



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Editor: *Mr Tim Boyd*

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Cover: Govardhan. Detail from 'Astrologer and Holy Men'. A page from the Late Shah Jahan Album, ca. 1650, Musee Guimet, Paris

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

President: Mr Tim Boyd

Vice-President: Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy

Secretary: Ms Marja Artamaa

Treasurer: Mr K. Narasimha Rao

Headquarters: ADYAR, CHENNAI (MADRAS) 600 020, INDIA

Vice-President: ivp.hq@ts-adyar.org

Secretary: secy.hq@ts-adyar.org

Treasurer: treasury.hq@ts-adyar.org

Adyar Library and Research Centre: alrc.hq@ts-adyar.org

Theosophical Publishing House: tphindia@gmail.com & tphindia@adyarbooks.com

Editorial Office: editorialoffice@gmail.com, Website: <http://www.ts-adyar.org>

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.

The Present Need

TIM BOYD

I WOULD like to share a few thoughts about this present moment and what might be the need. Can we recognize it and respond? What is the opportunity of this time, given our particular stage of development? Our initial understanding of the meaning of ‘Theosophy’ was largely given to us through H. P. Blavatsky. Her work was difficult. During the course of her life she lived without much in the way of material riches, yet she was able to participate in founding what has grown and now finds roots in seventy countries, with resources ranging from finances to land to its most important one — 26,000 members who have found meaning and value in Theosophy.

HPB was not suffering from any delusion that her work would be readily accepted. This is fortunate, because during her lifetime she found rejection and accusation that would stop normal people in their tracks. As angrily as she may have spoken, she was continually willing to pick up and try again. She said that the world to which she was speaking would not understand Theosophical teachings, and that it would not be until the twentieth century that the teachings she gave could

begin to be understood. There was a certain growth that would have to take place in the human scene. Some of that growth has been in the scope of the scientific worldview. Thus the Theosophy she presented and the movement that began through her efforts was directed towards the future. From what can be seen, it looks as though that future is now, as the possibility for these teachings to take root in a way that is meaningful to the world at large is this moment we now inhabit.

There is an African expression that says: ‘The disease that is hidden cannot be cured.’ I would like to examine some of the hidden obstacles to the full expression of this Theosophical worldview, recognizing that wherever we find obstacles, we necessarily find opportunities. Over the past four or five hundred years the way we see the world has shifted. Our present worldview has become so all-encompassing that we do not notice it, but it guides our every decision and has become worldwide in its scope. It has its roots in the development of the contemporary view of science. The scientific worldview is relatively new.

Public Lecture delivered at the international Convention, Adyar, 30 December 2014.

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Four to five hundred years ago the particular way of seeing the world that we describe as 'scientific' was relatively unknown. Today's prevailing approach to science has been called 'reductionism' or 'materialistic reductionism'. This worldview that has been embraced and promoted is reductionistic because, by definition, the scope of consideration for contemporary science is the material realm. The cosmos as examined, observed, and studied is the physical realm. Thinking of what is Divine, or consciousness, is not measurable. Its effects may be, but consciousness itself has been excluded from the reductionistic worldview. This is one of the factors that have had a very limiting effect. It would not be such a difficult problem were it not that, in reality, this narrow worldview has become so dominant, that it is now almost the religion of the world.

One of the difficulties with a view that looks at the physical world as the total universe, is that we find ourselves now in a condition that has never existed earlier. There has never been a time in human history where the cosmos has been regarded as anything but sacred. That is no longer the case. It has been described as a 'desacralized' cosmos, and this has implications. The main way we tend to arrive at our decisions about anything is impelled by the values we have cultivated. These values have been diminished.

A further stream that has coalesced with reductionism also had its beginnings five or six hundred years ago. It was started during the time of the Protestant

Reformation in Europe, when the Church had the final say. With the tumbling of that sense of center and value that Luther (who began that whole movement) set afoot, something spread abroad. What has developed is a misshapen interpretation of the fundamental concept ingrained in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, that 'all men are created equal'. It has not isolated itself to the West. It is engulfing the world.

This trend is beyond mere individualism, which is part of the natural spiritual cycle in which the individual is able to establish its own central core and to operate from it. In its ideal form the individual develops this core so that it can then be turned over as conscious service to the whole. As someone who grew up as a student in US schools, I had to learn this Declaration by heart: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.' This is a profound statement if it is understood from the level at which it is intended. In terms of our Divinity every one of us is equal. We share the same Source: there is no separation, no division. From the divine perspective even equality is an inadequate term. All is one. There is nothing to be divided, to compare or contrast. At the level of popular discussion, this understanding has been lost.

We all know that in the world there are great beings whose wisdom, experience, knowledge, education, and development far exceeds the norm. Yet, we are at a stage where 'all men are

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created equal' has come to mean, 'Why should I listen to this person when I am equal to him?' Hopefully this is a mindset that we do not find so active in ourselves, but it is certainly active in the world. In the early days of the prophet Mohammed's work, one of his followers was asked a question along this line: 'What's so great about Mohammed? He's a man just like any other man.' The response of this wise person was: 'The prophet is like other men in the same way that a ruby is like other stones.' We have to reawaken our sensitivity to these inner qualities. In the face of the prevailing current of thought, this sensitivity has a way of slipping away from us.

Thus you have these two trends active in the world today: the materialistic reduction of our worldview, coupled with a self-centred individualism. This way of seeing the world produces a long list of obvious consequences. There are a host of crises in the world that we are all having to face which have become pronounced. Some of the problems that we see around us such as global warming, climate change, deforestation, rapidly growing deserts, water shortages, rapid uncontrolled urbanization, pollution of the earth, air, and water, are all increasing at an alarming rate. In 64 countries around the world, 600 different groups are waging war at this moment. These are just simple facts. This is the world we are living in and the problems we must address. If we choose not to, then we will experience consequences and will pass them on to future generations.

Without having to develop some new theory or new technology, every one of these pressing problems has a solution available now! The knowledge required is here. That should cause us to ask a question: 'If the knowledge is available for their solution, why are these problems not solved? Why do they persist?' It seems that however great our knowledge might be, perhaps knowledge alone is not enough. It is a bit too small for big problems. Something that exceeds mere knowledge is required, something that was part of the reason the TS was founded.

I would like to share two quotes — one is from Albert Einstein and the other from H. P. Blavatsky. The first one is: 'No problem can be solved on the level of consciousness at which it was created.' Another way of putting it is: 'We don't know who discovered water, but we know it wasn't a fish.' We swim within the confines of an ocean of thought — a particular narrow band of thinking and emoting that we identify as 'the real world'. We are those fish, and we just do not know. The HPB quote was in answer to a question about 'What is the world?', and she said: 'The world is man living in his personal nature.' They are similar quotes. What we perceive as the real world is merely the reflection of our collective personal natures. But it is a world with very clear limitations that need to be addressed.

As an example of the limitations of mere knowledge, let us take the case of the wars that are going on around the world, violence, terrorism, and so on.

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What is the solution that we apply today? We all know that the solution is greater violence, and if this is not enough to quell the adversary, we resort to levels of violence so extreme that there can be no response at that point. This is what we imagine to be a solution, that peace can come from war. Obviously the history of the world demonstrates it does not work. That has not meant that we do not keep trying!

Basic logic would tell us that if we do harm and destroy the lives of the loved ones of another, it cannot produce positive results. The daughters, sons, family, neighbours, friends of those people cannot feel kindly towards us. Such means may temporarily suppress further violence, but they cannot create a genuine peace. From the theosophical point of view we are aware that with the sudden deaths that occur in war, the body dies, but the consciousness does not disappear. It goes on to become part of the pervading atmosphere, the ocean in which we fish are swimming, a consciousness now marked by fear, anger, and hatred. Is this the solution to peace? It just does not work.

We can apply this same analysis to our approach to spiritual study and the path. Initially most of us are attracted to the pursuit of the spiritual because within ourselves we experience intense suffering in different ways. For some it is physical, for others it is emotional, and for some it is in the mind, but suffering is universal. When we start to find out that perhaps there is some glimmer of

hope along this line of spiritual practice, how do we approach it? It is said that at the root of all of our problems is a fundamental and profound ignorance. With regard to this ignorance our problem is not that we do not know, we know many things. The problem with this fundamental ignorance is that what we know and see is wrong.

The example often used is that of a man who sees a coiled rope in the road, but thinks it is a snake. His heart starts beating fast; he gets ready to run because of his fear of snakes. His thought and bodily processes respond in this way because the 'reality' he perceives is wrong. When he realizes the error of his perception, his responses change. In our effort to address this ignorance, what is the approach that we take? Our normal thinking tells us that ignorance is remedied by more knowledge. Our sense is that we need to study more. So we pick up the right books. After we finish one we need to study another, and another, and another, in the hope that there is a quantitative solution to the qualitative shift in perception that we are pursuing. When we reduce the world to a material one, then the answer to the problem is 'more'. Clearly something needs to change with this approach.

Annie Besant told a story about a time when she was going to Chicago on a train. She was half asleep, when all of a sudden some heavy sense of gloom and despair awakened her. She had not come into Chicago yet and did not know what it was that caused this feeling in her.

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Chicago at that time was called ‘the slaughterhouse to the world’. Animals by the millions were being slain. She realized that what she was feeling was this overarching atmosphere that breathed out from the city. It was well known that in the neighbourhoods of those slaughterhouses crime rate and violence were much higher. Very often the crimes that were committed were with the very weapons used in the slaughter industry! The atmosphere we live in affects us.

