



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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# THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

# On the Watch-Tower

M. P. SINGHAL

## **Future of The Theosophical Society**

The past of the Theosophical Society is history and is relevant for learning some lessons. This history is perceived in the beauty of Adyar as an Ashram. It is also visible in the architecture and grandeur of buildings, the Adyar library, the museum the archives and the rich literature. Present is more important, because what we do today will shape the future. The declining membership, the lessening of reading, writing and communication skills and inability to inspire and induct young members are the three major challenges before us.

## **‘Think’ Theosophical Society: A great Institution**

We should take pride in calling the Theosophical Society a Great Institution. A clarity of purpose is essential for an institution. Its great vision is ‘Vasudheva Kudumbakam’. Its mission is ‘To Live to Benefit Mankind’. Its purpose is Human Regeneration and Transformation of humanity, for its holistic development and welfare. And its core value of truths is enshrined in its motto. ‘There is no Religion higher than Truth’. Its ethics is, ‘Return good for evil; love those who hate you’. The three declared objects are the

three pillars and the guiding principles for daily action. The resolution on Freedom of Thought is the basis of behaviour within the Society. Can we become capable of institutional thinking in which the institution and the work are far more important than any individual and with purpose? Also workers are the greatest asset with self motivation as a characteristic.

## **Information to Comprehension**

Comprehension leads to inner awakening that gives the delight of knowing something deeply, creating desire to learn more. But without strong aspiration this is not possible. Perfect attention, continuous reflection, frequent imagination and abstract thinking as well as visualization followed by constant practice are the tools leading from information to comprehension.

## **Five steps to Promote Theosophy**

In *The Key to Theosophy*, HPB exhorted us first to study and comprehend the theosophical doctrines so that they may teach others, especially the young people — second, by taking every opportunity of talking to others and explaining to them what Theosophy is and what it is not — third by removing misconceptions and

spreading an interest in the subject by assisting in circulating our literature by buying books when they have means, by lending and giving them and by inducing their friends to do so. Fourth by defending the Society from the unjust aspersions cast upon it by every legitimate device in their power — fifth and most important of all, by example of their own lives. Are we aware that we are required to do so?

### **Theosophy and the Theosophical Society**

As the Theosophical society was taking roots, its co-founders decided to have distinct roles between themselves. HPB would discover and present theosophical doctrines, while Col. Olcott would develop the Theosophical Society as a vehicle for its propagation. The Society soon had rich literature for Human Regeneration. Colonel Olcott, Mrs Besant, Bishop Leadbeater and others travelled widely contacting and inspiring people. Thus the membership grew rapidly; Theosophical centres sprang up worldwide. At present we feel shy in reaching out to others, perhaps due to our little comprehension of theosophy. Theosophy is discussed inside our lodges. For even in the city of Chennai, many do not know the location of International Headquarters which exists since 1882.

### **Empowering Youth**

The youth of today, who are to be the torch-bearers of the future, are facing challenges, personally, and socially, aggravated by the imbalance between the technological and the psychological

progress. Our youth nurture a scientific zeal for truth, a contempt for sham and superstition. We have a choice between, what is truly good and what gives us pleasure. The material development has to be matched by spiritual growth for true progress, and human survival. For the youth to be so inspired, the elders have a major responsibility. Therefore, at least a few leaders should emerge, among the elders and the youth, to serve as role models for human transformation. For the Youth to be attracted the emphasis should be on yoga, meditation, participation in discourses on truly spiritual matters and select areas of service in which they have expertise. The participants need to meet on a regular basis under the guidance of knowledgeable person. Yoga and meditation will promote holistic health, service will subdue the ego, spiritual discourses will purify, nourish and enrich the soul. Weekly question and answer sessions may be programmed to clarify doubts. If youth are attracted, declining trend in membership will be reversed.

### **HPB's view of TS in Future**

In *The Key to Theosophy*, answering questions on the future of Theosophy and the Theosophical Society, HPB said: If you speak of Theosophy, I answer that as it has existed eternally throughout the endless cycles upon cycles of the past, so it will exist throughout the infinitudes of Future, because Theosophy is synonymous with EVERLASTING TRUTH.

In the case of the Theosophical Society she said, its future will depend almost

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entirely upon the degree of selflessness, earnestness, devotion and last but not the least, on the amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by the members of the Society on whom it will fall to carry on the work and to direct the Society after the death of the founders. She included knowledge and wisdom, because knowledge and wisdom provide unbiased and clear judgement, for clarity is the state of seeing clearly. Tools like meditation, journal writing, personal coaching help to understand deeply; the lessons need to be repeated regularly until comprehension is achieved.

### **The Big Challenges**

The three challenges, mentioned earlier started emerging from 1980's more conspicuously in diminishing membership, difficulty in inducting youth and insufficient propagational activity.

### **Comprehension, Communication and Propagation**

For propagation we need comprehension as well as skill in communication with good knowledge of language. Good comprehension is a prerequisite for good communication. If there is comprehension the person would like to communicate and develop communication skills easily. In a communications seminar organized by Mudra Institute of Communications Ahmedabad (MICA), February 12-14, 2014 this view was reinforced. For Propagation of Theosophy, it will be useful to integrate study of Religion, Philosophy and Science for man's balanced growth.

For effective propagation, we have to reach out to non-members personally at the grass root level. Let each member bring one new member by personal contacts each year.

### **Forgiveness, Justice, Gratitude and Modern Science**

As one of the Masters of Wisdom said, 'Injustice and ingratitude are not among our vices'. This gives a clue for just action and expressing gratitude to all noble ones. Being grateful, dispels mental confusion. As anger corrodes its vessel, ingratitude eats up its container. Justice means equality. We will feel taller and happier if we are grateful. Be grateful to those who betrayed you for they helped you to become independent. Being grateful, lessens our burden; it connects us to another soul with great depth of feelings. Let us recall, what Christ uttered when he was being nailed to the cross. 'Oh lord forgive them for they know not what they do.'

A Master of Wisdom said, Modern Science is our best ally. So we should modernize our methods, adopting new technologies in our work. We need definiteness of purpose and deliberateness of action. The Theosophical Society will become vibrant, with sizeable strength of youth, if we are sincere to our vision, the mission, the core values and the purpose.

**Conclusion:** The Mahachohan as reported by Master KH once said, 'The Theosophical Society was chosen as the corner stone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity.' So, we should think that this society is a great institution

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with a clear vision, a definite mission and a useful purpose. We need to work diligently remembering HPB's Caution: 'theosophy is not for the lazy and the obtuse . . .'

For attracting the youth, emphasis need to shift from the present theoretical approach, to doing things. We should present theosophy in ways that are more interesting by incorporating life size stories and experiences. Youth Academies for their training should be opened at select places with trained faculty members having comprehension and communication skills. Information creates awareness; education provides knowledge; using that knowledge in daily life leads to wisdom, and in turn to humility and a sense of oneness. Personal contacts at the grass root level are indispensable to induct new members after intelligent understanding and conviction.

Existing literature of *Theosophic Life*, *At the Feet of the Master*, *Human Regeneration* and *I Promise* should be combined and printed in book size. Similarly *Practical Occultism*, *Light on*

*the Path*, *The Voice of the Silence* and *The Universal Law of Life* should be combined and printed in book size. A special compilation of *The Laws of Karma*, *Three Great Truths*, *Reincarnation*, *Meditation*, with yoga and character building be prepared with a view to educate the youth specially. These books in new form can be given appropriate titles and included in the curriculum of proposed Youth Academies. These measures most likely help reverse the trend of declining membership and attracting youth. The Theosophical Society in the distant future is assured of its place as told by the Mahachohan. In the short term it will be, what we do unitedly, earnestly, selflessly and mindfully with wisdom. So press on to overcome the three challenges. Let us ask ourselves, 'What each one of us can do for propagation of theosophy?' His holiness the Dalai Lama was once asked 'Sir, what is the purpose of life?' And he replied, 'The purpose of life is to spread a warm heart. And if that is not possible, then at least do not spread the cold heart.' ✧

**There are persons who would like to see the Society's membership grow fast and its popularity increase. They want to please the public with psychologically comforting things which have little or nothing to do with the universal brotherhood which is the main Object of the Society, or the common search and aspiration for truth which binds the far-flung Sections and members together spiritually in an affectionate bond of union. They regard it as a weakness in the Society that it does not cater to the wants of the public and change its aims to gain popularity.**

**The Society's clear policy is not to entertain the world with what it wants, but to aid people to discover the source of wisdom within themselves.**

Radha Burnier

# Inspired Living: the Basis for Understanding

TIM BOYD

**I**N recent years I have done a fair amount of travel. Because my travel has been primarily for the TS, it has given me the opportunity to meet and share with people who are attracted to a process of conscious unfoldment. The focus has not been to close a deal, make a sale, or persuade someone to think or act a certain way. It has been to explore things of meaning and address some of life's problems.

