SELF, are unconscious within us.

* * *

If we say that the world is the extended self, which self do we mean? The phrase may be taken to refer to all three 'selves'. We can say that the world we live in is an extension of the self, the Self and the SELF. Let us take each of these interpretations in turn and see how they apply to ourselves and to the world we live in and how they throw light on our present predicament and its possible solution.

We shall begin with the SELF in the

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highest sense. From a very lofty and metaphysical point of view *the world is the extended SELF*, meaning Spirit or *ātmā* which is *brahman*. The cosmogonies or creation legends of different civilizations and religions all relate something similar:

Out of the ONE which is Spirit, TAT, Brahman or the Absolute, there emerge the two, called variously 'heaven and earth' or 'consciousness and matter' or 'father and mother'. As soon as two emerge, a third follows: the relationship between the two. There must be a relationship, because they come from the same source. That relationship is sometimes known as 'Fohat' or cosmic energy, another term for Fohat being *eros* or love. Another presentation relates that a child is born from father and mother and that child is the universe. Thus, out of the one emerge the two and out of the two emerge the three or the Trinity which we find in different religious traditions. In some traditions the three is followed by the seven and, through many stages or hierarchies, this world of the ten thousand things, as Chinese tradition calls it — indeed, this universe — emerges. In the Kabbala presentation of the tree of life, the ten Sefiroth are depicted in the mystical tradition of the Zohar 'not as the steps of a ladder between God and the world, but as various stages in the manifestation of the Divinity which proceed from and succeed each other' (Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 209).

Thus we can say that the world, indeed the universe, the cosmos, is the extended

SELF — in capital letters.

But when we say the world is the extended 'self', written in small letters, we might say we descend from the sublime to the ridiculous — from the transcendental to our everyday imperfect world, from the Real to the world of *Māyā*.

And yet is not our world, as we know it, also real? — or at least relatively real? Must we not take that relatively real world seriously?

The Universe is called, with everything in it, *Māyā*, because all is temporary therein . . . Yet the Universe is real enough to the conscious beings in it, which are as unreal as it is itself. (H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, I, p. 274)

When we look at ourselves and the world around us, which are more real to us than the world of the SELF in capitals, do we not realize that that world is an extension of the self written in small letters, that is, of the personality, the everyday self, the selfish self of us all?

Everywhere we witness the workings of three great evils, the scourges of mankind and therefore of the world: ignorance, lust or greed and hatred or anger, symbolized in the nave of the Tibetan Wheel of Life rather unfairly by three animals: a black pig representing ignorance, a red cock representing lust or greed and a green snake representing hatred or anger. And, aptly, they are biting each other's tails, meaning that they are interconnected. The one leads to the other.

Ignorance blinds us to the harmfulness of certain attitudes, to the mischief

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wrought by them, and out of such ignorance we succumb to greed, which means the desire to accumulate more and more — more possessions, wealth, useless knowledge, fame, the praise of others, power, etc. It is the little self puffing itself up, like the frog in the fable, wanting to become as big as an ox, and finally puffing and panting, expanding and expending itself, until it bursts! Perhaps this was a good lesson. A frog is not meant to be as big as an ox. A human being is not meant to acquire more and more. It will not bring happiness and man's better nature will be stifled and seem to perish in the attempt.

Out of greed and lust comes hatred — hatred for those who will not give us what we want — and what we want is more and more; hatred for those who have what we want to possess. We may think of other curses of human life, such as jealousy or fear. Perhaps the list of these three, ignorance, lust and hatred, is not meant to be complete but only to provide examples of how we make ourselves and others miserable!

Ignorance, combined with greed, leads to stupid actions which destroy our environment. If this destruction happens in another continent, we may feel it does not concern us. But it will sooner or later have an effect on us. We live in one world. Pollution in one continent, in one ocean, spreads throughout the world, affecting, for example, the climate everywhere. Remember *el niño*! Out of desperation, people from deprived countries, starving and unemployed, try to emigrate to affluent areas and create many

problems for the very countries which have caused their misery. These problems include racial strife, based on hatred. Hatred arises from the feeling that we are different from and better than others and this hatred leads to jealousy and fear and to violence.

We may think of ignorance, lust and hatred as, so to speak, our enemies and therefore outside us, threatening us, but they are not outside us. As long as we are susceptible to them, they are part of us, as we are now, part of our consciousness. What is the solution?

The solution lies in a world which is an extension of the Self with a capital 'S' referring to the Higher Self, our inner, spiritual nature. If the Higher Self is expressed, the Self which embodies wisdom, humility and love, the world will also reflect or be an extension of that Self, and wisdom will replace ignorance; lust and greed will give way to humility, and love will replace hatred.