So how do we address the types of problems that we have in the world today? Mr A. P. Sinnett, one of the early Theosophists and recipient of many of the letters from the Mahatmas, wrote several books, one of which was *Esoteric Buddhism*. In it he describes the traditional teaching methods for occultism and the spiritual life. He wrote that those methods sought to impress every new idea upon the mind ‘by provoking the perplexity’ that this new idea ultimately relieved. It is a nice way of saying that the learning experience in terms of the life of a person who commits to a spiritual path is through the progressive creation and resolution of crises. This is true for us in our individual cycle of unfoldment. It is equally true for the planetary cycle. The world is in a period of crisis, a perplexity that has been provoked by a narrow line of thought that has been imposed on the planet and its inhabitants, which by now has gone about as far as it can go. The fresh idea that is to be impressed upon the mind of humanity is fresh only in the sense that our current

crises are preparing us to see it and embrace it. It is as old as humanity itself. This is the idea that oneness, unity, and brotherhood can be experienced.

For us as Theosophists, how do we move beyond this particular stage we are in, where we are rich in knowledge but poor in solutions? The first thing is to realize that knowledge in and of itself will not be enough. There is something greater that we know as ‘wisdom’. This wisdom is not the sole possession of great ones who live outside of our realm. By its very nature it is part of our being — ‘nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet’.

In *The Voice of the Silence* HPB describes the *pāramitās*, the perfections, of which the greatest and final one is *prajñā*, or wisdom. It is said that each of these perfections is an antidote to various conditions of mind and heart. Patience, one of the *pāramitās*, is an antidote to anger, violence, and so on. It is also said that wisdom is the antidote to every possible ill that there is, and that a little bit of a realization of wisdom is sufficient to alleviate many problems. We all speak about wisdom. This is probably the best we can do because we do not know. Wisdom could be described as the perception of what is real. It is not foreign to us.

I will share a poem about one man’s experience. It was written by a great poet who was also a member of the TS: William Butler Yeats. When he was fifty years old he had a brief experience. He described it in a beautiful short poem.

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It is an experience which probably all of us can relate to:

My fiftieth year had come and gone,
I sat, a solitary man,
An open book and empty cup
Upon the marble table-top.
While on the street and crowd I gazed
My body of a sudden blazed;
And twenty minutes more or less
It seemed, so great my happiness,
That I was blessed and could bless.

This poem is one man's experience of a descent of buddhi, the intuition. The twenty minutes of this blessed awareness was life-changing. I think all of us have experienced some measure of this. Maybe we did not get our full twenty minutes, or it was just a brief moment where for whatever reason our normal self-absorption disappeared and in that vacuum something came to fill it. Looking back on the experience we might call it a wonderful moment. We might say, 'I was happy', 'I was peaceful', but the basis of that experience is that somehow we had a moment where the gnawing, constantly crying voice of self-grasping died away. And it is enough to last a lifetime. This is an intimation of the wisdom that Theosophy speaks about.

To quote from the Bible, there is a Psalm that describes this type of experience. One line from it says: 'He utters his voice and the Earth melteth.' Those moments that are most real in our lives, are those when the seemingly solid Earth

disappears from view, and we encounter something profound that defies our later descriptions, yet we still try to describe. This is the basis of the answer to this present need. Whatever it is that we know will not be enough. Whatever our specific talents may be will not be enough. Whatever we have in terms of finances, resources, will not be enough to meet the need that is upon us. But whatever we have, whether it is a grain of sand or a million dollars, when it is touched by the blessing of this illuminating consciousness within all of us, and that we have all experienced to some degree, then it becomes transformed. That is the transformation that takes place, the need that is before us.

What we have to do now is to learn to live at our limits. All of us feel as if we are limited beings and we try to confine ourselves within these limitations, never straying too far. How do we know where our limits are? Because where we are among people we do not know, and we start to feel uncomfortable, we become aware that maybe this is a wall that we were not aware of. Where we see various types of sufferings and feel like turning away, we recognize there is a wall. When we sit in our meditation practice and on this particular day, unlike other days, some sense of an unfamiliar expansiveness starts to invade the border of our consciousness, and we quake at its approach because we do not know what it might hold for us — another limit, a boundary appears. These are the places where we have to learn to live, because

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what we will find as we approach these limits, is that they recede. None of them can confine us. In the process of facing one limitation, we develop our capacity to face the very next one.

There is a need for something that the Theosophical Society came into being to provide: we find the means to accomplish within the hearts of every one of us. Nothing is missing, nothing is lacking, nothing more is needed. What I would ask for each of us is that the compass we apply to our living needs to

be a reliable one. The tools of science, of our various training and talents are useful in their way, but the only clear point that will guide us is our own experience of that which we have perceived as profound, as true. What I would ask for all of us in facing the ever-present need of this world, is that we refer continually to that inner centre. That is what links us with one another, and that alone will bring solutions that will lead us to the next turn in this cycle of the growth of humanity. ✧

**Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence.
Talent will not; nothing is more common than
unsuccessful people with talent.
Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.
Education will not; the world is full of educated
derelicts.
Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.
The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve
the problems of the human race.**

Calvin Coolidge
(30th US president, 1872-1933)

Transcending Science — A New Dawn – I

JACQUES MAHNICH

Introduction

Once upon a time a tiny molecule of water was born, coming from the sky in a high mountain. She woke up when she felt she was moving down between rocks and started rushing in the falls with great delight. Her name was ScienceMol; we will call her Molly. She was very excited, and soon, together with her companions, she wished to measure and understand everything around her, the pressure surrounding her, the temperature agitating her, her moving speed, the height of the cliffs, the distance she was travelling, and so on. Soon, she met older molecules who told her: ‘Be careful, the time and distance you are measuring are not fixed values, should you speed up, relativity will catch you!’ She became afraid, what could be this strange beast who was lurking in the blue, waiting to invade her landscape and modify her vision of the world?

Molly continued to run down the stream, entering a large city. Here, another old molecule told her that this place, far away from her birthplace, was also the place of a very strange creature called

the Black Whirl. Nobody had seen it, but according to legend it could swallow anything which would dare to come too close to it, and, because nobody ever came back from that place, nobody knew what was happening there.

Rushing forward, she reached another place downstream where there were so many other molecules that she could not see the banks of the river. Another friend came, very excited, and told her: ‘You need to know, we just discovered that our river is now expanding in all directions, and we do not know why! Let’s pray not to fall into the hell of Black Energy!’ Old superstitions were still very active among these people.

Very frightened, she rushed ahead, looking only in front of her. Suddenly, she heard a voice telling her: ‘You think you are here, but, in reality, you are everywhere at the same time, and you just cannot know where you are or at what speed you are moving. Therefore, you don’t know where you are and you cannot know where you are going. You better stop trying to understand your

Mr Jacques Mahnich is President, St Jean Lodge, *French Section*. Theosophy-Science Lecture delivered at the international Convention, Adyar, 28 December 2014.

surrounding world.’ That was too much for her. Finally, she decided to close her eyes and let it go without any more resistance. After a long moment, she finally sensed no more movement, and she opened her eyes. She was standing among an infinity of water molecules, all standing still. She saw that the molecules had each a small blue light inside themselves, illuminating their surroundings. She intuitively knew she had reached the end of her journey, until the Master, the Sun, would call her again into the sky to restart another journey. Molly was now integrated in the Ocean of Theosophy and a new dawn was to start.

Science and Traditions, an old couple

An important constant of life on this planet, is its rhythms. This is one of the three fundamental propositions of the Ageless Wisdom. Here, we are talking about all cycles which sustain the mode of being during the manifestation phase. We are familiar with the main cycles such as the life and death of cells, organisms, people, civilizations, stars, universes, and so on. Same for the day and night sequence, the seasons, the water cycle, the carbon cycle, and so forth, on this earth. When we look at the Traditions of humankind, we find cycles in cosmogenesis, which, except in the Christian Tradition, the smallest interval is expressed in one hundred thousand terrestrial years.

There also exist much shorter cycles that are much closer to us: the life cycle of our human cells, that our physical

bodies are made of. We have around 100,000 billion cells in our body, which, side by side would be equivalent to a 15,000-kilometer rope. They work all together, fortunately for us, on their own, to maintain the integrity of each body during their lives. Every day, 20 billion cells will die and be replaced by new ones. Replacement cycles can last from some hours to fifteen years. This means that most of our cells are fewer than ten years old. When we feel a little bit old, we may want to remember that fact. The surface of our lungs is around 100 square meters, the length of our blood vessels is 100,000 kms and we synthesize 1,014 molecules each second. Our physical body is a marvel, the fruit of a billion years of evolution. This is what Science tells us.

The Ageless Wisdom tells us also that the complete human physical body is renewed every seven years. This is an example where it may be possible to build a bridge between Science and Traditions. And this is not by chance. There is a key fundamental axiom which everybody can recognize easily: Reality is One, and we, as human beings, are interpreting it with an infinite set of possibilities based on our culture, conditioning, tendencies, and atavisms. When we talk about a scientist or a spiritualist, we need to keep in mind that both are, first of all, human beings at a certain stage of their development. They do not differ so much, they have both their conditioning which carry them on their life path with common features.

So, let us have a look at these two

approaches and see how they can enhance each other for the sake of a better humanity.

Science in the twenty-first Century

Science, defined by Mme Blavatsky as ‘an abstract of *every fact*, a comprehension of *every truth* within the scope of human research and intelligence’ (*H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, VIII, ‘What’s in a Name?’, p. 13), has deeply penetrated our day-to-day lives, and pervades now almost all aspects of human societies. The industrial, economic, financial, educational, artistic, and cultural domains are all heavily relying on technologies brought about by scientific discoveries. Science has reshaped our landscape, has modified deeply our ways of living, and it is important not to ignore it.

As we know, it has not always been the case, and it took centuries for it to emerge as one of the forces driving our evolution. Since early in its history, it had to fight against predominant dogmatisms held by the main religions in Western countries. The last forty years have brought a strong acceleration to the development of Science, widespread now to most of the world. But, more important is the dissemination factor, powered by more open boundaries between countries and world-wide means of communication, allowing real-time access to information and on-line cooperative processes.