A fascinating insight for me has been that the problems faced by those engaged in a spiritual path and the problems faced by those who have no concept or idea about spirituality are the same. Everyone is trying to find ways to deal with the basics of food and shelter; everyone is concerned with the countless changes they face each day, from weather to finances to the changes in the body that come with growth or aging. At some point everyone has to come to grips with death and dying; and everyone is looking for love — to receive it, to give it, and to understand it.

What is different for the spiritual seeker? The difference is not in the problems themselves, but in the attitude

of mind in approaching them. In normal living we try to fix problems or overcome them. In some sense we behave as though they were our adversary. For those in whom some sense of a deeper possibility is dawning, the goal is not to conquer, but to understand — to arrive at that depth of vision that sees the pattern embracing all in a greater life.

There is an aphorism in conventional wisdom that tells us 'knowledge is power'. It is a statement that has a certain appeal because it seems to accord with our daily experience and common sense. Every time we learn a new skill, or apply some new piece of information we influence our environment for better or worse. If your car is broken, you can read a manual and fix it. If your body has problems, you can read, or talk to a doctor and learn about a medication or exercise. If your mind is uneasy, you can gain some knowledge about a breathing or relaxation technique. At these levels ordinary knowledge is effective. When we begin to ask deeper questions such as 'how do I experience Oneness, or peace, or even happiness?'

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**Mr Tim Boyd** is National President of the American Section, The Theosophical Society. Talk delivered at the International Convention, Adyar, in December 2013.

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something more is needed. As our focus shifts to deeper levels of being, conventional knowledge is ineffective.

In normal speech the term knowledge can mean a variety of things — from the address of the neighbourhood grocery store, to the data from a physics experiment, to a description of the astral body. Although different in content and quality, the process for gaining knowledge is the same. The organs of sensation convey impressions to the inner man. In the view of contemporary science the nervous system reports to the brain. In the ageless wisdom tradition, which acknowledges the primacy of consciousness, the process has a greater range. The *Jñānendriya-s* (organs of knowledge) transfer our perceptions to ever deeper layers of our being. What begins as a physical impression becomes a sensation, then a feeling, then combines with thought. The distinguishing characteristic of information is that no matter what the subject, information does not transform. It is at best a mental phenomenon.

For those who are consciously engaged in a process of self-transformation there is a hierarchy of perception in which normal knowledge is the first step. The unfoldment of consciousness moves from knowledge, to understanding, to wisdom. Knowledge is the builder. It gives structure and is a function of mind. Understanding gives meaning to the structures that the mind builds and is a function of *buddhi*, the spiritual intuition. Wisdom is like space, which contains all things, defines all things, but cannot be identified by any or all of it. It is the nature of reality. In

Krishna's words, 'Having pervaded this universe with a fragment of myself, I remain'. We experience wisdom as the perception of reality. The prayer of many is 'From the unreal lead me to the Real.'

The present need for most of us is to move beyond the information gathering tendencies of mind to the deeper function of a mind illumined by *buddhi*. Only this mind reflects the spaciousness, creativity, understanding, freedom, and compassion that characterize an inspired life. Information gives structure and is a mental process. Understanding is a function of the spiritual intuition, *buddhi*.

In the world of western classical music the Stradivarius violin is considered a name that stands above all others. What makes this instrument so special? Careful analysis has shown that the materials used in making the violin were of the highest quality. The masterful combination of those materials by the Stradivarius family created an instrument that produces the finest sound. However, even a Stradivarius cannot make music unless it is carefully tuned. Once tuned it is still useless until it is placed in the hands of a genuine musician. The development, tuning, and highest use of our vehicles, particularly our mind, is like this. The materials are like knowledge. In order to create a useable instrument they must be of the highest quality, but materials (information) alone are not enough. They must be combined into structures capable of producing a pure sound. The conceptual structures of the theosophical teachings fulfill this function. However, even this does not suffice. The



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instrument must be tuned and then placed into the hands of the musician. The disciplines of profound study and meditation are the way our minds are tuned, but it is only then that the spiritual intuition can make its presence known. The building and tuning is a mental process. The playing is the function of Buddhi. Having done the disciplined work of preparing the mind, we have done all that is personally possible for us to do. The next, and sometimes most difficult step, is to let go of personal effort and allow the Higher Self to play through us. This is the work of a lifetime.

Part of the purpose of the many spiritual disciplines of the world is to foster the experience of this descent of the Higher Self. Depending on the tradition this experience is named differently. The close association of this experience with the teachings and practices of the various religions and spiritual traditions give the impression that it is something only available to the profound devotee, or spiritual professional. The fact is that everyone, without exception, has some familiarity with this state of being. Who has not had the experience of watching the sunset on some particular day and feeling overwhelmed by a sense of beauty, serenity, power? Or, the experience of losing all awareness of oneself in watching the spontaneous joy of children at play, or birds in flight. At these times our normal process of analysis and examination is momentarily suspended. After the fact we find ourselves describing these moments as times when we were happy, peaceful,

joyous, or content, but these are after thoughts. The precipitating factor for this experience is that for a moment we find release from our normal preoccupation with ourselves. We are temporarily relieved from the endless fascination with our problems, our numerous wants, our likes and dislikes. In that moment the light of buddhi has an opportunity to shine on to a mind that has briefly become like a calm lake, unruffled by the constant waves of self focused thinking. Even though the experience is fleeting, in that brief moment we understand. We understand what is peace and what it means to be genuinely happy. We sense the presence of an all embracing, omnipresent love. At some time in life something like this occurs for everyone. Often the desire to reproduce this experience is the reason for involvement in a spiritual path.

For many the desire to repeat this momentary experience of selflessness becomes a driving concern. Spiritual traditions around the world call for devotees to make pilgrimages that duplicate the journeys of their founders. Devotees are encouraged to wear certain clothing, perform rituals, go to special places, speak certain words with the hope and intention that in doing it they will experience what the great teacher experienced. Even outside of religious traditions we behave in a similar way. The problem for us is that these experiences are not the result of any outer conditions, and cannot be induced by following a formula.

A woman once told me a story of a vision she had of hell and heaven. In the

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vision of hell she was shown a table piled high with food. Every imaginable delicacy was on the table — only the finest food. There were people sitting around the table. The odd feature of the people was that they had very long arms that were unbending. When they would pick up the food they could not bring it to their mouths. With no elbow to bend, try as they might they could not feed themselves. So, in hell, even in the presence of the most exquisite and nourishing food, the people were starving, angry, and desperate.

Then she was shown a vision of heaven. In heaven she saw the exact same table filled with the same abundance of food. Around the table were seated people with the same features as the people in hell — long unbending arms. The difference in heaven was that here, instead of the futile struggle to feed themselves, the people were using their long arms to feed each other.

On occasions when I have shared this story I have sometimes been told that it is a lovely story, but in the ‘real world’ it is not practical. In this ‘real world’ where every one is looking out for one’s own interests it is the selfish who are fed while the kind ones starve. Both as a fact and as a basis for action this point of view is not accurate. As a practical matter, acts of kindness, compassion, love, honesty, generosity are like food that every person craves. In their presence we flourish. In their absence we develop a taste for low quality substitutes — junk food like conflict, constant excitement, addictions to substances or relationships. These low

quality inputs have the effect of either numbing us, or exciting us into a state of forgetfulness. The depth of our need to connect with others as a natural expression of our inner nature is masked and temporarily forgotten. In the presence of someone, or some place in nature that allows us to encounter the experience of love, compassion, etc., we are moved and remember.

From time to time we come across the term ‘vicious circle’. It is a term that is frequently encountered in the field of economics, but it is also the basis for countless movies and cartoons. So, for example, a man comes home. He is angry about something at work. His dog comes to meet him at the door. In his anger he kicks the dog. The dog runs away from the man and chases the cat. The cat runs away from the dog, and in running knocks over a candle. The candle sets the house on fire. The man becomes more angry. Vicious circle describes a situation in which the apparent solution of one problem creates a new problem and increases the difficulty of solving the original one. A most profound example of this negative feedback loop is found in the Buddhist teaching of the Twelve *Nidana-s*, also called the twelve interdependent links of origination. It is visually depicted in the Wheel of Life, or *Bhāvachakra*. In this understanding of the vicious circle, the first link, ignorance, inexorably leads to all of the others, which ultimately include birth, sickness, old age, death, and rebirth into the repetition of the cycle. It is a description of the mechanism of Samsara.