The problem is: Where do we begin? The first step may be to recognize the state of affairs. Many books and many articles have been and are written, showing up abuses of various kinds perpetrated against underprivileged individuals and countries. But do these articles and books go to the root of the trouble? What is the root of the trouble? Is it not the self, in small letters, which is each one of us in our present conscious nature? If we can really realize this, realize the ugliness of the ignorance, greed and hatred in ourselves, if we can see the harm they cause to us and to others, this is a first

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step towards their disappearance. If, on the other hand, we can see the beauty of true wisdom, true humility and true affection, we may strengthen these qualities in ourselves. But we must not think of ourselves as showing forth those qualities or we may become subject to spiritual pride. What hinders the expression and the extension of the Self with a capital 'S', which is in itself wisdom, humility and love? It is the little self, in small letters. Only when the little self is silent, only when it is no longer present, even momentarily, can the other Self find expression. In self-forgetfulness lie wisdom, humility and love — and infinite happiness for us and, through spontaneous extension, for the world. Only when more and more human beings become unselfish, self-forgetful and selfless can the world become the reflection of the Self with a capital 'S', the Higher Self of Humanity,

and thus reflect its own origin, its true nature, in the DIVINE SELF, in capital letters, in THE ONE, which is our origin, and, however remote, our destiny, as well as our true being.

Can we now better understand the following verses in the *Bhagavadgītā* (VI.5–7)?:

Let him raise the self by the SELF and not let the self become depressed; for verily is the SELF the friend of the self, and also the SELF the self's enemy.

The SELF is the friend of the self of him in whom the self by the SELF is vanquished; but to the unsubdued self the SELF verily becometh hostile as an enemy.

The higher Self of him who is SELF-controlled and peaceful is uniform in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, as well as in honour and dishonour.

Either a universe that is all order, or else a farrago thrown together at random yet somehow forming a universe. But can there be some measure of order subsisting in yourself, and at the same time disorder in the greater Whole? And that, too, when oneness of feeling exists between all the parts of nature, in spite of their divergence and dispersion?

Marcus Aurelius
Meditations

Men and Animals

ANNIE BESANT

THE relation of man to the lower animals is but very partially understood, chiefly because animals are generally regarded as 'having no souls', and hence as being divided from man by an insuperable gulf. In Italy this idea has been carried so far that even cruelty is excused, under the plea '*Non e Christiano*', 'It is not a Christian', as though the absence of a future life justified the making of the present life miserable! But even among kindly-hearted people there is a very general idea that animals are merely an appendage of man, and that, as it is often phrased, 'God made animals for man's use'. Hence the animal is regarded only in the light of its usefulness to man, and to consider the welfare and evolution of the animal as a separate being would, to most people, savour of the absurd.

Yet it is not absurd if the animal, like man, should be an evolving creature, if the animal should in some sense have a 'soul'. Now, in the animal we find maternal affection, capacity of love, fear of pain, and dawning intelligence, and in some we see great courage, endurance, fidelity and devotion to a master. Great as are the differences between these and the corresponding qualities in a civilized man, they

are differences in degree rather than in kind, and a better moral character may be found in a domesticated dog than in a low type of primitive man.

A brave, loving dog, faithful to death, would seem to be more worthy of immortality than a bloodthirsty, cruel, treacherous savage. Yet ordinary orthodoxy dooms the one to extinction and awards immortality to the other.

Now, it is true that there is one important difference between an animal and a man; both are vivified by an immortal Spirit, whose powers are more or less unfolded and active; but the bridge between the immortal spirit and the perishing body, that which is sometimes called 'the soul', the intelligent, self-conscious 'I', is present in the man, even in the most brutal primitive man, and is normally absent in the animal.

Take a flock of sheep, a herd of cattle, any group of similar animals, wild or domesticated, and a marked similarity of thought, feeling and action may be observed among them. They are largely guided by instincts, which they share in common, and comparatively little by individual reasoning; it is as though there were 'a common soul' guiding them all.

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But when one of the higher animals comes into close relations with men — such an animal as a dog or a cat — a gradual change is visible to the close observer. If the animal be a favourable specimen of its class, and be strongly devoted to its owner, it will gradually separate itself off from its kind, and begin to show marks of individuality; it will evolve strong likes and dislikes, will follow ways of its own, will manifest ever-increasing powers of reasoning, and anyone who can use clairvoyant vision will see that a change has taken place in the super-physical bodies of such an animal.

Now, a man, however undeveloped, however primitive, shows an astral body, a mental body, and a causal body, with the spirit brooding over and vivifying all. But an animal shows an astral body, a vague cloud representing an embryonic mental body and the over-brooding spirit; the causal body, that which makes possible the self-conscious 'I', is absent. Herein lies the difference between the animal and man, between the noblest ordinary animal and the most brutal person.