As of today, there are about seven million scientists in the world, doing research in more than 250 academic

disciplines. Almost one scientist per one thousand human beings. Scientists published an average of one million research papers a year. And they live in physical and virtual communities, with no more borders — the global village. For example, the European Laboratory for Particle Physics (CERN) in Switzerland has, on a permanent basis, 8,000 researchers from 80 nationalities coming from 52 countries. The diversity of culture and traditions gives a better sum of competencies and experiences. Most of the research is now performed under interdisciplinary and multinational approaches, and such a combined effort allows for synergy of financial and intellectual powers, way above what any country could afford. This is the type of practice we may want to remember.

In one word, Science became an enormous machine to dig inside the mysteries of the physical world under all its measurable aspects. We are far from the 19th century image of some renowned universities and some isolated geniuses. Therefore, the impact of Science on our social, economic, and cultural life is tremendous. It has reshaped our societies, for good and not so good. On the good side, sustainability, reduction of inequalities between countries, conservation of Nature, preservation of the local cultures and ethics became drivers in scientific developments. At least they are part of the values of today’s Science. As an example, the 6th World Science Forum Declaration (2013) states that: ‘Scientists are individually and collectively, ethically

responsible for the advancement of Science and the use of its benefits for society.’ The report has the following recommendation: ‘It is the responsibility of both those who promote science and of scientists to maintain the primacy of moral and social concerns over short-term economic and political interests in the selection and implementation of research and development projects by governments or private industries.’ This is a sound statement, but real life shows that these wishful statements are not, or are not enough, implemented. It has not prevented over-exploitation of the earth’s resources, which is on full swing currently. Obviously, scientists cannot control the use of their inventions, and we have seen that for a long time. Responsibility resides in human nature, its lower personality being driven by greed and desires. The current motto is ‘Always more for me’, i.e. more profits for the producers/providers of goods, and more fulfillment of desires for the consumers. Technologies have enabled this acceleration, and the development of liberal economy at the planetary level has impaired most of the authorities/governments’ capabilities of controlling the movement. We may be sitting in a high-tech race car with no steering wheel.

Traditions in the XXI Century

Traditions, including all religions, philosophies, and cultural heritages, have their life-cycles also. Today, we see some of the monotheistic religions declining sharply in some countries,

some Eastern religions like Buddhism blooming in Western countries, and a lot of ‘new age movements’ appearing and disappearing. For so many centuries, social, political, and community life was organized around the main religious traditions. They have shaped human behaviour through their philosophy, morals, and ethics. Because they took over not only the spiritual aspect, but also the temporal aspect, they have moulded our societies using means of moral and physical repression up to terror modes such as the Inquisition in sixteenth-century Europe. Vanishing, they are leaving a vacuum in the field of human values, morality and ethics which they used to promote, nurture and protect. Since Nature abhors a void, other values quickly jumped in to replace the old ones. And because religious morality is disappearing, the lower mind no longer finds an obstruction to express its basic behaviour: the fulfillment of its desires. The infernal cycle has started: because desire cannot be exhausted by being fed, it increases constantly its demands for ‘more-for-me’. At the other end of the food chain, producers of goods increase their rate of production, the variety of their products, creating new need for the ‘always hungry’ mass of consumers. In turn, this has a repercussion on the resources of Mother Earth. The infernal cycle is up and running.

Human in front of Science and Traditions — The Power of Science

One can wonder why Science is taking

so much importance and visibility today. Apart from the quantitative aspect of the outcomes of Science in daily life, manifested by technologies enabled by discoveries, scientists have focused on a broader scope of influence in societies, targeting decision-makers and education. Their strategic plans, built and approved worldwide, are targeting not only materialistic welfare[?], but also materialistic values. An educational project initiated in 2000 and presented at the UN level was driven by the urgent need to promote a world community of scientifically and technologically literate citizens. Goals and objectives were highlighted as:

- ◆ personal development through acquisition of scientific knowledge;
- ◆ personal mental development through use of scientific skills/methods;
- ◆ development of individual attributes, attitudes, and perceptions;
- ◆ development of values and skills as a responsible member of society.

Ned Lane, Director of Science and Technology Policy, Washington DC, USA, declares at a World Conference on Science (2000):

It is certain that our responsibility extends beyond the world of science. We are the ones who will help determine the ways in which new knowledge intersects with

societal goals and values. We are the ones who can stand at the crossroads of human knowledge and human needs, and help our world chart the course ahead.

He just did not tell us where this course was leading to. Obviously, spirituality does not belong to the proposed values. All the ingredients for a materialistic society are there, and science-fiction of the 1950s (Orwell 1984 novel) seems to have become a reality.

To summarize, all observations and facts are showing that human evolution on this planet is accelerating and may have taken a wrong turn, or is taking a turn at too high a speed and can get centrifuged out of its evolutionary path. Universal values are vanishing with the decrease of influence of religious institutions, and cultural values are centered around materialism. Maybe this picture is unbalanced, too pessimistic or too simplistic. But the mainstream materialistic philosophy and its practical implementation, supported and endorsed worldwide (UNESCO) are unequivocal.

This should be a wake-up call. The next question then would be ‘What can we do?’

Let us first have a look at some new trends in scientific and Theosophical communities.

(To be continued)

Scientific knowledge can be combined with spiritual activity to create peace and goodwill in the world via an unmanifest field.

Richard Prosser

Dr Wu Ting Fang and a History of the TS in China

CHONG SANNE

NOT much information is found in the annals of The Theosophical Society regarding Theosophy in China, save a brief statement in *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* by Mrs Josephine Ransom in the year 1922:

The first Chinese Lodge had been formed, with the great Chinese statesman and ambassador, Dr Wu Ting-Fang, as President, but who passed away in June. He was intensely anxious that Theosophy should take root in his own land, for he wished the new China to be built up on the basis of brotherhood.

In the *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society* by C. Jinarājādāsa, there was a picture in Fig. 204 with the caption ‘Dr Wu Ting Fang, author of the first Chinese Manual on Theosophy’.

But who was Dr Wu Ting Fang? No further information was given in theosophical publications regarding this Chinese pioneer of Theosophy. Though a distinguished name in China’s modern history, few realize the significance of this name or the extent of his greatness.

Wikipedia describes him as ‘a Chinese diplomat and politician who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and briefly as Acting Premier during the early years of the Republic of China; a lawyer and a calligrapher’. The Chinese edition of *Wikipedia* and the Chinese *Baidu Encyclopedia* give considerably more information on the illustrious background of Dr Wu Ting Fang. What was not known or not stated was the fact that Dr Wu was veritably the Father of Theosophy in China.

Wu Ting Fang was reportedly born on 30 July 1842, interestingly, in Singapore, which was then known as the Straits Settlements. However, at 3 years of age, he was taken by his father back to China where a greater destiny awaited him. He had his early education in Hong Kong. In 1874 he went on to study Law in England at University College, London, and was called to the bar at Lincoln’s Inn in 1876. He became the first ethnic Chinese barrister in history. In 1877 he had the distinction of being the first Chinese to obtain a Doctorate in Law, LL.D. It is interesting to note that at the time when

Mr Chong Sanne is Vice-President of the Indo-Pacific Federation, Presidential Representative, East and Southeast Asia, and President of the Singapore Lodge.

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the Theosophical Society was founded in New York with its attendant publicity in London, Dr Wu was in fact living in England. However, it is not known if he had any contact with early members of the Theosophical Society.

After being called to the bar in England, Dr Wu returned to Hong Kong in 1877 to practise law. He became the first ethnic Chinese Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong when he was appointed by Great Britain in 1880, a position he served until 1882.

Dr Wu was appointed by the Emperor Guangxu and served under the Qing Dynasty as Minister to the United States, Spain, and Peru from 1896 to 1902. He returned to the United States to serve as the Chinese Minister for the United States, Mexico, Peru, and Cuba from 1907 to 1909. During this time he became friends with President Theodore 'Teddy' Roosevelt and also met with the scientist and inventor, Thomas Edison. In March 1910, Dr Wu left the United States for Europe, Singapore, and Hong Kong en route to Beijing.

Dr Wu resided in the West for a considerable period of time, some four years in England and eight years in the USA. His mastery of the English language and his knowledge of current affairs worldwide could be seen from the delightful book he authored, *America Through the Spectacles of an Oriental Diplomat*. This book is quite readable. Interestingly, he was coaxed to write it, his only English book, by an American lady friend. As it says in the preface:

Such a race should certainly be very interesting to study. During my two missions to America where I resided nearly eight years, repeated requests were made that I should write my observations and impressions of America. I did not feel justified in doing so for several reasons: first, I could not find time for such a task amidst my official duties; second, although I had been travelling through many sections of the country, and had come in contact officially and socially with many classes of people, still there might be some features of the country and some traits of the people which had escaped my attention; and thirdly, though I had seen much in America to arouse my admiration, I felt that here and there, there was room for improvement, and to be compelled to criticize people who had been generous, courteous, and kind was something I did not wish to do. In answer to my scruples I was told that I was not expected to write about America in a partial or unfair manner, but to state impressions of the land just as I had found it. A lady friend, for whose opinion I have the highest respect, said in effect, "We want you to write about our country and to speak of our people in an impartial and candid way; we do not want you to bestow praise where it is undeserved; and when you find anything deserving of criticism or condemnation you should not hesitate to mention it, for we like our faults to be pointed out that we may reform." I admit the soundness of my friend's argument. It shows the broad-mindedness and magnanimity of the American people. In writing the following

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pages I have uniformly followed the principles laid down by my American lady friend. I have not scrupled to frankly and freely express my views, but I hope not in any carping spirit; and I trust American readers will forgive me if they find some opinions they cannot endorse. I assure them they were not formed hastily or unkindly. Indeed, I should not be a sincere friend were I to picture their country as a perfect paradise, or were I to gloss over what seem to me to be their defects.