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Just as there is a vicious circle, there is also a 'virtuous circle' — a condition in which a favourable circumstance gives rise to another that subsequently supports the first. So, as an example, we meet someone who lives an inspired life — someone who is kind, loving, patient, and generous. In their presence we become aware of how deeply we respond to these qualities. We feel it as a need. This awareness awakens us to the presence of these same qualities within us. We understand our own nature more deeply. This leads to an expanding capacity for kindness, love, and compassion on our part, which in turn leads

to a greater understanding, which leads us to live in an inspired way — an expanding spiral of inspiration, understanding, and increased capacity to serve.

There is the potential for a new mind within us — a mind open to the understanding that comes from inspired living. It is not the mind of any individual, but that greater mind within which we all 'live, move, and have our being.' Just beyond the walls of self-absorption that form the boundaries of our normal world, lies something greater, a new world whose expanse and openness embrace all beings. It is our job to remove these barriers. ✧

**Begin by fixing this truth in your mind, that there is within you a palace of surpassing splendour . . . for no building can be compared in beauty and magnificence with a soul that is pure and filled with virtues. In the midst of this palace dwells the great King who deigns to be your constant guest, and here He sits upon a throne of priceless value, and this throne is your own heart. But here comes the great point of all. We on our part must have a full and hearty determination to make over to Him entirely this interior palace. He will never give Himself entirely to us, until we have given ourselves entirely to Him.**

St. Teresa

# *The Voice of the Silence* — I

CLARA CODD

I think this is the most sublime and splendid scripture that ever was written. Everybody has a favorite. Dr Arundale, I remember, liked *At the Feet of the Master*, that was his beloved, and Dr Besant *The Bhagavadgītā*, and I heard Mr Jinarājadāsa say that his favourite was *Light on the Path*. Well, my favourite by a long way is *The Voice of the Silence*. I think there is such a wonderful compassionate note about it. The difference between *At the Feet of the Master* and the other three is that the other three are mystical treatises, but *At the Feet of the Master* is ascetical. These three describe the sublime states of consciousness or try to do so. *At the Feet of the Master* does not describe that at all. It just gives us plain rules for every day living. It is like the Christian *Imitation of Christ*. It tells us how to live, but does not describe states of consciousness. HPB says that she knew certain treatises by heart when she was in Tibet, and she has picked out what she thought would help us most. I often wonder nowadays where the others are, and if they are safe now that the Communists have come into Tibet. She also talked about the Gurus, the teachers. They do

not know very much more than do their disciples, and they all have their own methods, but beyond the Himalayas, among the trans-Himalayan School, there is only one method. And she told us that these books were written by the great Arhats of the Buddha when they emigrated into Tibet, and if I remember rightly, Bishop Leadbeater told us that quite a number of these precepts were written by the great teacher Āryāsanga. They were written in a sort of cryptic language, picture language, that you can read in many different tongues. I wonder if some of them are written in what is called the Senzar, because HPB says she studied the Senzar when she was in Tibet, and the Senzar is the sacred root of Sanskrit, and it was brought over from Venus by the Great Adepts, six and a half million years ago. I suppose it is a language hardly anyone knows except in certain esoteric schools, but Sanskrit is a derivative from the Senzar, and I expect that is why it is called the ‘Devanāgarī,’ God language, Deva language. It is the sacred language in the East, like Latin used to be in the West. She says at the end in the preface, ‘I have done my best to preserve the

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Reprint from August 1974, *The Theosophist*. This is the 125th year of the publication of *The Voice of the Silence*

poetical beauty of language and imagery which characterizes the original.’ Bishop Leadbeater told us that she was helped in doing this by the Master Hilarion, the one who wrote *Light on the Path*. He helped HPB and it is the most beautiful language. When you remember that HPB didn’t really know English very well, yet she managed to put it in the most splendid words. The Master must have helped her; she could not have done it by herself.

The first part is called ‘*The Voice of the Silence*’ and it is explained on the first page. ‘He who would hear the voice of *Nāda*,’ which HPB says you can translate as the soundless sound or *the Voice of the Silence*. Compare that with *Light on the Path*: ‘Hold fast to that which has neither substance nor existence. Listen only to the voice which is soundless.’ How on earth can one talk about that! Evidently it is the awakening and the apprehension within ourselves which answers to something very deep in the universe and is the ‘Soundless Voice’. It reminds me of the passages in the Bible, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ We do not see God with our physical eyes, but with our inner spiritual apprehension. Said St. Paul, ‘These things are spiritually discerned.’ To the other people it is all foolishness. So you and I cannot discern it with our minds, but only with our spiritual nature when it wakes up. She begins with these words, ‘These instructions are for those ignorant of the dangers of the lower IDDHĪ.’ *Iddhi* is the Pali word for the Sanskrit Siddhis, or psychic powers in man. There are two sorts of psychic

powers — the undeveloped psychism which peasantry and all anima’s have. All animals are psychic. That is often to be seen with dogs and horses and cats — they see things which we cannot see. So can some of the peasantry, but it is not under the control of the will. It is spontaneous, and as a man develops the manas, the lower mind, that is shut out. That is the reason why we people of the Fifth Root Race have not got that psychic power. The lower ranks of evolution have, but it comes back again on a higher level, under the control of the will and the understanding. The lower *Iddhi* must not be mistaken for the real Wisdom. And then she says, ‘He who would hear the Voice of *Nāda*, the Soundless Sound’ — there is a lot in these first two sentences — ‘and to comprehend it, he has to learn the nature of *Dhāranā*.’ *Dhāranā* is ‘the intense and perfect concentration of the mind upon some one Interior object accompanied by complete abstraction from everything pertaining to the external Universe, or the world of the senses.’ There is a life-time of evolution in that. But I think you will see the point when I come on to the three Halls. It is an interior concentration so complete that you are out of touch with the world and the senses in the sublime state of consciousness called *Samādhi*, which is what the Christian saints call ‘Ecstasy’. It is so complete that the meditator is in a state of deep trance, so very complete that if you were to run a needle into him he would not feel it. All response to the universe lessens and lessens and lessens, the breathing alters, and the

heart beat is much slower. It just comes down to a point sufficient to keep life in the body and no more, because the consciousness of the man is gone, is in another world. In that state we can hear the 'soundless voice'. Patanjali says that when the mind is perfectly still, not rippled by world affairs, it will reflect the glory of the Self.

*The Voice of the Silence* says, 'Having become indifferent to objects of perception —.' I call it slowly breaking the bars of the case which keep the soul a prisoner, and we can do it in a lot of little ways. I remember Dr Besant telling us that if she found herself getting too fond of a thing she gave it away. If she liked something very nice to eat she didn't have it. These are very small things but you see they are breaking the chains. One of the Upanishads says: 'When all the bonds of this heart are broken, then this mortal puts on immortality.' We have to become indifferent to the objects of perception. 'The pupil must seek out the Rajah of the senses, the Thought Producer, he who awakes illusion.' Of course that is the Manas. HPB says nearly every man is ruled entirely by desire, which he mistakes for will. We want to do things and we do them. Now the Rajah of the senses is the pure intelligence. So instead of doing what we want to do and being ruled by desire, we do what our pure intelligence discerns, that is *viveka*, the right thing to do. This is the Rajah of the senses. All the same he awakens illusion. He is the thought producer. He produces thought-forms which we take for reality and none of those thought-forms are reality. As the Master

puts it in one letter, 'We all of us fill our current in space with the hosts of our thought-creations.' We are hemmed in with them. This is the Hall of Illusion and I will come to that in the three Halls.

Then *The Voice of the Silence* uses a very pregnant sentence, 'The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real.' So in order to really understand the real we have to reach a point where thought actually drops away. Our mind ceases making all these thought-forms. It is like a mirror lake. And then it says 'Let the Disciple slay the Slayer' — get the control of it. Then she says something rather wonderful: 'When to himself his form appears unreal, as do on waking all the forms he sees in dreams, when he has ceased to hear the many, he may discern the ONE — the inner sound which kills the outer.'

Śankarāchārya says that when we are dreaming it seems very real, but when we wake up it is no longer real. When this world becomes a dream and the other world becomes real — it sounds almost impossible, doesn't it? But St. Teresa describes it. She writes: 'I look down on the world from a very great height and I care very little 'what people say or know about me. The Lord has now made my life a kind of sleep for almost always all I see seems to me as in a dream. Nor have I any great sense of pleasure or pain.' There was only one time in my life when I experienced that! When I came out of prison! I think it was because I had not said a word and had been hemmed in for a month. But for three days after I came out of prison everything looked to me like a cinematograph.

It didn't look real. I suppose this is going from the unreal to the real. . . . I never felt quite like that again, but I remember it today.