But when a highly-developed animal becomes intensely devoted to some human being, and clings to him with passionate and unwavering fidelity, the play of the human self-conscious intelligence stimulates the dawning intelligence and quickens the unfolding of the spirit in the animal, and at last, as it were, a flash, like an electric spark, springs across the gulf between the over-brooding spirit and the embryonic mental body, a bridge of

light spans the gulf, the causal body is formed, the 'soul' is born. Henceforth that animal is separated off from its kind, and has completed the term of animal evolution. Its death will be followed by an immense period of rest and inner growth, and it will, long ages hence, be borne into some future humanity, to begin the long course of human evolution.

These individualized animals are, indeed, rare exceptions, but all animals are treading the path which leads to individualization, and their progress is hastened or retarded by the human beings with whom they come into contact. The dog, the cat and the horse are the three animals capable of profiting most by association with man, and their progress in the animal kingdom may be much quickened by the wise, firm and sympathetic training given to them by their elder brothers, men. Even when they may not reach the point of individualization, they may be led up near to it, and a link is made between them and their masters which, in the future, will be a source of benefit and happiness to both.

The practical difference which the adoption of this view of animals would cause in the relationship between them and men would not be the relinquishment of their services, nor the loss of their utility. They would be used as much as they are now, but the treatment of them would be always kind, considerate, firm and judicious. The training of the animal would be regarded as useful to the animal as well as to the man; hasty and unnecessary blows and savage language would be

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avoided, and harsh punishment of horse or dog would be regarded as showing the owner's incapacity to train and educate aright. All cruel methods of breaking would be abandoned, trust and confidence on the part of the animal would be encouraged, and we should hear much less of 'incurably vicious horses' — vice which is mostly the result of human stupidity and cruelty.

Man must gradually learn to regard

himself as the divinely appointed ruler of the animal world, using his great powers to raise and train his subjects, not to crush and terrify them. He must cease to look on them as existing only for his use and comfort, and regard them as his infant brethren in the divine family, knowing that he is the representative to them of the Divine Being, to whom he must answer for the exercise of the kingship placed in his hands. ✧

**These men do never die;
They become the praised ones;
They shed mercy on the world with
myriad hands;
They help the helpless;
They aid the depressed;
They leave not those who follow them when
time of danger comes.
They are men only in name
In reality they are God Himself
These 'Solitary Ones' are marvellous.**

Bedil of Rohri

After Death — What?

D. P. SABNIS

THE *Bhagavadgītā* advises meditation upon birth, death, decay, sickness and error. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in the Second Chapter of the *Gītā* that ‘Death is certain to all things which are born, and rebirth to all mortals’ and therefore, not to grieve over the inevitable. What dies or perishes is only the physical body, but the true ‘Self’ is immortal. We are familiar only with the middle stage called life, but know nothing about the state before birth and after death, and hence the advice to meditate on birth and death. Before we discuss the states after death it is necessary to know that man is sevenfold. These seven constituents are: the Physical Body, Astral Body (*linga śarīra*), Life (*prāṇa*), Desire (*kāma rūpa*), Mind (*manas*), Wisdom (*buddhi*) and the Higher Self (*Ātmā*). In Theosophical parlance the former four elements or lower quaternary is termed as the ‘Personal Man’ or ‘Personality’ which is destructible and subject to change, whereas the latter three constituents are termed as the ‘Upper Triad’ or the ‘Real man’ because of being Immortal and Indestructible.

Let us now examine what is commonly termed as death. Generally, when the

heartbeats and pulse stop, we say that a man has died. But from the Theosophical point of view this is only the beginning of death. It can be said that out of the seven constituents, the physical body has died and the process of death moves forward from the physical to other levels. When a man is externally or bodily dead, the inner Real Man, who is imperishable, is busy internally. Before permanently leaving this particular body he sees his entire past life, like a movie. The Ego or *suṭrātmā* views the life just ended, as it was, like a spectator, without any praise or self-deception, and understands the causes set in motion during his lifetime and the justice in whatever he had to suffer. This ‘review’ enables one to understand the power and the justice of the Law of Karma. The ‘review’ happens in every case, whether the person led a good or bad life, and whether the death was natural or unnatural.

As soon as the Real Man’s task of ‘reviewing’ the past life is over, the five constituents, minus the physical body and the life energy, pass to the astral region called Kāmaloka. Kāmaloka is the world or plane of feelings and desires. In

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Theosophy it is also termed as the Desire Plane because it is related to, and dominated and controlled by, desires. In a relative sense, this world is an invisible astral realm, surrounding and penetrating our earth. It is beyond our physical senses to know or understand it and yet it does exist. Kāmaloka is the Christian 'purgatory', and is compared to a slag-pit, meaning a pit into which the waste material separated from the heating of metals is dumped. It can be said that nature has provided a pit or space to discard the negative aspects or lower desires gathered during one's lifetime. Kāmaloka has many gradations, since the people in the world differ from each other in their character and many other aspects. The gradations not only provide for the natural varieties and differences but also for those caused by the manner of death.