This delectable book is witty, humorous, if sometimes satirical, but written with great humility. It was written in 1914 when Dr Wu had taken up important portfolios in the new Republic of China.

Dr Wu Ting Fang supported the Xinhai Revolution and negotiated on the revolutionaries' behalf in Shanghai. He served briefly in early 1912 as Minister of Justice for the Nanjing Provisional Government, where he argued strongly for an independent judiciary, based on his experience studying law and travelling overseas. After this brief posting, Dr Wu became Minister of Foreign Affairs for the ROC. He served briefly in 1917 as Acting Premier of the Republic of China.

Dr Wu joined Dr Sun Yat-sen's Constitutional Protection Movement and became a member of its governing committee. He advised Dr Sun against becoming the 'extraordinary president' but stuck with Dr Sun after the election. He then served as Dr Sun's foreign minister and as acting president when Dr Sun was absent. He was Minister of

Foreign Affairs from September 1917 to June 1922 and concurrently Minister of Finance from May 1921 to June 1922. He died shortly after Chen Jiongming rebelled against Dr Sun.

It was during the last three years of his life that he did the most work for the Theosophical Society while still holding the dual portfolios of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Finance. In 1920, aged 78, while residing in Shenjiang, Shanghai, he actively promoted the Theosophical Society. He initially named Theosophy *Daodetongshenxue* and renamed it *Tianrenmingdaoxue* before finalizing on the name *Zhengdaoxue*. Every Thursday he would invite Chinese and Western members to get together at his house to study the true teachings of the various religions, the deep mystery and secrets of heaven and earth (Nature), man's constitution, etc., in short, Theosophy. According to his followers, whenever he had any leisure after his official duties, Dr Wu would enthusiastically talk to the Chinese and Western members on Theosophy and occult science and teachings.

Evidently, Dr Wu gave public talks on Theosophy long before the first Chinese Lodge was officially chartered. It was reported in the press that on 12 March 1916 Dr Wu, in his capacity as a Theosophist, was invited by the *Shanghai Shangxian Tang* (The International Institute of China) to give a talk on 'The Relationship Between the Soul and the Body' to an audience of hundreds of people.

In June 1921, Dr Wu translated and

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published *Information for Enquirers* by Annie Besant. In July 1921, he wrote and published *Outline of Theosophy*. In the latter publication he gave the reasons with an insightful explanation of the choice of the final name *Zhengdaoxue*. On 14 February 1922, he published *Elementary Lessons on Karma* which he translated from Annie Besant's writing. The latter was published four months before his death on 23 June 1922.

On 8 March 1923, the Shenjiang Theosophical Society Sun Lodge posthumously published *Dr Wu Ting Fang's Dialogues on Theosophy*. These dialogues were recorded answers by Dr Wu to questions on Theosophy. In the preface to this book, tribute was paid to him 'as a great sage of the Republic of China who led a life with careful words and deeds, and who did not seek luxury. Everything he did was based on morality as the yardstick.' This book was published together with a compilation of his three other works, viz. *Outline of Theosophy*, *Elementary Lessons on Karma*, and *Information for Enquirers*. This compilation of Dr Wu's works on Theosophy can be found in the archives of the National Library of China although the last two titles appear to be missing.

Dr Wu lived in the era of the founding of the Theosophical Society and the first half century of its existence. He was a contemporary of the early leaders of the Society. It is not known whether he ever met any of them but evidently he had great admiration for leaders such as Annie Besant, who, incidentally, was five

years younger than Dr Wu. In *America Through the Spectacles of an Oriental Diplomat*, published in 1914, he referred to Annie Besant more than once:

The immigration laws in force in Australia are, I am informed, even more strict and more severe than those in the United States. They amount to almost total prohibition; for they are directed not only against Chinese labourers but are so operated that the Chinese merchant and student are also practically refused admission. In the course of a lecture delivered in England by Mrs Annie Besant in 1912 on 'The citizenship of coloured races in the British Empire', while condemning the race prejudices of her own people, she brought out a fact which will be interesting to my readers, especially to the Australians. She says, 'In Australia a very curious change is taking place. Colour has very much deepened in that clime, and the Australian has become very yellow; so that it becomes a problem whether, after a time, the people would be allowed to live in their own country. The white people are far more coloured than are some Indians.' In the face of this plain fact is it not time, for their own sake, that the Australians drop their cry against yellow people and induce their Parliament to abolish, or at least to modify, their immigration laws with regard to the yellow race?

Dr Wu was also an advocate of vegetarianism. In the concluding chapter of the same book, Chapter 17, on Sports, he writes:

As an ardent believer in the natural, healthy and compassionate life I was interested to find in the Encyclopaedia Britannica how

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frequently vegetarians have been winners in athletic sports. They won the Berlin to Dresden walking match, a distance of 125 miles, the Carwardine Cup (100 miles) and Dibble Shield (6 hours) cycling races (1901-02), the amateur championship of England in tennis (four successive years up to 1902) and racquets (1902), the cycling championship of India (three years), half-mile running championship of Scotland (1896), world's amateur cycle records for all times from four hours to thirteen hours (1902), 100 miles championship Yorkshire Road Club (1899, 1901), tennis gold medal (five times). I have not access to later statistics on this subject but I know that it is the reverse of truth to say, as Professor Gautier of the Sorbonne, a Catholic foundation in Paris, recently said, that vegetarians 'suffer from lack of energy and weakened willpower.' The above facts disprove it, and as against Prof. Gautier, I quote Dr J. H. Kellogg, the eminent physician and Superintendent of Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan, USA, who has been a strict vegetarian for many years and who, though over sixty years of age, is as strong and vigorous as a man of forty; he told me that he worked sixteen hours daily without the least fatigue. Mrs Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society, is another example. I am credibly informed that she has been a vegetarian for at least thirty-five years and that it is doubtful if any flesh eater who is sixty-five can equal her in energy. Whatever else vegetarians may lack they are not lacking in powers of endurance.

Here again, Annie Besant is mentioned.

It was indeed a loss for the Theosophical Society that Dr Wu passed away only three years after he formed the first Chinese lodge. Being a Chinese scholar highly proficient in both the English and Chinese languages and in a position of power and influence, he was pre-eminently qualified to translate Theosophical literature in order to spread Theosophy throughout Greater China. Then again, he was already 80 years old when he died. However, his legacy was preserved and the name he chose for the Theosophical Society was kept active until the Second World War.

In The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Book of The Theosophical Society by Josephine Ransom we have this statement in the year 1936:

Mr A. F. Knudsen was appointed Presidential Agent for East Asia. He and his wife made Shanghai their centre — 'a better place than Hong Kong to contact the real China'. An appreciable amount of Theosophical literature had already been translated into Chinese.

Indeed, Mr Knudsen presented one of these translated books, *Theosophy*, in Chinese, to Adyar on 21 January 1938. It is not known when the book was first published. The translator's name is given in Chinese as *Yuanhujinhuilian* which appears to be a transliteration of a Western name. This is a rather comprehensive book and the closest to a Chinese theosophical manual.

Two versions of *At the Feet of the Master* were found with the Chinese

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title *Shixun*. One of them has a preface by Mr Knudsen dated 17 April 1937. However, the translator was not named. The other version is undated but evidently an older version translated by *Lin Haohua*.

Again, in *A Short History of The Theosophical Society* in the year 1937, the following was reported about Mr C. Jinarājādāsa on his way back from Japan:

On his return journey he spent a longer time in Shanghai, where he gave one public lecture and addressed the Lodge several times, and gave a lecture on Buddhism to the 'Pure Karma Society,' which was translated into Chinese.

In *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Book of The Theosophical Society* in the year 1939, we have this report:

In Shanghai Mr Knudsen was preparing, with the help of scholars, translations into Chinese of *First Principles of Theosophy*, by C. Jinarājādāsa, and *The Ancient Wisdom*, by Annie Besant.

We do not know whether translations were actually carried out, as Chinese translations of these books were not to be found.

Then came World War II. In *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Book* in 1944, was the ominous pronouncement:

In Burma, Netherlands East Indies and the Philippine Islands the Society was practically extinguished by the Japanese, as were the Lodges in Shanghai (China), Hong Kong and Singapore.

After World War II and the Great

Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the People's Republic of China taking place from 1966 through 1976, the Theosophical Society ceased to exist in China. However, another version of *At the Feet of the Master* with the Chinese title of *Lizugongtinglu* translated by Mr Maurice Chu was published in Hong Kong by a private group in 1961 and reprinted in 1972. Up until then, the Theosophical Society was still referred to by the Chinese name given by Dr Wu — *Zhengdao xuehui*. This book, together with the aforementioned seven, are the only eight Chinese books kept in the Adyar Library and Research Centre and are believed to be the only ones extant.

The Theosophical Society is currently not present in the country with the highest population in the world. As it is verily the mission of the Society to 'popularize a knowledge of Theosophy', we must not neglect China, with its population of 1.37 billion people. In this respect, under the auspices of the Indo-Pacific Federation of the Theosophical Society, a Chinese Project Team was set up in December 2011 at the Singapore Lodge to promote Theosophy to the Chinese-literate population of the world, primarily in China. To this end, we have developed a dedicated Chinese website <www.chinesetheosophy.org> as the vehicle for the dissemination of theosophical teachings. Fortunately, China has high computer literacy. Of the population of 1.37 billion, there are an estimated 621 million internet

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users according to statistics as of 30 June 2012. This is 50% of all users in Asia. The work of the Chinese Project Team consists of ongoing translation of theosophical literature into Chinese which is progressively posted on the website. The Team also facilitates on-line forums for interactive discussions of theosophical subjects. Work has only just begun. We have uploaded images of the eight Chinese books made available by the Adyar Library and Research Centre to our Chinese website. We expect

to accomplish more in time to come.