'Then and not till then will he forsake the region of Asat, the false.' Do not let us call it exactly the false — the phenomenal universe. What is the derivation of the word phenomenon? It means the appearance only — do you notice that this world and the other are full of appearances which change and change and change, and never stop changing? 'To come unto the realm of Sat, the true.' Plato would have called it passing from the phenomenal world to the noumenal world, because behind every passing illusion that changes and changes and changes there is the eternal reality. I remember Krishnaji telling us that always he looked beyond, beyond, beyond. So 'before the soul can see, the harmony within must be attained, and the fleshly eyes be rendered blind to all illusion.'

Now we come to the three Halls. I think this is what psycho-analysts would call our subconscious and superconscious self.

'This earth, Disciple, is the Hall of Sorrow (HPB says that there is no hell anywhere comparable to a man-bearing planet) wherein are set along the Path of dire probations, traps to ensnare thy Ego by the delusion called "Great Heresy," the illusion of separation, thinking we are separate beings. We, all of us, have got the feeling, this is 'I'. Descartes said: 'I think, therefore I am.' That is because we have a principle in the mind called the *Ahamkāra* — that is the 'I-making' faculty. The 'I-making' faculty has a special

function in nature. HPB says that this delusion is like the eggshell around the chicken, that is the protection for many many lives. The I-making faculty is establishing an identity. Presently it will become safe to break the periphery and it will still remain a centre without a periphery, but not until the hour is ripe. So do not let us blame ourselves for having *Ahamkāra* because that is what it is for. 'This earth, O ignorant Disciple, is but the dismal entrance leading to the twilight (this is the astral plane) that precedes the valley of true light — that light which burns without a wick or fuel.' She says this about the First Hall, the Hall of Ignorance. 'Happiness is not to be attained on earth.' I think we may as well give up wanting it. Let it come or let it go. I remember Carlyle said something like that: 'Why all this bother about happiness. Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other happiness.'

She said: 'It is not to be found on earth.' Here we have the dark entrance hall alone, and only on opening the door into the real living place, into the reception-room of life, shall we see the light, whether in heaven, in *Nirvana*, in *Swarga*, it is all the same. The name does not matter. But as to the Divine Principle it is one, and there is only one light, however differently it may be understood by various earthly darknesses. So let us wait patiently for the day of our real, our best birth.

This is when the spiritual consciousness, that will endow us with happiness for ever and ever, awakes in us. The reason

why men want to be happy is because they have a dim remembrance of that.

‘Give up thy life, if thou wouldst live.’ Does not this remind us of the words of the Christ — ‘He that surrendereth his little life will find it unto life eternal.’ Now we can’t give up our life and say we won’t have it. It is what I said about breaking the bars of the cage — get loose about things. Do not let the mind hold you and become attached to you, no matter whether it concerns people or things or events. That is why two of the qualities for initiation are tolerance and cheerfulness. I like to put them in my own words. One is letting people be what they are and not wanting them to be different and the other letting events be what they are.

‘Three Halls, O weary pilgrim, lead to the end of toils. Three Halls will bring thee through three states into the fourth, and thence into the seven worlds, the worlds of rest eternal.’ Śankarāchārya calls them four states of consciousness. These correspond to the Three Halls. First of all, there is the state of consciousness, ‘*Jāgrat*,’ which is this world. That is very concentrated and very small. It is the one we are employing at this moment, and she calls that the Hall of Ignorance. ‘The name of the First Hall is Ignorance, *Avidyā*. It is the Hall in which thou saw’st the light in which thou livest and shalt die.’ It is called the Hall of Ignorance, because all we are concerned with is changing phenomena and we do not see the noumena. She says the first step in occultism is to realize that we are ceaselessly self-deceived —

ceaselessly. The next step is to realize that this can be overcome by effort, but it is a long, long effort. She said that to achieve this is greater than to tell the future or command the elements. It really means that we must reach the Divine Consciousness of the Ego within. So that is the First Hall, the Hall of Ignorance.

‘The name of Hall the second is the Hall of Learning. In it thy Soul will find the blossoms of life, but under every flower a serpent coiled.’

The Hall of Learning is what Śankarāchārya calls the dream consciousness. It is the Astral Plane, the Psychic World, in which we find ourselves when we pass through the gateway of sleep, and through the gateway of death. I have often said that the gateway of sleep and the gateway of death and the gateway of very deep meditation is the same gateway. It is the gateway to the psychic world. HPB says it is the world of mediums and astral sights. No blossom plucked in that region and brought down to earth is without a serpent coiled round it. It is the world of the great illusion. If we see and hear things on the Astral Plane we should not always take them for gospel truth. Nine out of ten psychics are mediums. One who taught me a great deal about that is a friend of mine with whom I often stay in Durban. She is half Swede and half Scotch and was born psychic. She told me herself that she had found out that nearly all astral sights and sounds are liars. St. Paul calls them ‘lying spirits’. The Astral Plane is crowded with them. We cannot help



peopling our currents in space. We do it subconsciously and spontaneously, creating thought-forms all the time. We might have what is called deep aspirations and wishful thinking, they all make forms, and nature spirits will ensoul them. They do not mean us any harm, but they have not any morals; they are tricky things. For instance, suppose we have a subconscious desire to be something wonderful and lovely. Along comes a nature spirit and ensouls that thought. Perhaps we see it and take it for something exclusive and the nature spirit will tell us, not meaning any harm, but it can't help itself, all the things we want to hear — 'O my child, you are especially called of God to do something wonderful.' So many psychics have come and told me this. Bishop Leadbeater told us always to mistrust anything from the other side which flatters us. So this friend of mine told me that she saw a very beautiful lady who came and sat on her bed and looked at her and said, 'We need you, you must come to us.' So she said 'I don't believe a word you say, go away.' Then, being a nature spirit who can change its form in a second, instead of being a beautiful lady, it turned into a creature with a funny face and a scowl. I want you to realize that the astral plane is not the real plane of the truth. It is the plane of all our desires and wishful thinking, of all our ideals and thoughts. Of course, one great help in the practice of meditation is the development of the imagination — the image-making faculty. To control the imagination will lead us to the gateway of

Heaven. But the uncontrolled imagination will play the dickens with us. Nine out of ten people are under the control of the uncontrolled imagination. Perhaps you hear a knock in the dark, and at once picture a burglar. Probably there is no burglar there. Patanjali calls that 'fancy'. And most of us are governed by the uncontrolled imagination. Many people are ill because of that. But the controlled imagination is a creative faculty. The Master tells us to create a picture of Him and to forget our body completely if we can. If we can do that He will send His Voice, that means He will radiate through that picture, or it will be your own Higher Self that will make it become alive, but you must remember as you make the picture it is not a reality.

Alexandra David-Neel in a book about Tibet, tells how the guru, the lama, taught her. She made vivid thought-forms, so strong that they materialized. Then said the abbot to her, 'You created that, destroy it.' Now HPB also says that we make mental conceptions and that as we go on these mental conceptions enlarge and simplify. We are all prisoners. We are imprisoned in a cell with only the five windows of the senses by which to see the world. Then we have skylights which are the conceptions we make from those sense perceptions. Through these we glimpse Reality, and the Reality shines back to us. As we go on the skylights get bigger and bigger and wider and wider, till one day we escape from the little prison and come face to face with the whole sky.

(To be continued)

# The Compassionate Mind

BHUPENDRA R. VORA

THE purpose of evolution is to enable consciousness to experience terrestrial existence in the various kingdoms of life. Through this experience it has provided the impetus to develop from the grosser levels of existence to higher and higher levels of unfolding and potentialities. Nature's preordained design is for the progressive movement of consciousness from the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms to the human kingdom.

In the human experience self-consciousness arises and the distinction between the self and others as separate entities is cognized at the outer level. In the evolutionary journey nature intends for the unit of consciousness from being self-centred, and involved only in its own interests, to a being that is concerned with the welfare of others. Progressively it has to learn to work in harmony with the Universal Laws and thereby assure its own progress as a part of the Whole.

The occult doctrine describes the journey of consciousness from the unmanifest levels of Being to the manifested outer world where, through experiences in the various kingdoms of life, it reaches the state of manifested perfection. At the

pinnacle of the evolutionary journey are the incarnations of love and compassion like The Buddha and The Christ.