The death of the physical body marks the 'first death', but the process of death continues in Kāmaloka, wherein there is separation of the astral body, desire nature and lower mind from the higher trinity of Ātma-Buddhi-Manas or the Real Man, which goes to devachan, *svarga* or Paradise, after the separation. This is termed as 'second death'. After the disassociation of the three higher elements, the astral body, desire nature and the lower mind integrate with each other to form an entity, called *kāma-rupa* or the Desire body. This Desire body is akin to the 'soiled garments' thrown away by the real man while moving towards devachan and hence our ancestors termed it Satan or Devil. It is variously termed *bhuta* or

piśācha in India, and as spook or ghost in the West.

During life, the Real Man is able to control desires and temptations, but after death, with the departure of the real man, there is no control on the desire body in Kāmaloka. The desire body lacks intelligence or understanding, but it can be activated under the influence of external forces. However, it has a kind of mechanical or 'automatic consciousness', because of its long association with the Real Man during life. The automatic consciousness exhibited by the *kāma-rupa* is similar to the automatic movement of a frog or a cock, for a few moments after it is beheaded. This *kāma-rupa* is a repository of the memory of the life just ended, because the astral body of man has the property of absorbing and storing all the experiences and thoughts of a person, which occur during his life and then of throwing them off under appropriate conditions. Since these Desire bodies of the dead are devoid of intelligence and severed from the higher, spiritual element, they are called *kāma-rupic* shells — because minus the higher elements they are like empty containers.

It is these 'empty containers' which come in contact with 'mediums', 'sensitives' and the séance room operators. Hence, those who visit the séance rooms with the hope of contacting their departed ones, never really contact the Real Man or spirit, save in exceptional cases.

The *kāma-rupic* shells that come in contact with the séance room operators are not all alike. Those who die an unnatural

After Death — What?

death, by committing suicide, by hanging, or by accident, are not in the same 'after-death state' as those who die a natural death. The persons who die an untimely death are not really dead because the cohesive forces hold together the remaining six principles or elements until the point of natural death is reached. These cohesive forces cannot be destroyed by any mechanical process. Hence, the person dying an unnatural death remains in Kāmaloka, only partly dead, and the remaining principles have to wait until the end of the actual natural life term is reached, whether it be one month or sixty years. At the end of this period, the second death, as described earlier, takes place. Thus many years of the lifetime of an Ego are wasted in the case of untimely death. It should therefore be considered how far it is proper to commit suicide to escape the sorrows and difficulties of the world, or to kill others for some reason.

The state of the ego in Kāmaloka depends upon the quality of life led on Earth. Some suffer during their stay in Kāmaloka while others may remain in a dreamy state. Harsh wrongdoers, terrorists or criminals, with a feeling of hatred and revenge, keep repeating their criminal tendencies. When such desire bodies (*kāma-rupic* shells) come in contact with highly sensitive persons, they inject their criminal and murderous thoughts in the minds of such persons.

As the body is destroyed and the five elements (Earth or Soil, Water, Fire, Air or Gas and Ether) from which it is made, return to their original form after death,

so the *kāma-rupa* in the Kāmaloka dissolves, but the time required for the dispersal differs from person to person. The astral shells of good and normal persons are soon disintegrated whereas the shells of materialistic, selfish, cruel and bad persons take a longer time to disintegrate, because these astral shells are well organized, coherent and heavy. Thus the after-death Kāmalokic state depends upon the real life on this Earth. The *kāma-rupa* disintegrates and leaves behind *skandha-s* which are responsible for guiding and regulating the rebirth, determining the kind of body, emotional and mental nature, and various affinities for the next birth.

As stated earlier, the Ego or Real Man, after remaining for a longer or shorter time in Kāma Loka, falls into a condition called pre-devachanic unconsciousness. When this state is over, the Real Man enters the devachan. It is like re-entering a conscious state after sleep.

* * *

The Sanskrit equivalent of the word 'devachan' is *devasthān*, or the place where deva-s or gods reside. It is a state of consciousness where the Reincarnating Ego or Real Man, called *sutrātmā* enjoys unalloyed bliss and happiness. This is the *svarga* of the Hindus and Paradise or Heaven of the Christians. It is said that the deva-s (or demi-gods) do not have a body like ours. So too, the Ego does not have our kind of body in devachan, but is wrapped in a clothing or vesture, which is very ethereal, suitable to that state of consciousness. It is called the Causal

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Body or *kāraṇa-śarira*. After death, the permanent ideals like kindness, love, truth, beauty and inclination towards goodness — the aroma of the last personality — attach themselves to the Ego on its way to devachan. Remaining in this vesture the Ego works totally on the mental plane. 'The Devachanee (the one in devachan) lives its intermediate cycle between two incarnations, surrounded by everything it had aspired to in vain, and in companionship of everyone it loved on Earth' (*The Key to Theosophy*). This devachanic condition can be compared with that of a poet who is busy writing his poem or a painter lost in selecting and applying colour, oblivious of their surroundings or the passage of time. The Real Man is almost in a similar condition in devachan.