And we have reverted to and shall propagate the Chinese name *Zhengdaoxuehui* composed by Dr Wu as the official name for the TS thereby preserving his legacy. After all, that name has been recognized as the official Chinese name for the Theosophical Society from 1920 until at least 1972. It is an interesting twist in history that the Chinese Project Team should be established in Singapore, the country of birth of Dr Wu, to continue his theosophical work in China. ✧

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Science in the Light of Ethics

ELS RIJNEKER

MANY books have been written about science, and just as many about spirituality. What is the bridge between science and spirituality; should there be a connection at all? Where does the inspiration for scientific discoveries come from? Albert Einstein is a good example of someone who built a bridge between science and spirituality. It is said that H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* was always within reach, lying on his desk.

There are a few book titles referring to the link between science and spirituality: *The Universe in a Single Atom*, *The Convergence of Science and Spirituality* (His Holiness the Dalai Lama); *The Science of Yoga* (I. K. Taimni); *A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night*, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (His Holiness the Dalai Lama); *Science and the Sacred* (R. Ravindra).

All theosophists know the Universal Mantra by Annie Besant which begins: 'O, Hidden Life, Vibrant in Every Atom, O Hidden Light, Shining in Every Creature, O Hidden Love, Embracing All in Oneness . . .'

The motto which forms part of the

emblem of the Theosophical Society (TS) is *Satyān Nāsti Paro Dharmah*. In The Netherlands we use the Sanskrit words, for they mean far more than just 'There is No Religion Higher than Truth'. With the emphasis on Freedom of Thought, TS members are students of life, together searching for Truth, seeking the *art of living correctly*. This search is meant to discover the unknown through the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science (the second Object of the TS), and by investigating the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the human being (the third Object).

We human beings start discovering our world from the moment of birth, first of all for survival. We go on experiencing and learning until the time we close our eyes at the moment of physical death; this discovery is the task of a lifetime. What we take in, understand, and remember depends entirely upon our abilities and our educational and cultural backgrounds. In short, we experience the world through our senses, and then add our thoughts and emotions. Our observations can hardly be called unbiased, real and pure.

Ms Els Rijneker is General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in The Netherlands. Talk given at the European Congress held in Paris last summer.

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In human research and in science there are many pitfalls. Here discernment, ethics, personal integrity, and spirituality might be needed. *The Golden Stairs* of H. P. Blavatsky mentions clearly: 'A clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception.' This is evidently a lifetime's work.

At a symposium held together with several other spiritual organizations, in Amsterdam in March 2014, Marco Pasi, Associate Professor in the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents, talked about *The Challenge of the Academic Soul*:

One of the methodological problems most often debated in our field, concerns the position of those who do not wish to adopt a 'neutral' or 'agnostic' stance in the study of esotericism, but rather let their judgement be coloured by their own spiritual or religious beliefs... (see <www.theosophie.nl>, magazine, March 2014, p. 19).

The scientific approach — as far as I understand, curiosity, and the will to investigate and to do research in general — starts from observations of the outside world. Then hypotheses are formulated, which are tested many times under controlled conditions (nowadays with very precise instruments). As a result, a new hypothesis, a new theory, a new discovery is launched. Scientists are now able to observe the smallest part of the material world! At that point, however, the miraculous question arises: what is the force behind the material world, what is this energy, what is 'life'? To catch this,

more 'ethereal', nearly spiritual levels of understanding, are required: can we see beyond, beyond the material world, can we really understand, and see things as they really are, can we reach pure vision at all? Man can be bright and brilliant intellectually, having studied many books, extracting and reproducing an immense amount of formulae, facts, and figures from the brain (this is called 'the doctrine of the eye' or 'of the head'), but do we possess inner wisdom, are we intelligent (this is 'the doctrine of the heart')? What is our aim in life: status, pride, profit for a few, or a sharing with all mankind? There are even more difficult issues, as we have such a limited view: what to preserve and maintain, what to release, because change in this physical world is inevitable.

Right attitude and integrity should, of necessity, play a large role in scientific research. We might ask ourselves: is a discovery useful and beneficent for the whole planet, or for just one part of the world; only for mankind, or also for the lower kingdoms (for animals and plants)? Is it correct to take the life of animals? Are specific medicines really necessary, or are there motives of influence, of power and commercial money-making? The former president of the TS, Mrs Radha Burnier, once said when speaking about physical illness: 'What is wrong with dying?' This is quite a challenging pronouncement.

Dr Klaus K. Klostermaier, Professor Emeritus, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada, wrote in *The*

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Theosophist, November 2009:

Aldous Huxley, a twentieth century giant in the Realm of Humanities, whose *Perennial Philosophy* is not only an unsurpassed anthology of world religions, but also an outline for a universal religion, . . . suggests that Vedantic *jñāna* (pure knowledge) is the key to unlocking the gate to the meaning of human existence.

Our entire scientific enterprise — and with it a large part of our public educational effort — is largely dedicated to avoid the great human questions rather than addressing them. The reduction of rationality to the mathematical manipulation of data, which finds its epitome in the computer, not only restricts the scope of science and makes it ignore questions of meaning, but it also convinces the average scientists and the masses who believe in science, that questions of meaning, questions relating to the Self, are ‘unscientific’ and thus not worth pursuing. Research into such questions apparently ‘does not pay’. Modern science leaves out, on principle, questions which include the entire range of ethics, aesthetics, and spirituality.

Is there a *Bridge between Science and Spirituality*? Most certainly there is. There ought to be one, and it can always be improved.

How should we act in order to improve this connection? This is a matter of ethics. Here the first step must be taken by every man and woman individually. We all are free to take this decision for ourselves, and we have to walk on our own Path to reach the great ‘know thyself’, *gnothi seauton* (the text inscribed in the Temple of Apollo in Delphi). Spiritual and religious movements aim for this goal of discerning, understanding, purifying, and acting ethically. Although in the scientific world this might not be common practice, it would be an appropriate idea to consider and discuss ethical issues more often, admitting that one solution is not easily found! Study, Meditation, and Service are three of the pillars of a theosophical life, connected with the Art of Living Correctly mentioned earlier. The ideal situation would be for scientists to combine their research with reasoning and reflection (a meditative study), the result of which could lead to a whole-hearted service to mankind. ✧

Only when modern science begins to relate its discoveries to life as a whole, to the misery or happiness of living beings, will it truly become an ally.

Is Science Our Best Ally?, *The World Around Us*
Radha Burnier

Impressions of Adyar

ROBERT BÉLAND

I WOULD like to share my impressions about my stay in Adyar and about the Annual Convention. There are three or four topics I would like to share with you.

The first thing that impressed and touched me when walking on the Adyar campus, was that, no matter whom I met, there was always that feeling of brotherhood or humanhood with no distinction of race, color, or gender. That seems to be obvious because it is our motto. But it is always touching to see implemented in day-to-day living, with such a large and diverse group of people, what you are studying in books and what is, from time to time, difficult for many to apply with their family and friends. I was also very impressed seeing that respect was directed to all animals and plants on the campus.

The second topic I want to talk about is that I attended the School of the Wisdom. I found it a fantastic opportunity to meet great teachers and other students who are now friends. It is also wonderful to have a chance to acquire knowledge of such quality, even beyond knowledge. This is something I can bring back

home to share with my colleagues for the good of Theosophy in our lodges, study groups, and with anyone who wishes to learn more. Again I must repeat it is always amazing that although we were many people from different backgrounds and cultures, and the subjects of study were from time to time sensitive, it was always done in a spirit of respect and humanhood.

Now the Convention. The main subject we talked about was change in the world and in the Theosophical Society. The following are not scientific statistics but around 50% of people are consciously afraid of change and another 49.9% of people are unconsciously afraid, or at least uncomfortable with change because it leads to the unknown. What struck me was that spirit of respect amongst everybody. The ones who want changes to happen did not seem to push or pull the others. The ones who prefer not to change, or at least not so quickly, seemed to be open to listening.

I always come back to the subject of brotherhood or humanhood but, is it not what is lacking in this world? Many

Mr Robert Béland, member of the Canadian Theosophical Association, speaking during the Closing of the international Convention, Adyar, on 31 December 2014.

Impressions of Adyar

people are hungry, yet there is enough food, many people are poor, yet there is enough money. What is lacking? The profound desire to share . . . humanhood. This last month, I have seen and experienced humanhood every day.

To summarize, I have travelled in North and South America, Europe and Asia before, but this last month I have spent here in Adyar at the TS international Headquarters has been one of the best experiences of my life. ✧

I want you all to be very joyous, for joyousness is indispensable both to a happy Adyar and to an efficient Adyar. As the great world centre both for brotherhood and specifically for the Theosophical Society and the many movements our Society has mothered, Adyar occupies a unique place in the life of the world. By the force of strong example, Adyar can almost compel the world to follow the path to happiness in the sense that a strong example from such a centre would be so compelling in its power and attractiveness that the rest of the world would be irresistibly drawn to follow the example.

Annie Besant

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

YOUR enjoyment of the world is never right till every morning you awake in Heaven; see yourself in your Father's palace; and look upon the skies, the earth and the air as celestial joys; having such a revered esteem of all, as if you were among the Angels. The bride of a monarch, in her husband's chamber, hath no such causes of delight as you.

You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars; and perceive yourself as the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and kings in sceptres, you can never enjoy the world.

Thomas Traherne

The Changing Self: Its Progression

N. SRI RAM

IT is a rather wonderful and an extraordinary fact that all such basically beautiful qualities as humility, simplicity, purity, and others which are unnameable, merge into one condition of mind and heart. Equally all vices stand allied to one another, being all of them the progeny of egotistic self-assertion and desire; they constitute a close-knit brood, while the virtues, considered separately, constitute a single constellation.