At the heart of the Universe is love and compassion which manifest in all creation. The Divine Intelligence, that is the architect of this creation, caringly caters to the needs of all its creation with great intricacy and love. A Divine desire to lead each species of life to its perfection and ultimately to the pinnacle of evolution can be discerned in this vast creation. This is evident in the myriad species of life with special abilities granted to them by nature for their survival. There is variety in the fauna and flora of the Earth with their intricate designs and forms. It is amazing that each species of life has been provided with its own particular form of defence mechanism to protect itself from other forms of life. For instance a chameleon changes its colours to blend in with the foliage on which it is perched so that it does not easily attract attention from birds and other carnivorous animals. Some other varieties of insects and small creatures have been provided with glands to eject poisonous substances or odours to deter other animals from attacking them. Nature

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in its infinite compassion provides all of them with the means to protect their lives and the right food and environment for survival. Equally there are species of life that support each other and live in harmony with natural laws.

Lord Mahavira, the great teacher and reformer of the Jain faith preached non-violence and compassion as the basis for a true morality. He declared that all life had the right to exist and evolve on its own evolutionary journey. He further stated that it was not enough, to declare non-violence as one's creed, but to also empathise with all living beings in their struggle for existence. His message to human beings was to live and help other forms of life to live as well. In doing so he would not only respect the rights of all life to live and progress but also ensure the delicate balance of life on this planet. This is in accordance with Nature's plan for consciousness to experience life through all forms of manifestation.

How can a new mindset emerge in the 'New Age' in the human consciousness that has the sensitivity and compassion to live in accordance with this principle of 'Live and Help Live'? Scientific research is proving that there is interconnectedness and interdependence of life at all levels of being and disturbance of this harmony causes disasters in one form or the other. An understanding of this truth, not merely intellectually but at the deeper level of experience and understanding, transforms the consciousness into a caring and compassionate one. However self-centredness and limitation in understanding the plan

of evolution binds human beings to their individual existences. They are therefore unable to perceive the larger design of nature for the evolution of life! The human mind is caught up in this island of self-interest and unable to perceive the larger design for its rise to a higher level of consciousness.

When we aspire for a 'New Mind' for a 'New Age', it is for a different mindset from the one in which human beings are trapped. The mind imprisoned in the conditioned way of thinking is unable to make this change without understanding that conditioning. There can be no liberation from this conditioning until there is clarity of perspective of the purpose of life; and the relationship of and the dependence of the different species of life upon each other.

In the Eight-fold noble path of the Lord Buddha, the first step of 'Right View' has been considered to be of paramount importance, on the foundation of which the remaining steps are constructed. 'Right View' indicates a true understanding of the nature of things or the world as it is, and not how we perceive it through the colouring of the senses and the mind. This implies an understanding of the laws of nature under the operation of which evolution proceeds. It also means an understanding of the Oneness of all Life and the interconnectedness of everything with everything else. When the understanding is correct the subsequent processes of thought are correctly founded and lead to right actions.

When the Buddha was asked whether this meant that belief in some form must

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be accepted blindly, he replied; 'No, but you must know for yourself three great things — that only upon the Path of Holiness and good living can man finally attain perfection; that in order to attain it he moves through many lives, gradually rising higher and higher; and that there is a Law of Eternal Justice under which all these things work.'

In the teaching of the 'Four Noble Truths' the Buddha explained that there was suffering and a cause for it. This is 'Trishna' or desire. As long as we are caught up in the web of desires of one kind or the other for wealth, fame or power this suffering continues and as *The Light of Asia* describes:

If ye lay bound upon the wheel of change,  
And no way were of breaking from the  
chain,  
The Heart of boundless Being is a curse,  
The soul of Things fell pain,  
Ye are not bound! The soul of Things is  
sweet,  
The Heart of Being is celestial rest;  
Stronger than woe is will; that which was  
Good  
Doth pass to Better-Best.

The Buddha taught that man's suffering is as a result of the choices that he makes. In the words of *The Light Of Asia* man 'Whirls upon the wheel of life and hugs and kisses its spokes of agony', of his own free will; no one forces him to make the choices that he makes out of ignorance. This bondage to the cycles of birth and death takes place as a result of his desires that tie him to the wheel of causality.

Ignorance of the real purpose of life is reflected in the vain search for wealth, power and position from which the hope is to acquire happiness and contentment. The mind that is self-seeking is caught up in this struggle of life that results in suffering. That there is much suffering in the world is evident everywhere and makes no distinction between the rich and the poor.

The human mind conditioned by many things like race, religion, caste etc. is trapped into an established way of thinking. It is constantly conditioned by impacts not only from outside but also by impulses from within by all those factors that create division. The thinking is therefore not holistic but divisive. Freedom from such a state can be realized when the conditioning of the mind is explored through observation. A detached observation of the thinking process reveals the things that influence our thoughts and actions.

The Buddha once put a problem to his disciples — How would you untie a knot? The pupils gave very learned answers. Then the Buddha said: 'If you want to untie a knot, find out how the knot was tied.' To understand the human conditioning we must find out the causes of that conditioning. To arrive at the unconditioned state of mind, we must know how the mind gets conditioned. Krishnaji said:

'The totality of our conditioning can be broken, not bit by bit, which takes time, but immediately, by directly perceiving the truth of the matter. It is the truth that liberates, not time or your intention

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to be free'. To understand the conditioning process, the impacts of the outer consciousness operating through the senses on the inner state of the mind and conversely of the mind on outer actions and thoughts must be observed. In all the thought and action processes this conditioning can be observed. This needs awareness. An awareness that can perceive the influence of some previous experience on the present experience is an alert awareness.

We create images of our past experiences that influence all our present actions. So differences of race, religion and many other forms of division are created by the mind. Images of past experiences and prejudices affect our present experiences that we see through preconditioned eyes. The action in the present is therefore never right action nor compassionate.

Therefore preconceptions of people based on religion, race, nationality, sex and a thousand other things are created that hinder true understanding. There is pre-judgement of people, on the basis of these artificial divisions, without an attempt ever being made to understand them. To understand this working of the mind is the way of wisdom and compassion.

To have genuine understanding means putting ourselves into the shoes of others and see where they are coming from in terms of their outer behaviour and beliefs. However our own conditioning makes us intolerant of others and hinders a true perception. To understand this conditioning requires deep insights into our own nature. It then becomes evident that we

have pre-established views that influence our present experiences and views. Our present is therefore never free from the images of the past. The recognition of this conditioning comes from awareness and deep contemplation. Therefore to understand the present human condition we have to analyse those things that divide human beings and prevent them from becoming compassionate and mindful about others. Firstly it is self-centredness. It results in a very selfish attitude that considers only that which one likes or wants, to the exclusion of the interest of others. This self-centredness rises from the self at the individual level and from there to the family, the group to which one belongs, race, religion, nation and so on.

In this way innumerable numbers of separate interest groups are created by human beings that are divisive and do not help in creating harmony. As long as there is exclusivity and separative tendencies there will be conflict. When he was addressing the European Union Parliament, Dr A. P. J. Kalam who was then the President of India, referred to the thoughts of the Tamil poet Kaniyan Pungundranar who was quoted having said far back in time:

'I am a world citizen and every citizen of the world is my kith and kin. Where there is righteousness in the heart there is beauty in the character. Where there is beauty in the character there is harmony in the home. Where there is harmony in the home there is order in the nation. Where there is order in the nation there is peace in the world.'

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In a similar way Krishnaji said that the individual must change before society can change. It is only when our inner conflicts cease and we are in harmony with others that the world will change. There are many serious social issues with broken homes or unstable families because of individual self-interests and lack of true love; a love that is not self-seeking.

Where there is love and understanding in the family there is stability and security in the children born in that family. Where there is selfishness and a lack of understanding of the other person's point of view there is unhappiness and instability. A true relationship whether between a husband and wife or any other member of a family is based on selflessness and love. In such a home as the poet Kaniyan said there is harmony. But this is far from what many homes have under the influence of the present electronic age of computers, mobile phones and other gadgets. A relationship between a husband and wife is often based on expectations that are self-centred. There is therefore an unwillingness to accommodate the views or interests of each other in the relationship. Hence there are broken homes and children who become social problems.

The need is for right values and right forms of education that result in responsible and compassionate individuals. It is fine to have institutions providing technological and other forms of learning. But this development is lopsided without the balancing of right values of life. There must be fundamental grounding in ethical and moral values that would create

compassionate and caring human beings. Is a society based purely on material progress the right one! Should there not be a balance between the material and spiritual aspects of life and an understanding of the social responsibilities that go with this! The drive towards greater and greater material progress is creating extremely competitive societies where there are tremendous pressures on individuals to perform more and more. The resulting pressures on family life are tremendous and often result in broken homes and unhappiness.

There is the story of an Australian couple; the husband a lawyer and the wife a mathematics graduate who got tired of their materialistic life and came to India to find out whether a simpler mode of living could bring contentment and happiness in their lives. They have been living in a slum in Delhi for more than a decade and raised two sons there. When interviewed they expressed great contentment with their simple life. They also experienced the kindness and generosity of the poor people who were their neighbours. This is perhaps an exceptional and extreme example that is not possible to be emulated by most people but it does indicate that happiness and contentment are not based on the things you have or the kinds of houses you live in.