The state of devachan is subjective and mental. The state of devachan is described as the subjective continuation of the last personality on earth, as the personal idea persists, and the person continues to think that he is still the Mr X or Miss Y he or she was on Earth. Thus, if a mother dies, leaving behind her children and husband, then in devachan, she will experience being surrounded by her children and living a happy life. A person in devachan is surrounded by his aspirations and high ideals, living in complete happiness and bliss. In a way, the state of devachan is an illusion but this illusion is not meaningless. In fact it is necessary for the rest of the tired soul. As the body needs rest after the day's work, so the Ego needs the devachanic rest.

During life we have many aspirations, ideals and thoughts, but we are not able to live them all out, and hence these get stored as mental energy or force. Our physical body, astral body and the brain do not permit the full development of the force. As a result, this energy remains latent and after death when the bondage of the lower principles is absent, the thought-force expands and develops. For instance, an artist who aspired to achieve and advance much in the field of art but could not achieve it during life, carries the force of aspirations to devachan. In devachan it would fully blossom like a flower, and also get assimilated into his higher nature (Ego). In devachan we do not get any new knowledge but there is an assimilation and expansion of all the nobler qualities — sympathy, love for beauty, art, and the abstract things of life — and whatever good we aspired to do — so that the Ego comes back enriched on Earth.

The Ego remains in devachan for a time exactly proportionate to the psychic impulses generated during life. This depends on the degree of spirituality and the merit or demerit of the last incarnation. The Master says that a person can be in devachan for an average of 1500 years. We eat our meal in fifteen or twenty minutes, but it takes three to four hours to get transformed into blood or physical energy. So too, the time needed for assimilation in devachan is longer. However, the time of stay in devachan varies from person to person. For instance, persons with a materialistic bent of mind, who have

After Death — What?

not created the mental force to keep their higher principles in devachan, are born quickly. The thirst for early life (*tanhā*) draws them quickly back to earth. Those who are totally materialistic, who have never shed a tear for others, may emerge out of devachan and are reborn in a month. But for the good materialists, who do not believe in soul and God but are kind and helpful to others — their condition in devachan is like that of a traveller sleeping in a train and having no awareness of the passage of many stations on the way.

Are those in devachan able to see or communicate with those they left behind on earth? The devachanee does not see those left behind on earth, though he surrounds himself subjectively and in imagination with his near and dear ones, and sees them in an ideal condition. A mother who has left behind her drunkard son sees him in devachan as one who is reformed. HPB points out that a mother's Ego in devachan is filled with love for the imaginary children it sees near itself, and that love will be felt by her children in the flesh. 'Love beyond the grave, illusion though you may call it, has a magic and divine potency which reacts on the living. It will manifest in their dreams.' Such love of the mother often saves the child from dangers and difficulties.

We say that after death, the 'Real Man' never communicates with those on Earth. However, there are two exceptions. First, a person who has died, having a strong desire to return for some specific purpose, will not immediately enter the devachan. He forces his higher consciousness to

remain awake and hence the 'Real Man' makes the contact. The second exception is that of the *Nirmānakāya*-s, who come in contact with selected noble persons, but not the séance room operators. Thus, apart from these exceptional cases, Theosophy does not agree with the claim of the spiritualists that the 'Real Man' comes in contact with the people on Earth. It is only logical, because, if the Ego in devachan were to be in contact with the sorrow or unhappiness on Earth and especially with its own sorrowing loved ones, then how can there be unalloyed bliss for the Ego?

Likewise, we on earth can neither reach nor influence those in devachan. And yet, during sleep, almost each one of us communicates with our dear departed ones, although on waking up we carry only a very dim and dreamlike remembrance of the same. Mahatmas with their powers can contact the Real Man in devachan. They can even help those who are noble by nature, but do not have the capability to come out of the illusion of devachan by themselves, to come out of the bliss of devachan and return back to earth to pick up work of benefit to humanity.

There is a commonly prevailing belief that the after-death condition of the soul depends on the thoughts or mental condition during the last moments. The quality of consciousness in devachan and the amount of time spent in devachan are dependent on a group of dominant thoughts at the moment of death. Some believe that in spite of having spent the entire life in worldly pursuits, if we pronounce the name of God at the dying

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moment, then we would experience a rich and colourful devachan. Logically, it is understandable that during our life, if we have only thought of money or materialistic gains, or harming others, then at the last moment we are not likely to think good thoughts or remember God. It is clear that in order to improve our after-death condition, it is not enough to make efforts only in old age, 'post-retirement', but it is essential that during our entire life we engender noble thoughts and have high aspirations.