It is the desire for what one wants and enjoys, or seeks to possess and hold, that makes one so self-assertive. But can there not be a pure motion of the heart, akin to desire though we may not call it desire — which does not have its origin in the self? Such desire, without a self that binds itself to the object desired, has the same quality as love. It arises out of a turning of one's heart, an inclination of will, that causes the beauty of the object, whether person, thing, phenomenon or idea, to flow into the heart. Such a movement arises, not from memory of a previous experience, as does desire of the ordinary sort, but as a quality that belongs to the free flow of life. Assertion and desire that seeks to

possess go together. We may not have realized how closely they are linked. The more demands and urges a person has, the more dominating and assertive he is sure to be. When I say, 'I want this thing', the stress, however insensibly, is centred on the 'I'.

All vices arise from a self which is potentially or actually in conflict with others; all virtues from the truth that supersedes that self with a nature of harmony and beauty. Truth in an inclusive sense is both subjective and objective. Subjectively it is truth in one's being, its nature and action. In relation to external things, it lies in seeing things as they are, not only the appearances, the crude facts about them, which do not touch us deeply, but also those inner or ideal forms which underlie these appearances. It is the response to the ideal that underlies the so-called real, which evokes in us the sense of harmony, although to see even the superficial fact as a fact and understand its place is part of the complete response. It is only the nature of one's true being which can respond so completely; it is true in the sense of being not vitiated, hardened or warped

Reprint from the May 1969 issue of *The Theosophist*.

The Changing Self: Its Progression

by influences external to it. All virtues being expressions of this nature, each is related to the others. Every virtue is an ideal form of action or being, and all ideals shining in conduct, thought or feeling, are aspects of one ideal truth, which is embodied in that unwarped Being. As one awakens to the existence of this truth within himself, its different aspects appear as so many forms of beauty, like stars in a sky from which the clouds have disappeared.

All clouds are earth-born, and the clouds in our mental sky are born out of attachment to sensation in various forms. Attachment to any kind of sensation, physical or emotional, carries with it both heat and tension. There may be some degree of heat or fever in one's system, but he may not perceive that fact when he has become accustomed to it. When there is attachment to something that causes pleasure, there is the urge to grasp the thing or hold it. All attachment is to a sensation of pleasure; the thing or the person connected with it being merely the means by which that sensation is obtained, replaced as exigencies require. One cannot really find peace in life, the peace which goes down to the roots of being, unless one has eliminated from one's nature every feverish strain, the desire for one kind of satisfaction or another, whether it lies in holding on to things or in acquiring them or in building more and more of whatever it is which gives the sense of security.

The clouds in our sky are born out of the soil of our nature, that is, its condition,

but there is the cloudless sky beyond them. A person who has not had even a momentary glimpse of the beauty and nature of that sky will not even believe there is such a thing in existence; if told about it, he will think it is a flight of fancy; there are only the clouds. This cloudless sky is referred to in the Sanskrit books as *chit ākāśa* or *chit ambaram*, *chit* being intelligence, *ākāśa* or *ambaram*, expanse or sky of pure intelligence, of consciousness in its original condition.

This expanse, which is absolutely unbroken, corresponds on the spiritual-intellectual plane to the continuum of space, or of space and time, with no distortion. The cloud which accumulates and hides this sky carries the moisture of various personal emotions which darken our existence. When there is attachment and the desire it breeds, there is also frustration and unhappiness, for what is desired is not always attained; even when it is, it does not, after a while, give the happiness that was hoped for. And there is the reaction to the enjoyment of it, unless it is a pure enjoyment, without any will that insists on continuing or retaining it. There is disappointment as one's hopes are either not realized or do not yield the satisfaction that was expected. To pursue the simile, periodically the clouds discharge themselves as tears of self-pity and grief.

The lives of so many people are dull and gloomy, not for lack of interesting events and phenomena, but because of a heavy pall under which they live and

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carry on. One can live in the midst of a whirl of excitements, but as the novelty of one thing after another wears off, life shrinks into dullness, losing its edge, and is without joy; the excitements then add to the misery. It is quite a different experience to live without any darkening pall over our lives. It is the charged cloud of our memories which overcasts the sky of the pure consciousness. The memories must necessarily exist as impressions received in the past, but they might exist without turning into clouds, charged with reactions affecting the present. When that is the case, they disappear from our horizon without obstructing the light that flows from above. It is memory charged with passions, cravings, resentment, and so forth, which creates our different humours, to use the alchemist's language, choler, melancholia, and so forth; these are all afflictions of the psychic self, the body of our mind and emotions, giving rise to complications and disorders causing different kinds of malfunctioning.

When one studies all this purely intellectually, he is only perusing a map; the map is not the country. One has to travel personally over the country himself, and the travelling is very different from seeing a map and noting its features. The practical question then for us is: How can one completely eliminate these humours, the clouded sky, the continuous generation of reactions that darken one's existence?

What happens in the natural course of events? The clouds disappear at death, not immediately, but in the process which

death initiates, which is the real death, according to the great spiritual Teachers whose teaching on this subject is well in accordance with what we can understand of our own constitution and natures. They must disappear along with the conditions which produced them, the conditions of the recent earth-life. One might be thankful for the fact that there is, for the time being, an end to a process that was but a continuous sowing of seeds mostly productive of grief. It is a subjective, indrawn condition into which one must pass, as at sleep, when there is no longer the challenge of happenings to which he has been responding during the earth-life. Lacking reinforcement and left to itself, the condition must change, becoming lighter and easier. The clouds that were present, no longer replenished, must either discharge themselves or evaporate and disappear. They were formed by stages in the course of contacts with the external world, and they must come to an end by stages, when cut off from it. All this can be seen to be likely from a study of one's own psychological self.

Then it is the clear sky which must emerge, that sky being a pure expanse of consciousness. In that clear sky whatever stars appear — perhaps at first they are only a few — would be the spiritual truths that become self-evident in that state. All the formations previously in the mind have been dissolved. But there can be an infinity of forms of harmony which can arise and come into view, when there is nothing to obstruct one's perceptions, though what is realized

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at first must be the truths nearest to one's comprehension. The entity which has thus reached its summit for the time is unable to stay there forever if it has still remnants of ignorance that generate a downward motion, as it turns its attention outside itself. Such is the ancient teaching. If we regard the consciousness of an individual as consisting of two aspects, the lower being formed by its contacts on earth, and the upper being the aspect metaphorically described as the sky with its stars, the entity that has still ties or affinities with the earth must return to the earthly conditions. The *Gītā* expresses this turn of the cycle in the words (freely rendered), 'Having exhausted the merit he has won, the individual returns to the earth.'

The entity that is reborn is fresh and pure, practically a new being. The old has been made new, which is contrary to the seeming rule of Nature, where the new constantly becomes the old. If a person can look simultaneously with some kind of a vision that bridges the intervening time, upon the self of the last incarnation, perhaps dissipated, stained, worn out and hardened, yet unwilling to die, and upon the reincarnated young child, tender, playful, sweet, fresh and innocent, eagerly enjoying life, it would be difficult for that self to believe that the two pictures belong to one and the same entity. It is the winsome creature which in other days and other conditions appeared as the bloated, heavy person whose wants were insatiable, even of things already had in surfeit. How strange

the change! Yet the reverse of the dissolving process that is death takes place in our lives, but we take it in our stride because the change is so gradual and we get accustomed to it bit by bit. When one realizes the revolutionary nature of the change which death can make, he realizes also its place in the scheme of things. The true inner process of it can be set in motion in the very midst of our lives here and now. The renewal which, when things are left to themselves, awaits the period of liberation from the body, can take place day by day now, while we are still in our bodies. Death as an inner disburdening, purifying, simplifying, and sweetening process is not the death of deterioration and decay. Death means one thing to the outer person, the reverse of it in relation to the inner nature.

The transformation of the old into the new becomes possible because the freshness and beauty that appear are native to the soul. It is not something new which is created, but a nature that was present but hidden is disclosed and manifested. The soul in its true nature cannot deteriorate — this has to be taken as a postulate — it being a receptacle or medium of life's freshest waters. It is the mind which deteriorates, and of course the body too, influencing the mind. It is the nature of the relation between soul and mind which makes it possible for the mind in its freedom to become corrupt, and then it eclipses and divorces itself from the soul. It is the corrupt and sickly mind which is the principal factor in the deterioration of our earthly natures, and

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the soul, which has such a different nature, is so far away inside the material and mental vestures that its very existence is a matter of conjecture and doubt. We know little of it because its nature is so little in action in our ordinary lives. People have all kinds of fanciful ideas about it, as though it is an object like a dark cat in a dark room, instead of the pure knower or subject in oneself.

The inherent nature of life is a nature of freshness, energy, sensitiveness and beauty; it has to be *released*, not acquired. If this is so, it puts a different complexion or face on the whole problem of the transformation that is possible in ourselves. It is a problem only to the mind that thinks on the basis of appearances. It ceases to be a problem when one sees the possibility as well as the desirability of the condition which the word 'soul' represents. When the mind is utterly quiet, having renounced everything of the nature of a personal end or concern, then that other nature to be associated with that word comes within one's horizon and manifests itself.

We come back into incarnation with that true and original nature reflected in the child, but the new entity becomes very soon tarnished and much like the other people who are around. It succumbs to various influences alien to its real nature, because of its unawareness. It should be possible for a person to go through the successive stages of life without so succumbing, not undergoing the unfortunate metamorphosis which takes place in the generality of cases. But it is the

rare individual who remains unstained, pure as a lily in a pond even amidst impurities, the decaying weeds. Occasionally one can see a touch of that quality in some exceptional person, whom the world usually passes by, as meaning nothing to it.