There is much that is not right in a society that is based on material values only. Should there not be a sensitivity and compassion of the mind to share the limited resources of the world with those that are less fortunate than us! But what is visible in many places is the extreme

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greed of people who accumulate wealth through unfair practices without any thought of the harm they are doing to others. Often illegally obtained wealth is siphoned off to safe heavens and is never used even by the perpetrators of such immoral acts. So we hear of immense amounts of money deposited by politicians in foreign lands that could be used for the development of their countries.

Lord Mahavira taught that a disproportionate accumulation of wealth was a form of violence because it prevented others from having their share of the Earth's resources. So any inequitable distribution of the resources of the earth is a form of violence against others.

The challenge for the new age is right-ful thinking and living. A new way of thinking and living should evolve in the human consciousness that is based on a holistic perception of life. What stops this happening is the limited, self-centred mind that is concerned only with its own interests and not with the welfare of others. To understand life requires sensitivity of nature and compassion.

A compassionate mind is one that has the sensitivity to respond to the suffering of others and is not preoccupied with the self. Such a mind is very different from the worldly mind that is only concerned with its immediate circle of interest. The average human being lives a life in which the mind is occupied in matters of self-interest only. There is no concern for the well being of others outside the circle of family, friends and other specific groups. When we observe the world around us we

see this as the general human condition everywhere. This is so at the individual, societal or national levels.

There is either a lack of understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life or the understanding is only at the intellectual level without the sensitivity and empathy that is required to feel this. A compassionate mind on the other hand has the sensitivity to perceive the oneness of life and to respond whenever the need arises anywhere. The influence of materialism on the human mind is so strong that it craves for more and more of the worldly goods at the expense of inner contentment and peace. A mind like that caters only for the self and not for others.

At the national level the same factors of self-centredness are multiplied. Hence at world forums nations are unable to come to agreement on issues that are vital to the survival of the planet and its resources. Whether it is matters of the pollution of the oceans of the Earth or the depletion of its resources, the economic interests of nations and large corporations are the deciders of actions.

Human greed is the cause of much suffering in the world and no resources of the planet have been left untouched by this greed. In the continent of Africa many countries are in a state of civil war or internal strife. There is great human suffering and the exploitation of women and children. At the core of these strife's are the vast natural resources of the continent. Therefore you have trade in what are termed as the blood diamonds and other valuable

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stones. These are sold in the world markets and the proceeds used for the purchase of armaments that fuel the wars on the continent and support the vast armament industries of the world. So these cycles of wars, human exploitation and the destruction of the planet's resources continue.

Another example of human greed is the demand for ivory and rhino horn in the Far East. The result of this greed is the slaughter of these wonderful animals and the near extinction of these species. Similar exploitation of the resources of the seas has resulted in the near extinction of many species of life like the whales and dolphins. In some countries animals are killed for sport. Such animals are recorded to have displayed great fear and anguish at the time of their death.

A petition was recently circulated by an activist organization concerning extreme cruelty towards dogs, which were boiled alive so that their meat would become more tender and succulent for eating. Many voices of protests from all over the world were lodged in the petition to stop such inhumane practices. To stop such practices of animal cruelty a larger and larger number of people must raise their voices of conscience. It is not enough to be negatively good; there must be positive efforts in the direction of stopping such cruelty.

Radha Burnier writes in her book *'The World Around Us'* (October 2004, *TheTheosophist*)

'Compassionate living in the modern world seems to be hardly an ideal as it comes in the way of making large and quick profits out of business, and also

conflicts with the desire to find new pleasures and satisfactions. People are seeking to introduce into their diets novel tastes, eating the flesh of wild animals and creatures which were not counted previously as sources of meat. Eating the brains of living monkeys for example, and regarding it as a culinary delicacy is a new pleasure open to tourists travelling around the world and getting acquainted with alien customs. . . . In the midst of the gruesome inhumanity being practised, there is a glimmer here and there of a different mentality and approach to life. This keeps alive the hope that humanity is not altogether ceasing to be humane.'

The other factor of division amongst people and nations is religion. It is the cause of much suffering and division in the world. Instead of spreading the message of love and compassion that is at the core of all belief systems, we have bitter divisions and hatred. In a very vivid commentary on the state of religions *'The Mahatma Letters'* describe the influence of the priests of institutionalized religions on their flocks. Indoctrination of the followers turns them into fanatics who are willing to kill in the name of their God. Immense suffering is caused by such fanatics of all faiths on the followers of other faiths in the name of their religion. Even within the followers of different sects within the same faith there is so much mistrust and violence that have resulted in suffering for thousands of people. The priesthood of the various religions who are entrusted with matters of faith inculcate feelings of mistrust



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and hatred for the followers of other faiths.

The indoctrination of people into certain belief systems continues to be carried out in the name of their faith. Places of worship become hotbeds of violence and extremism. How can this extremism be replaced by understanding, love and compassion for others! Only through right education and upliftment of communities that have been economically disadvantaged, can the problem of extremism be vitiated. It is the lack of education and the economic hardships under which many people live that create the conditions for social unrest and religious extremism.

An example of a courageous stand against extremism is that of the remarkable young girl Malala Yousufzai who has been fighting for the rights of girls to education. In her speech at the United Nations she spoke about education that would foster liberal thought and non-violence. She quoted the examples of the Buddha, Jesus Christ and Prophet Mohamed for their compassionate lives and those of Mahatma Gandhi, Pashtun and leader Badshah Khan for their principles of non-violence. This example shows what the courage and right belief of one individual can do to awaken world opinion.

Right education creates stable and compassionate human beings with ethical and moral values. They in turn create a caring society. With right education that fosters freedom of thought, the causes of poverty, conflict and many other ills in the human condition can be reduced to create a more just and equitable society. However instead of tackling the core

issues to alleviate suffering, vested interests use illiteracy and poverty for indoctrination into extremist ideological thinking that encourages violence. Politicians use these large vote banks to acquire power and wealth, without making any real attempt to help such people.

In order for any real change to take place the individual must change. This means that we have to examine our own conditioning. What divides us from others and why do we create islands of separation from other people on the basis of race, religion, caste etc. This may be out of fear, insecurity or the lack of understanding of other people on the basis of their belief systems or cultural traditions and many other things. Unless an attempt is made to understand other people and their traditions or belief systems peace cannot be realized.

The question that we have to ask of ourselves is whether we can make a difference. The majority of the people in the world are decent human beings who abhor violence and extremism. But they remain as a silent majority who shy away from giving voice to their views. The small minority holding extremist views seem to prevail everywhere because of the silent acquiescence of the large number of moderate human beings. Right thinking people must ask of themselves whether it is morally right to remain passive. Is it not morally incumbent upon them to raise their voices when issues concerning the well being of humanity and life generally are affected!

The inaction may be as a result of underestimating one's own strength or ability

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to do something significant. In reference to this human tendency, Nelson Mandela the great humanitarian and statesman said:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and famous?' Actually who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make magnificent the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, its in all of us. And when we let our light shine, we

unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

A mind that has the sensitivity and compassionate concern for the wellbeing of life would be involved in proactive action. If a new age is to mean an age of an equitable and a just society then the right values must be cultivated. Glimmers of such sensitivity and compassion are visible in the altruistic actions of some people and organizations around the world that are increasingly taking up issues concerning the welfare of all life. This creates hope that a more humane society is evolving. ✧

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I, S. Harihara Raghavan hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: 28 February 2014  
*PUBLISHER*

S. HARIHARA RAGHAVAN,

## Pilgrim

The mountain pass is higher  
Than some passing clouds.  
People call the place  
'Overcome by tiredness'.  
Twice I fell badly  
During the steep and rugged descent,  
But there's no feeling of shame.  
Conquests or the futility of quests  
Never crossed my mind.  
Each trek reveals the pilgrim,  
The geography of a nameless passion  
Beyond the borders of joy and pain.

Before and behind me unseen  
Lie two restless communities  
Established by exiles and nomads  
Who respond to the seasons  
With simple resolve.  
Each village imagines itself  
As the navel of a self-redeeming world  
Turning patiently on its axis.  
In these sanctuaries the buddha  
And the snow-beast co-exist;  
Children speak to mountain peaks,  
Learn the vows of shadow and light.