As already seen, the time period in devachan depends on the proportion and strength of a person's noble and moral thoughts in his previous life. When the forces created by the thoughts of the person are expended, the Law of Karma forces him to take birth once again. We have performed many actions (karma) in the past life, so to get reward or punishment for our actions it is absolutely necessary to be reborn on Earth. However, the mental forces appropriate to the devachanic condition act against the forces of our actions (karmic forces) and prevent an immediate birth of the Ego. As soon as this mental pressure or force of the previous birth is exhausted, the cumulative effect of the actions of many previous births pushes out the Ego from devachan and it has again to take birth.

We have seen that before death the Ego takes a review of the life just ended.

Similarly, on emerging from the devachan and before taking birth, the Ego is in a state of complete *mānasic* consciousness with which it is able to analyse the acts of past lives and the resulting effects. In accordance with the causes generated in the past, the Ego takes a new birth. But since the ego has to experience and balance the many acts of many previous lives, it cannot experience their effects in a single life. Hence, by selecting only some of these acts or karma, the ego takes a new birth on the earth. Not only that, it takes birth in a place and surroundings which may produce less obstructions and difficulties in adjusting the results of past karma. Also it will take birth to parents and a family engendered by strong karmic affinities. Our ego itself chooses the parents and family according to past karma. Knowing that the new environment is in accordance with past actions, the Ego takes up the cross — the burden of the new bodily vesture — once again, and takes birth. Thus, death is not an end but the beginning of a new life.

This 'vicious cycle of births and deaths' in this visible mortal world is not suitable for the Enlightened Theosophists. Theosophists must expand their consciousness, break open the barriers of time, space, motion, sound, light, etc., and become 'Self-liberated' through the simple process of 'Self-realization' here and now. If not now, never. ✧

When we come to the last moment of this lifetime, and we look back across it, the only thing that's going to matter is 'What was the quality of our love?'

Richard Bach

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

I HAVE but one word to say to you concerning love for your neighbour, namely nothing save humility can mould you to it; nothing but the consciousness of your own weakness can make you indulgent and pitiful to that of others. You will answer, I quite understand that humility should produce forbearance towards others, but how am I first to acquire humility? Two things combined will bring that about; you must never separate them. The first is contemplation of the deep gulf, whence God's all-powerful hand has drawn you out, and over which He ever holds you, so to say, suspended. The second is the presence of that all-penetrating God. It is only in beholding and loving God that we can learn forgetfulness of self, measure duly the nothingness which has dazzled us, and accustom ourselves thankfully to decrease beneath that great Majesty which absorbs all things. Love God and you will be humble; love God and you will throw off the love of self; love God and you will love all that He gives you to love for love of him.

Fénelon

The Ethics of the *Tirukkural*

MAHADEVAN KANNAN

IN every country there are great persons variously called prophets, saints, sages, Masters or guru-s, or whatever you like. India too has been blessed with her share of such noble men. One such saint appeared in Mylapur, now a suburb of Chennai. He was also a poet having left his message in the form of aphorisms, to be exact. He is popularly known as Tiruvalluvar.

Tiru is a reverential prefix forming part of the name of great men. This is synonymous with the Sanskrit prefix *Śri* as used in *Śri Rāmachandra* or *Śri Kṛshna*. Valluvar is a general term used to describe the priests, soothsayers, teachers or prophets of the Pariah tribe. 'Pariah' is the community for whose upliftment Col. Olcott did considerable work in and around Adyar and for which he also founded a number of schools in Madras Presidency. One such school is currently run by the Olcott Education Society in the TS campus. This Pariah tribe is regarded as the refuse of all castes in South India. Tradition says that Tiruvalluvar was a weaver by profession. The Revd G. U. Pope says: 'It is strange that the title by which alone the greatest poet of South India is known should be one indicating

an origin most degrading and contemptible in the eyes of the vast multitude of whom he has been for ten centuries the Oracle.' In this quotation two phrases are worthy of repetition. Tiruvalluvar has been the greatest poet of South India; he has been the oracle for ten centuries. An 'oracle' can be taken to mean a channel for transmitting Divine Wisdom.

It is a conventional belief that our poet was approached by the members of his community with a request to educate them in the wisdom contained in the Veda-s and Upanishad-s, since the original text was in Sanskrit and beyond their comprehension. At their request, our poet gave to the world the essence of Divine Wisdom in what is popularly known as *Tirukkural*. Kural means 'anything short' and is properly the name given to the form of verse written by our poet. His verse is the shortest species of stanza in the Tamil language. Each verse has two lines and seven words. Why he chose the number seven is not known to me. Probably the number seven has a significance of occult nature. The work consists of 133 chapters, each of 10 couplets, and thus 2,660 lines.

For want of authentic data, scholars are not able to fix with precision, the period

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The Ethics of the *Tirukkural*

of our poet. According to Revd G. U. Pope, who has made monumental research into the *Tirukkural*, between AD 800 and AD 1000 is the probable period. Other authorities believe that the work was written in the first century BC and accepted by the Tamil Academy of Madurai in the year 31 BC. There are two literary works belonging to the second century AD that have made clear reference to and have quoted from *Tirukkural*.