Every age can be beautiful in itself, without giving rise to any inner deterioration. The innocent child might retain its innocence, and yet grow to be full of the special charm of youth, whether girl or boy, the ardour, the eagerness and the readiness to respond and act wholeheartedly. One can be, even in later life, a child at heart and also full of a youthful spirit, able to drink in the poetry of life — not the sort of youth which is effervescent, which is the boiling of one's immaturity, ready to fall for anything and everything, to be trapped, solicited and caught. There is youth and youth. Unfortunately, the youthfulness that is in the nature of the soul is not much in evidence at present, but there is the other kind which is self-assertive, self-conscious, scornful of its elders, thinking it can make a new world without itself being new. Such thinking is merely an expression of a blind reaction to the old order of things. Although it is this kind of youth which makes the news at present, one hopes there are also some of that other kind, who have the virtues and the grace of youth, along with the energy of an outgoing spirit. Modesty, ready affection, willingness to learn, care, and respect for people, love of order — virtues so highly prized of old — cannot all these exist

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along with the radiance of youthful energy as well as fresh and unfettered thinking? It should be possible. If one feels it is not, one has not touched that condition of being in which there is this possibility. What we think to be possible as a condition attainable in oneself and extremely desirable *can* be attained, because it indicates that this inner condition is already present somewhere within oneself and one is aware of it.

The last phase of life can also be beautiful, like the declining sun amidst the autumn colors, the wonderful scene that Nature paints in a certain season of the year, when all the trees are colorful and the sun's warmth is mild, without any of its earlier fury, and it sinks most beautifully into the sphere that lies beyond our sight. There can be in old age a quality like the light of the setting sun, carrying the innocence, the ardour, the capacity to comprehend and execute, of the earlier periods, but also manifesting its special mellowness and maturity, with a spirit of peace, willing to sink into the depths of a condition transcending all that has been so far experienced. Such a life from beginning to end would be the most beautiful phenomenon of existence. In the world's history there must have been some choice spirits who have so lived, proceeding from one phase of life to another, all melodiously linked and flowing like a beautiful stream.

Life is full of difficulties and problems, but in the midst of them and the contradictions they present, the tasks and responsibilities, it must be possible to

have an inner condition manifesting the beauty of a Spirit which like the sun, as it rises, traverses the heavens and sets, casts its rays at different angles but sounds in each phase of the journey its appropriate melody.

Nature renews the forms of life in her domain mechanically and periodically; the renewal is only a phase of a cycle. But we can renew ourselves once for all with our own free intelligence; not the restless, inventive mind, but an intelligence which functions in detachment and peace. Just as the sun withdraws its rays from the darkening earth, we can withdraw our feverish interest from the estates we have built up, including everything to which we cling, the condition in which we have settled ourselves with all our possessions, position, and enjoyments, in short, from the elaborate psychic establishment with which we have surrounded the real inner being. It must be possible, even before one dies, to sink into the depths of that inner consciousness which spells perfect peace and understanding, though continuing to do whatever is necessary in the world, not losing interest in it, but remaining in touch with its peoples, aware of their concerns and follies.

The Buddha is reported to have said: 'Cease to do evil; learn to do good, cleanse your own heart. This is the teaching of the Buddhas.' We may be taken in by its simple phrasing, covering so much depth of meaning. When the cleansing has taken place, there is also simplicity in one's nature and life. The

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clouds create a complex atmospheric condition, but when they disappear the sky looks both serene and simple. That is really a condition of being free from every element in our nature that causes decay, that distorts, that makes us fall from the original simplicity into a condition of being dissipated, wanting ever

more and more, never being satisfied, full of self-pity and of fires which seem unquenchable. It is only in such a state of heart and mind that one can really know the truth that matters. Till then, whatever truth we think we know is merely exoteric, the husk and not the grain, the appearance, not the real thing. ✧

ACTION

Action is the outer sign of the invisible thought and desire, and in its very accomplishment gives birth to a fresh thought and desire. The three form a circle, perpetually retraced.

Action is only the manifestation of that which is within, and where the thought is pure, where the speech is true and right, there the action must inevitably be noble.

When a soul is at a very low stage of evolution there is many an action that is right for it, because it carries it a step onwards, that becomes wrong for it after that step has been taken. Lifting forces are right, down-dragging forces are wrong.

There is no excuse for doing an action which you have thought of as wrong. Those actions only are inevitable which are done without thinking, where the thought belongs to the past, and the action to the present.

Realize. . . that what you have to study is your motive more than your action. Make your actions as wise as you can; use your best thought and your best endeavour to judge what is right before you do it; but know . . . that the eyes that scrutinize not the outer face but the heart of man, judge by a better judgement of the world.

If, trying to do more than you can do perfectly, you grasp at a number of things that you have not time to finish, then you are going beyond right action.

Be true in action; never pretend to be other than you are, for all pretence is a hindrance to the pure light of truth, which should shine through you as sunlight shines through clear glass.

The Eternal Wisdom: A Theosophical Treasury, TPH, Adyar

Reading the Gitā

We meet to learn in an old building
Surrounded by trees luxuriantly humid,
Where birds of bright sounds and feathers
Constantly attempt to distract us.

The walls of our classroom are bruised
By drift of incense, chanted mysteries —
Listening to words that desire to exist.

Each day is a quest for wholeness
Divining the most compelling of duties
In the ripple of metaphor, silence between stanzas
As we encounter the epic in our ordinary lives:
The despondent hero caught in mirror of conflict
In a battlefield reserved for the heart,
His transformation invisible to warring armies.

We learn the tragic element in courage:
How it cannot be possessed unless tested.

At night we are left to our own device,
Unfolding a path slowly, each to his very own,
The way light bleeds and blooms in fertile darkness.

Each night the jackals howl by the riverside.

Victor Peñaranda

Mr Victor Peñaranda is a member of the TS in the Philippines.

Theosophical Work around the World

Ukraine

This year's conference of the Theosophical Society in Ukraine took place, as usual, on 15-16 November, the eve of the TS Foundation Day. Theosophists in Ukraine gathered for their tenth meeting this year, but, for the just-ratified Regional Association, this was the first anniversary. The first year proved to be uneasy for our country and for all the European community, as this was the time of a real test of acceptance of the idea of Brotherhood. The TS in Ukraine survived this examination.

About 60 participants represented the theosophical groups from nine cities of Ukraine. Our colleagues from other countries sent their greetings. Reports were presented such as fundamental analysis of the TS in Ukraine, annual report of the TS, volunteer activities for repair of HPB House in Dnipropetrovsk, and so on. The motto of the conference was 'New Mind for New Time' and it was discussed in a few lectures and a round table meeting titled 'Go Outside Conditionality'. The plans for further collaboration came into discussion during the coordination meeting of the TOS members and the Scientific Group.

As per tradition, music and singing performances served to strengthen a cordial unity. The collection was followed by an artistic exhibition, and a fair of

handmade wares on behalf of the TOS, made by a union of invalids, 'Source of Inspiration'. Such meetings are very much needed as they inspire, give a new thrust to further the work, and foster the spirit of Brotherhood.

India

The 88th annual conference of the Tamil Theosophical Federation (TTF) took place on 6-7 December 2014 under the auspices of the Salem Theosophical Society. The Federation is comprised of 23 Theosophical Lodges covering Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, except Chennai city. The conference commenced with a universal prayer and chanting by representatives of various religions. Mr M. V. Rengarajan, President of TTF, gave the welcome address; this was followed by an introduction by Prof. M. Natarajan, Secretary of TTF.

The chief guest, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, international Vice President of the TS, delivered the inaugural address and made a clarion call to the members of the Society to promote universal brotherhood and to live in harmony and peace. He asserted that a proper study of Theosophy will help people to understand the deeper aspects of religions in their proper context. He added that one's whole life could prove to be purposeless without regular thinking, meditating, and

Theosophical Work around the World



Annual Conference of the TS in Ukraine, held on 15-16 November 2014



Speakers at the 88th annual conference of the Tamil Theosophical Federation held in Salem on 6-7 December 2014



Delegates at the Opening of the International Convention held on 26 December 2014

Theosophical Work around the World



Opening of the Social Welfare and Vocational Training Centres' stalls on 26 December 2014



From left: Mr Pavel Malakhov, Presidential Representative of the TS in Russia, the President with his family, Angelique and Lily Boyd, Ms Raisa Kalashkova from the TS in Ukraine, and Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko, Organizing Secretary of the TS in Ukraine

Theosophical Work around the World



From left: Mrs Lily Boyd, Mrs Nancy Secrest, new International Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service, the President, and Mrs Dianna Chapotin, former International Secretary of the TOS



Mrs Linda Oliveira, General Secretary of the TS in Australia, the President, and Prof. R. C. Tampi, Director of the School of the Wisdom, during the Question-and-Answer session

Theosophical Work around the World



From left: Mr Robert Béland, Mr K. Narasimha Rao, the President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, international Vice-President, Ms Marja Artamaa, International Secretary, and Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary of the Indian Section, at the Closing of the Convention on 31 December 2014



The President with participants of the Youth Forum gathering on 31 December 2014

Theosophical Work around the World

living the great principles of religion and other philosophical truths. Later, in his public lecture, 'Service and Spirituality', Dr Satapathy, also brought out the close connection between these two subjects by quoting stories from ancient Indian literature to show that even the worst sinner could become really spiritual by offering selfless service to others.

Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, General Manager of the TS Headquarters, Adyar, talked about 'Theosophy and the Laws of the Higher Life'. The President of the TTF, Mr M. V. Rengarajan, explained the objectives of the conference and spoke on 'Theosophy in Daily Life', and the Regional Secretary of the TOS, Mr V. Narayanan, gave a talk on the 'Functions of the Theosophical Order of Service'.