I allow my body to lie flat  
On a pasture with grazing yaks.  
My skin floats on grass;  
I hear ferns growling near the stream. . . .  
Out of nowhere a dream  
Comes riding a pregnant tiger,  
A sudden compulsion to touch you  
And repair damaged prayer wheels.  
With eyes closed I dissolve  
The weariness of distances;  
An ocean of astonishing kindness  
Brings me to your shores.

Victor Peñaranda  
20 May 2005, in transit Paro-Bangkok

# Practising Theosophy: Knowing and Being

S. SUNDARAM

THE Theosophical Society, through the understanding of its Motto and the Three Declared Objects, has been trying to rid the world of its divisions and discords and has been encouraging its members to develop a positive outlook and approach towards life. What counts most in such endeavour is the sincere effort and the direction in which the knowledge and energy are being channelized. As we are aware, with the passage of time materialistic values are being given more and more importance in society in general. Individual interests, primarily economic as well as parochial, are putting people apart day by day. The individual is lost in the crowd, deprived of his sense of belonging. As such, responsibilities of the members of the TS have increased more to carry on the work. People engaged in spiritual liberation have to be equally concerned about social ethics and social responsibilities as well. When life is attuned to a sense of such moral obligation then transformation of the individual and change in the social set up can be there simultaneously. But this requires

tremendous self-sacrifice and social service, personal integrity and a strong social conscience.

I am reminded of a statement given by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. He said that he was not worried about Gandhian Thought because that is a living philosophy and will always remain a constant source of inspiration 'it is universal and ever relevant'. He was seriously concerned about Gandhian conduct which is becoming weaker day by day. And we all know that as long as there will be gap between thought and conduct, gap between knowledge and action, one will not be able to find a solution, find a way — neither for himself nor for others — to come out of a difficult and complicated situation. Whatever we study and whatever knowledge we gain have to be imbibed and internalized as an experience in one's consciousness. Because, Theosophy 'continues to be relevant today and would remain so in the future'.

What humanistic frame of mind shall produce such an ethical environment? It constitutes a challenge, more than a

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Mr S. Sundaram is General Secretary of the Indian Section of the TS. Talk delivered at Indo-Pacific Conference, Bali, November 2013.

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challenge a great responsibility, for all members — nay for all mankind.

Tagore in one of his lectures, points out to the difference between the 'perfection in doing' and 'perfection in being'. A person with his inherent talent and training in a specific field may be able to perform his job or present his art very systematically, methodically and efficiently. A professor of Religion and Philosophy may be very good at explaining the teachings of Gita, Buddha, Gandhi and J. Krishnamurti. But, outside the classroom he may not be true in his day to day dealings and in his relationship with others. So, it is very essential that one is true to his core in behaviour and conduct. It is very necessary to have and to develop certain basic humane and benevolent characteristics in order to proceed on *the path* otherwise whatever we study and listen to will remain at the academic level only. As Gandhi said, 'Satyagraha is not a thing to be practised in the caves of Himalaya. It must manifest itself in the form of action in our day to day life.' Basic transformation in one's inner being alone can help in bringing about change in the outer world. Inner transformation is the source of outer revolution. Transforming personal characteristics into social values is *the revolution*. Change within alone can bring about change in one's outlook and change in the outer world. A person is genuinely knowledgeable or not can be judged by seeing whether he has become more humble, sympathetic, sensitive, patient and with a feeling of love and brotherhood for all living beings.

'The main purpose of the TS is regeneration of human conscience through Universal Love.' If one desires to understand, examine and judge the Theosophical Society then he can do it not by knowing the number of members but by their way of living and the qualities of their behaviour. We will have to search and locate our strength and vitality in the qualities of the members because in the formation of a new system of human civilization these supreme qualities will play the main and prominent role.

The Theosophical Society lays great emphasis on search of truth, commitment to truth and putting in all one's effort and energy to live that truth. This commitment to truth awakens sensitivity, sense of awareness and sense of urgency for a cause. When there is intense and complete commitment to truth then the personal *Agraha*, personal considerations, automatically wither away; but the intensity channelizes itself in a creative, constructive and positive way.

History is replete with instances that whosoever tried to understand and discover truth, whosoever tried to follow truth, their life clearly manifests that a truth-loving person is always inquisitive, has an inquiring mind and tries to know, understand and perceive truth in its true perspective, in its totality. He wants to go deep into the inherent meaning, motive and message of truth. Now, Theosophy encourages the spirit of inquiry, Theosophy helps in exploring avenues for solving the fundamental questions of life and provides clarity to one's thinking. A

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man with such a state or level of mind remains true to himself, remains true to his society, and remains true to nature. In other words he remains true to the entire world. The discovery, study, meditation and pondering over truth is possible only when one is leading a simple, clean and pure life with commitment to high ideals. It is a reward for which one will have to make efforts with great sincerity and his beliefs should be the result of his own study, observation and inner knowledge. Theosophy presents a philosophy in its totality which can make one understand life and practice the art of living. Truth always manifests itself through welfare, justice and good conduct. So, it is necessary for one to have complete commitment to truth and also sincerely try to generate this sense of commitment in others as well.

The progress, the inner depth, evolution and transformation have to be seen, fathomed and judged by our own selves in our own way of thinking and living. These must reflect in our day-to-day dealings and activities. How far are we able to insist on truth under the challenging and adverse situations? What has been our contribution in promoting the cause of the Theosophical Movement? The criterion of judging one's integrity is that one is honest to himself. His honesty is not for the sake of policy but one is *just honest*. Then one's actions are also manifested accordingly. It will enhance the intensity of his commitment and involvement and will also expand his area of Theosophical activities.

The Path Finders have laid emphasis

on Discrimination. Man has the ability to distinguish and decide what is right and what is wrong, what is just and what is unjust, what is proper and what is improper. But, in spite of having the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong we find that most people are unable to practise it in real life and find it difficult to act accordingly. Because having only the power to discriminate between true and false, between right and wrong leads us nowhere. *Viveka* on its own is lame and so it is very necessary to understand and realize the strength of *Vairagya* and *Tyaga* (Healthy Dispassion and Sacrifice) along with the capacity to discriminate. It is not running away from life, but being in the midst of life, without being attached to it. In other words, rising above those bondages which enslave man and prevents him from his journey upward.

One might say that it is very difficult to live and survive with such ideal notions. It is not possible to practice them in day-to-day dealings. Then the question arises, what are we living for? Why are we not able to change others' outlook towards life by our own way of thinking and living? As stated by Tagore, 'A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. . . . Truth not only must inform but also inspire.' In other words, 'if the inspiration dies out, and the information only accumulates, then truth loses' its freshness and vitality. 'Life is a continual process of synthesis, and not of additions.'

The unenlightened life which we are living is without real meaning and truth.

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We must try to concentrate on thoughts and actions which may help one to move from personal considerations 'to a moral and spiritual self.' I will not do any harm to anyone is a very good idea. But a more positive step would be in what manner I can do good to others. We have to till and cultivate the soil within us so that it becomes fertile, receptive and vulnerable to receive and nurture the seeds of transformation *within* which will bloom, flower and transcend into a being which has *Oneness* of vision, thought and action.

Now the question is: What is it that hinders, that impedes and comes in the way of journey upwards? For transformation in one's psyche, for change in one's whole being, preparation within is a must.

As HPB categorically stated, Theosophy is 'true occultism' and 'altruism'. It needs 'great renunciation of self'. When one is engaged in a noble mission then the work of the mission is important and not personal glorification. Unless one gets rid of the thoughts and actions which strengthens one's ego, the consequences are bound to be what we are witnessing at various places in the world today. The true religious spirit is 'living and being conscious' of the sense of responsibility that we have toward higher goals, toward our organization and toward the society in general. Besides, it is an example of how one must respond to such situations if there is a strong feeling to conduct them in a Theosophical way.

The key to development is transformation, complete change. Certain

experiences and incidents bring about great change in an individual's life. We all know the story how Gandhi was thrown out of a railway compartment in South Africa. Before this incident, and even after this incident, several dark skinned passengers must have been prevented from entering the railway compartment or other places due to the then prevailing racial discrimination but there has been only one Gandhi in history. There are several such instances which show that for a questioning mind, observing mind, an enquiring mind, the spirit of enquiry is necessary to understand one's own real self, to understand the mysteries of this marvelous earth, the cosmic truth and above all the oneness of whole phenomena of realizing that One consciousness that is the supreme energy is pervading every particle in every being of this cosmos. This change is not without pain and discomfort. The more the intensity of change, the greater will be the pain. However, the being that emerges after undergoing the intense pain and suffering is an illumined one — which has the clarity of perception and the radiance of wisdom. Lord Buddha's life reveals that after seeing an old man, a diseased person, a crying woman and so forth he underwent pain and sorrow and then he had to struggle hard to discover the Truth.