Whatever be the true name of the poet and whatever be the period at which he flourished, there is undoubtedly a consensus of opinion among scholars that Tiruvalluvar has brought down to us in easily understood language, the wisdom of the Veda-s and the Upanishad-s. One poet, by the name of Paranar, has praised Tiruvalluvar and the *Tirukkural* in the following way: He says that as Vishnu, when he appeared as Vāmana, or the dwarf, measured heaven and earth with two steps, so with the two lines of his verse, Tiruvalluvar has measured the Universe.

The *Tirukkural* is in three parts or volumes. Volume 1 is on virtue and comprises thirty-eight chapters. This is a book of practical ethics for the individual. Vol. 2 is on wealth. This is a book on social wealth exploring the essentials of life in society. It is the largest volume consisting of seventy chapters. Vol. 3 is on love. This book portrays the victory of the inner self. It contains twenty-five chapters.

Let us now briefly consider some of the couplets and the messages contained therein:

On Renunciation

He who has the strength to control the five senses is the seed of immortals. (24)

That is: he prepares the way for a higher place in life.

On Virtue

Being spotless in mind is the basis of all virtue;

All else, is empty show. (34)

Thoughts and deeds free of envy and lust, Wrath and bitter words, alone constitute virtue. (35)

On Love

The loveless, to themselves belong, alone;
The loving men are others' to the very bone.
(72)

It is this all-encompassing love that fundamentally makes for greatness. Mother Teresa of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta and Ramalinga Swamy of Vadalur (in recent history) were living examples of such greatness.

Bodies of loveless men are bony frame clad with skin;

Then is the body seat of life, when love resides within. (80)

On Pleasant Speech

When pleasant words are easy, bitter words to use,

Is, leaving sweet ripe fruit, the sour unripe to choose. (100)

This is to be practised by everyone, every day, in our lives.

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On Gratitude

Timely benefit though a thing of little worth;
The gift itself, in excellence, transcends the earth. (102)

On Social Cooperation

Duty demands no recompense; to clouds of heaven,
By men on earth, what gifts are given? (211)

On Self-Restraint

Whatever they fail to guard, over lips men guard should keep;
If not, through faults of tongue, they bitter tears shall weep. (127)

A wagging tongue could give immense trouble.

In flesh by fire inflamed, nature may thoroughly heal the sore;
In soul by tongue inflamed, the ulcer heals nevermore. (129)

In the Book of Proverbs (from the Bible):

But a wounded spirit, who can bear
An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is burning fire.

On Chastity

Who home invades, from him pass nevermore;
Enmity, sin, fear, disgrace — these four. (146)

Here home means homemaker, women of the house who assume the responsibility of the welfare and health of the

children, menfolk and the old people of the house.

Manly excellences, that looks not on another's wife,
Is not virtue merely, it is full 'propriety' of life. (148)

This really is the courage of manliness, because in this case a man overcomes the inner enemy of his own lust.

On Dread of Evil Deeds

Other enemies one might hope to escape, but one cannot evade the inexorable pursuit of the effects of one's own evil deeds. (207)

He who sows wind shall reap a whirlwind — the Law of Karma.

On Benevolence

They in whose breasts a 'gracious kindness' resides;
See not the gruesome worlds, where darkness drear abides. (243)

According to Christian teaching, every good done to the 'least of the brethren' would be taken into credit as something done for God himself. Mother Teresa's concept of doing 'something beautiful for God', whenever we help or succour the most neglected of the poor in this world, follows the same idea.

On Knowledge of the True

Fivefold perception gained, what benefits accrue;
To them whose spirits lack perception of TRUE. (354)

The Ethics of the *Tirukkural*

On the Elimination of Desire

No glorious wealth is here like freedom
from desire;
To bliss like this not even there can soul
aspire. (363)

Absence of desire is the best wealth in
this world as well as in the next. In the

words of Brother N. Sri Ram: 'Only in the
absence of desire can there be pure love.'

Overcoming all desires and the pair of
opposites pervades the whole of the *Gītā*
as its central theme, and is the basic virtue
on which all else depends in structuring
the path of righteousness leading to one's
ultimate release and to the Lord himself.

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Col. Olcott requested Mme Blavatsky for a likeness of Tiruvalluvar and the same was precipitated by her after a few moments of silent meditation. An old photograph of the image of Tiruvalluvar as produced by HPB is in the archives of the Theosophical Society at Adyar.

The Blessed Lord said:

Man winneth not freedom from action by abstaining from activity, nor by mere renunciation doth he rise to perfection.

Nor can anyone, even for an instant, remain really actionless; for helplessly is everyone driven to action by the qualities born of nature.