In Dr Annie Besant's case, we find the personal suffering at the crucial stages of her life made her understand human sufferings at large. Suffering of her child, her suffering for the child, resulted in the awakening of compassion for humanity.

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Was it not a revolutionary moment? The burning questions and doubts about the very existence of God, with the depth of Wisdom turned into immense, unfathomable faith in Divine Power and in mankind. Thus the pain, the suffering, sorrow, conflicts, doubts and questions eventually resulted in her personality becoming the fountainhead of limitless love, compassion and deep concern for the entire world.

I would like to mention an incident to deal with another point. The typist in the library of the Research Institute where I was working was very much interested in listening to moral and religious stories, in knowing about the content of the talks delivered in our Theosophical Lodge at the Indian Section Headquarters or talks delivered during the International Convention. Once I mentioned to him about the statement given in *At the Feet of the Master*;

It is well to speak little; better still to say nothing, unless you are quite sure that what you wish to say is true, kind and helpful . . . think carefully whether what you are going to say has those three qualities.'

Next morning when I reached my Institute he told me that during the last sixteen hours, he could speak only three sentences. Then, I thought that he had at least made experiment with what was suggested in the book. In this way he must have saved a lot of energy by not indulging in gossip and unnecessary talk. Now, the only thing he has to do is to utilize that energy in the right direction.

Because what counts most in such endeavour is the sincere effort and the direction in which the knowledge and energy are being channelized. It is the direction in which we proceed, that matters most. The question is, how many readers who have read that portion really experimented with it?

The more one practises or develops the habit of right thinking and taking right action, the greater will be the possibility of understanding and discovering the right values of life. After all, man has certain moral and spiritual capacities which can keep him under reasonable restraint and control. So, the understanding and knowledge to discriminate between life negating causes and life promoting forces are very essential. And this is possible only when one is prepared to listen to his *inner voice* and is ready to be guided by his voice of conscience. As mentioned by Prof. Rege during the International Theosophical Convention in 1990 :

The practice of human and humane values, the purification of individual mind and pursuit of spiritual knowledge go hand in hand. Each is necessary support to the other. You cannot pursue spiritual liberation in isolation from social ethics and responsibilities.

Dr Annie Besant's life and work give us the lesson that every law abiding citizen must accept the moral obligation of refraining from all such thoughts and actions which would create hindrances in the way of unity, integration and brotherhood. She



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inspires us to work for the whole of mankind.

We will have to question ourselves — what is it that hinders, that impedes and comes in the way of the journey upwards? In what way are we different from others? What are the changes that have taken place in our lives after joining the Theosophical Society? Are we here in the TS merely ‘to generate information’ or ‘to generate an understanding? Each one of us will have to have dialogue with oneself to find out how much of Theosophy has really become part of us. How do we approach a problem? How our way of tackling an issue is different from others? Has our way of dealing with a situation created any positive impact on common people? These and several such questions may help us to understand as to where we actually stand and what more requires to be done. Theosophy helps in widening our mental horizon. Its genuine understanding leads to the blending of head and heart. It strengthens us from within. The deeper we go into it the greater are the chances of transformation. The more we try to put it into practice greater will be the scope to live a life based on harmony, cooperation, compassion, brotherhood

and love. Nevertheless, let us not wait passively for inspiration to be given on a platter. Let us labour hard and put in our best efforts so that *we* become the very meaning. As mentioned by HPB,

Put without delay, your good intentions into practice, never leaving a single one to remain only an intention.

Then, the innate harmony, wisdom and truth, on their own will unfold themselves through us. In order to make a positive contribution we must be strong in ourselves. If we are determined to make Theosophy a living force in our life there is no reason why it should not have multiplier effect. Thus, perhaps, there will be no need to explain the relevance of Theosophy because the very presence of a Theosophist will reflect Theosophy in its deepest and holistic sense.

Now, I would like to conclude with a few lines from Hazrat Inayat Khan :

There are two things: knowing and being. It is easy to know truth, but most difficult to be truthful. It is not in knowing truth that life’s purpose is accomplished. Life’s purpose is accomplished in being truthful.

**Theosophy, therefore, expects and demands from the Fellows of the Society a great mutual toleration and charity for each other’s short-comings, ungrudging mutual help in the search for truths in every department of nature — moral and physical. And this ethical standard must be unflinchingly applied to daily life.**

**Let every Theosophist only do his duty, that which he can and ought to do, and very soon the sum of human misery, within and around the areas of every Branch of your Society, will be found visibly diminished.**

Daily Meditations

# Books of Interest

INVISIBLE WORLDS: ANNIE BESANT ON PSYCHIC AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT. Annie Besant's essays compiled by Kurt Leland. Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 2013. 411 + xii pages, paper.

Annie Besant was a grande dame of Theosophy, second only to that grandest of all Theosophical dames, H. P. Blavatsky, the Mother of us all. A listing of Besant's oeuvre would require far more space than this review can accommodate. The volume under review consists of sixteen of her many publications originally appearing between 1896 and 1914.

The excellent chronology on pages 21-27 of the book under review records that Besant's life stretched from 1847, when she was born as Annie Wood in the central London district of Clapham, to 1933, when she died at Adyar after a life of distinguished service, both political to India and Theosophical to the world, having spent eighty-six years doing the Masters' work on the physical plane. The *Theosophical Encyclopedia* (edited by Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks; Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006) includes a detailed and illustrated biography of Besant by Catherine Wessinger.

During her lifetime, Annie Besant went through a series of striking psychological changes that were associated with several

men. Although Besant was a remarkably independent woman, she seems to have depended on men to trigger those changes. She was raised in a traditional family and married an Anglican vicar but became disillusioned with orthodox Christianity when she tried to combine the various gospel accounts of the life of Jesus into a single coherent sequence.

Subsequently she formed an alliance with Charles Bradlaugh, a noted free-thinker of the time and with him published a notorious pamphlet, 'Why I Do Not Believe In God' (1887), which long remained popular, being reprinted, for example, more than a century later in *American Atheist: A Journal of Atheist News and Thought* 35.3 (Summer 1997) and 35.4 (Fall 1997). She also collaborated with Bradlaugh in reprinting and selling a pamphlet on birth control, which today would seem tame (and which in fact advocated inadequate techniques to avoid conception), but at the time her role in distributing that publication resulted in her losing control over her children as she was deemed to be an unfit mother.

From her early days, Besant felt called to be an orator. During her marriage to the Anglican vicar, she would go into the closed and empty church, mount into the pulpit, and preach to a nonexistent congregation. That anticipated a lifetime of oratory. After her alliance with Bradlaugh, she became

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an advocate for union activities, including support for an 1888 strike of London matchgirls, who worked under miserable and dangerous conditions producing matches with which ‘gentlemen’ of the time lit their cigars.

In 1889, Besant was invited to review a new book for the *Pall Mall Gazette* periodical. It was Blavatsky’s *Secret Doctrine* (1888). Besant was inspired by that book to meet its author; upon doing so, she was immediately converted to Theosophy, which brought to an end her association with Bradlaugh but opened doors to a new life. She became Blavatsky’s favourite disciple. On Blavatsky’s death in 1891, Besant became the leading female member of the Society. In 1894, Besant met fellow Theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater, who became her closest collaborator for the rest of her life. Leadbeater was clairvoyant and helped Besant become so also. In 1902 Besant accompanied Francesca Arundale to Paris, where she became a Co-Freemason and

eventually the Order’s Most Puissant Grand Commander. After the 1907 death of Henry Steel Olcott, the founder and life-time president of the Theosophical Society, Besant succeeded him as president.

The title of this book is a guide to significant topics covered by the contents. One concept of Theosophy that Besant especially elaborated is that the physical world available to our senses is only one of a series in the cosmos. The non-physical worlds, which are ‘invisible’ to our senses, are nevertheless perceptible by the non-physical ‘powers latent’ in all human beings. The book title’s phrase ‘Psychic and Spiritual Development’ is also significant. We are both psychic and spiritual (referred to as personality and individuality). Although the human constitution has many aspects, the traditional number being seven, we are not just a congeries of those aspects, but a unified wholeness of which those aspects are facets.

JOHN ALGEO

**The understanding of Truth will kill out self, for self cannot exist where Truth abides. Seek, therefore, the world of Truth, and you will dispel the darkness where self abides . . . Leave no stone, however small, unturned, for Truth may lurk beneath it. Rise to the inner level of the mind, from which you can behold the Truth in all its nakedness and not be blinded. To do this you must have courage and intelligence.**

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The eyes of wisdom are like the ocean depths, there is neither joy nor sorrow in them; therefore the soul of the occultist must be stronger than joy, and greater than sorrow.

H. P. Blavatsky

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