Bhagavadgītā, III.4–5

Perform thou right action; for action is superior to inaction, and, inactive, even the maintenance of thy body would not be possible. The world is bound by action, unless performed for the sake of sacrifice; for that sake, free from attachment, O son of Kunti, perform thou action.

Bhagavadgītā, III.8–9

Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform action which is duty, for, by performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the Supreme.

Bhagavadgītā, III.19

Books of Interest

KINDNESS IN A CRUEL WORLD, by Nigel Barber, Prometheus, pp. 400.

ONE PLANET, ONE PEOPLE, by Carl Coon, Prometheus, pp. 496.

Most persons, during their finer moments, pine for a kinder, more gentle world. Barber probes a recently discovered evolutionary mechanism called 'reciprocal altruism' by examining mutual grooming, military heroism, and priestly celibacy. Barber observes that through their history, humans have developed various social contracts, ranging from food-sharing among hunter-gatherers to following the 'rules of the road' when driving an automobile. Although apparently rare among animals, reciprocal cooperation or altruism influences human emotion and social behaviour. Commencing with Darwin's theory, Barber contends that an image of a dog-eat-dog world, where the survival of the fittest is predominant, must be replaced with greater altruism. The author notes that among humans, reciprocal cooperation requires trust. He states that 'moral emotions' such as embarrassment and resentment have evolved and inhibit the temptation to cheat. The cultivation of these emotions might foster exceptional self-sacrificial behaviour in developing a better world. Barber enlists the important insights found in evolutionary psychology to analyse the sex differences among persons known for

kindness, the innovative approaches for rehabilitating criminals, and political manifestations arising within the environmental movement.

Coon's readable survey scanning the evolution of human society confirms that the twenty-first century will be crucially significant and precipitate a problematic transition. The author analyses the persistent human tendency that divides persons into contrasted groups, 'we' and 'them'. Coon observes that instinctively, persons generally behave altruistically towards members of their own group and respond with hostility towards the outsiders. Emphasizing that complex human communities became possible when cultural attitudes encouraged persons to define their own group more extensively, he traces how small kin-based bands grew into villages, kingdoms, and nation-states. His argument is that, in the contemporary world, the entire world must become a united human community capable of confronting unprecedented challenges.

WAKE UP! A LIFE OF THE BUDDHA, by Jack Kerouac, Viking, New York, pp.146.

In *Wake Up: A Life of the Buddha*, a chain is explained. Death comes from birth; birth, from deeds; deeds, from attachment; attachment, from desire; desire, from perception; perception, from

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sensation; sensation, from the six sense organs; and the six sense organs, from individuality; and individuality, from consciousness. The writer enumerates the Four Noble Truths and explains the Eightfold Path. Buddha comprehended that the way of perfect knowledge was transmitted to him from Buddha-s innumerable of old. The Buddha attained *samādhi*, was a Blessed One. He entered the great Ṛshi's house of Dreamless Sleep, fixed in holy trance, attained the source of exhaustless truth, experienced the happiness that never ends, and was always already there within the True Mind. Buddha unveiled the True Mind and ended suffering, not anxiously employing outward means but resting quietly in thoughtful silence. One who no longer saw differentiation among varied creatures and phenomena, entertained no definite conceptions about self and selves, permitted the world to remain unnoticed except as a pitiful apparition, was perfectly composed and remained silent, radiant with glory, shedding light around, rose from beneath the Tree of Enlightenment. The Buddha resembled a person standing on

the brink of a torrent and calling to a worldly man defying the current.

Kerouac considers the Buddha as the supreme Dharma Teacher who revealed the human potential. Buddha apprehended what the writer describes: the Pure, True Mind; the Source; the Original Perfect Essence. This universal, eternal reality is the empty void essence. Everything everywhere is forever empty. A foolish mind accepts as reality the perceptions that are petty thwartings. Everything happening within the mind is a dream. When a person awakens, the mind returns to original emptiness, pure truth; the world apprehended is a lingering shadow. The reality apprehended beyond perception, the Great Heart of Compassion and all Buddha-s, is real. Aspirants who awaken are aware that the worldly phenomena are nothing except one's wonderful, intelligent Mind of Enlightenment, a mind permanent and illimitable. Listening inward for the perfectly unified intrinsic sound of one's Mind-Essence and attaining perfect accommodation, an aspirant can attain Supreme Enlightenment.

DANIEL ROSS CHANDLER

Instead of wishing our readers a happy or prosperous New Year, we feel more in the vein to pray them to make it one worthy of its brilliant herald. . . . every person who draws the breath of life affects the mental and moral atmosphere of the world, and helps to colour the day for those about him. . . .

And let no one imagine that it is a mere fancy, the attaching of importance to the birth of the year. The earth passes through its definite phases and man with it; and as a day can be coloured so can a year. The astral life of the earth is young and strong between Christmas and Easter. Those who form their wishes now will have added strength to fulfil them consistently.

H. P. Blavatsky

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