Adyar Annual Convention 2014*

A few days before the international Convention, Christmas joy was seen and heard at the newly-renovated and beautified Leadbeater Chambers dining hall, where both foreign and Indian delegates, and staff participated in singing Christmas carols and at the Olcott Bungalow, where the international President and his family have established their residence. The General Council meeting took place on the customary 25 December, as it has been done for the last 128 years, with GC members attending

from 19 different countries.

Convention programmes from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. started to be live-streamed around the world this year, resulting in many good reports from viewers. All the videos maybe viewed at: <<http://videos.ts-adyar.org/>>. During the afternoon reception held on Opening Day, many members from 31 countries around the world, but particularly from India, had the opportunity to meet Mr Tim Boyd for the first time as international President, and for many to meet old friends and make new ones.

The Convention Closing was followed by a Youth Forum meeting, where a dozen or so young people gathered along with some older ones, including the President. Later the youth got together on their own to discuss what was meaningful to them. Australia, Estonia, Spain, USA, and several parts of India were represented. Most of the youth, as well as about 40 others, gathered around the usual bonfire held on the Scout Camping Grounds to welcome the year 2015 with some storytelling, singing, and dancing.

On 1 and 2 January a Strategic Planning meeting was held with 26 Theosophical leaders from around the world: members of the General Council, TOS organizations, Camp Indralaya, the Science groups, and so on. It was an intensive two-day brainstorming to plan ahead. ✧

* Adapted from the President's Blog for December 2014:
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2-og6MAyqU>>.

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

Date	Section	General Secretary, etc.	Address	Magazine	Email address
1947	Africa, East and Central	... Mr Ebrony Peteli	... PO Box 40844, Mufulira, Zambia	... <i>The Theosophical Light</i>	ebrony.peteli@gmail.com
1909	Africa, South	... Mr Jack Hartmann	... 9 Ronean, 38 Princesses Ave., Windsor E. 2194	... <i>The South African Theosophist</i>	hartmann.jack.c@gmail.com
1956	Africa, West	... Mr John Osmond Boakye	... PO Box 720, Accra, Ghana	... <i>The West African Theosophist</i>	tswafrica@gmail.com
1929	America, Central *	... Mrs Ligia Gutiérrez S.	... Rept. Los Arcos # 43, Ent. Princ. 1 c. Sur 2 c. Abajo, 1 c. Sur, Distrito 2, Managua, Nicaragua		ligusimpson@hotmail.com
1920	Argentina	... Mr Jorge Garcia	... Santiago 257 — 2000, Rosario	... <i>Teosofía en Argentina</i>	stargentina@sociedad-teosofica.com.ar
1990	Asia, East and Southeast †	... Mr Chong Sanne	... 540 Sims Avenue, No. 03-04 Sims Avenue Centre, Singapore 387 603	... <i>Newsletter</i>	sanne@theosophyasia.net
1895	Australia	... Mrs Linda Oliveira	... Level 2, 162 Goulburn St., Surry Hills, NSW 2010	... <i>Theosophy in Australia</i>	tshq@austheos.org.au
1912	Austria *	... Mr Albert Schichl	... Oberbaumgarten 25, 4204 Haibach im Mühlkreis	... <i>Theosofie Adyar</i>	theosophie.austria@aon.at
2013	Bangladesh †	... Mr B. L. Bhattacharya	... B/4-3, Iswarchandra Nibas, 68/1, Bagmari Road, Kolkata 700 054		blbtos_2005@yahoo.com
1911	Belgium	... Mrs Sabine Van Osta	... Place des Gueux 8, B1000 Brussels, Belgium	... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i>	sabine_van_osta@hotmail.com
1965	Bolivia †	... Mrs Teresa W. de Nuñez	... Casilla de Correo 3911, Cochabamba		uparati@hotmail.com
1920	Brazil	... Mr Marcos L. B. de Resende	... SGAS Quadra 603, N. 20, CEP 70200-630 Brasilia (DF)	... <i>Sophia</i>	marcos.resende@riedel.com.br
1924	Canada *	... Mr Medardo Martinez Cruz	... 3162 Rue de la Bastille Boisbriand QC., J7H 1K7	... <i>The Light Bearer</i>	martinez6@sympatico.ca
1920	Chile *	... Mr Cesar Ortega Ortiz	... Casilla 11 Sucursal Paseo Estacion, Estacion Central, Santiago	... <i>Revista Teosofica Chilena</i>	sociedadteosoficachile2010@gmail.com
1937	Colombia †	... Mrs Nelly Medina de Galvis	... Carr 22, # 45B-38 (Cons. 404), Barrio Palermo, Bogotá	... <i>Selección Teosofica</i>	nmedinaga@yahoo.es
1997	Costa Rica †	... Ms Maria Orlich	... Apartado 8-6710-1000, San José		orlichsm@yahoo.com
2007	Croatia ▲	... Mrs Nada Tepeš	... Krajiška ulica 24, 10000 Zagreb	... <i>Teozofija</i>	z.zemlja@gmail.com
1905	Cuba	... Ms Barbara A. Fariñas Piña	... Apartado de Correos 6365, La Habana 10600		teocuba.sociedad@gmail.com
1987	Dominican Rep. †	... Mrs Magaly Polanco	... Calle Santa Agueda 1652 Les Chalet Col San Juan Puerto Rico Apartado 23 00926		polancomagaly@yahoo.com
1888	England	... Mr Colin Price	... 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA		president@theosoc.org.uk
1907	Finland	... Ms Marja Artamaa	... Teosofinen Seura, Vironkatu 7 C 2, Fin 00170, Helsinki	... <i>Teosofi</i>	teosofinen.seura@netti.fi
1899	France	... Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu	... 4 Square Rapp, 75007 Paris	... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i>	trankimdiêu@sfr.fr
1902	Germany	... Mrs Manuela Kaulich	... Hauptstr. 39, 93138 Lappersdorf	... <i>Adyar</i>	theosophie-adyar@gmx.de
1928	Greece	... Mr Antonis Papandreou	... 25 Voukourestiou St., 106 71-Athens	... <i>Ilisos</i>	info@theosophicalociety.gr
1907	Hungary †	... Mr Thomas Martinovich	... Hunyadi Janos ut 17. II. 8, H-1011 Budapest	... <i>Teozofia</i>	tshutau7@hu.inter.net
1921	Iceland	... Mr Halldor Haraldsson	... PO Box 1257 Ingólfsstraeti 22, 121 Reykjavik	... <i>Gangleri</i>	iceland.ts@gmail.com
1891	India	... Mr S. Sundaram	... The Theosophical Society, Varanasi 221 010	... <i>The Indian Theosophist</i>	theosophyvns@gmail.com
1912	Indonesia	... Mr Herry Ispoernomo	... Jalan Anggrek Nelimurni A-104, Jakarta 11410, Timur	... <i>Theosofi</i>	theosofi.indonesia@gmail.com

1919	Ireland *	...	Mrs Marie Harkness	...	97 Mountsandel Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, UK BT52 ITA	...	marieharkness@yahoo.co.uk
1954	Israel ▲	...	Mr Abraham Oron	...	PO Box 9114, Ramat-Gan, Israel 5219002	... <i>Or</i>	ornet@theosophia.co.il
1902	Italy	...	Mr Antonio Girardi	...	Viale Quintino Sella, 83/E, 36100 Vicenza	... <i>Rivista Italiana di Teosofia</i>	sti@teosofica.org
1997	Ivory Coast *	...	Mr Pierre-Magloire Kouahoh	...	Yopougon, 23 Rue Princesse B. P. 3924, Abidjan 23	... <i>Sophia</i>	pm_kouahoh@hotmail.com
1919	Mexico	...	Mrs Lissette Arroyo Jiménez	...	Ignacio Mariscal 126, Col. Tabacalera Mexicana, Mexico, D.F. 06030		sede@sociedadteosofica.mx info@sociedadteosofica.mx
1897	Netherlands, The	...	Ms Els Rijneker	...	Tolsraat 154, 1074 VM Amsterdam	... <i>Theosophia</i>	info@theosofie.nl
1896	New Zealand	...	Mr John Vorstermans	...	18, Belvedere Street, Epsom, Auckland 1022	... <i>TheoSophia</i>	np@theosophy.org.nz
1913	Norway *	...	Dr Saleh Noshie	...	N-6873-Marifjora		saleh.noshie@bedriftshelse1.no
1935	Orlando ▲	...	Mr Carl Metzger	...	1606 New York Ave. Orlando, Florida, 32803-1838, USA		Theosophical SocietyCF@gmail.com
1948	Pakistan †	Jamshed Memorial Hall, M. A. Jinnah Road, opp. Radio Pakistan, Karachi	... <i>The Karachi Theosophist</i>	bhagwanbharvani@hotmail.com
1924	Peru †	...	Mr Julio Pomar Calderón	...	Av Republica de Portugal 152, Breña, Lima 5	... <i>Búsqueda</i>	sede-central@sociedadteosoficaenperu.pe
1933	Philippines, The	...	Mr Rosel Doval-Santos	...	Corner P. Florentino and Iba Streets, Quezon City, Manila	... <i>The Philippine Theosophist</i>	philtheos@gmail.com
1921	Portugal	...	Mr Carlos Guerra	...	Sociedade Teosófica de Portugal, Rua José Estevão, 10 B, 1150-202 Lisboa	... <i>Osiris</i>	carlos.a.g.guerra@gmail.com
1925	Puerto Rico †	...	Mrs Magaly Polanco	...	Apartado 36-1766 Correo General. San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936-1766.	... <i>Heraldo Teosófico</i>	polancomagaly@yahoo.com
2012	Qatar ▲	...	Mr Dom Escobido	...	Teyseer security services Doha, Qatar		qatarblavatskylodge@yahoo.com
2013	Russia †	...	Mr Pavel Malakhov	...	Molodyozhny pr., 10-221, 650070, Kemerovo, Russia		pr@ts-russia.org
1910	Scotland *	...	Mr Stuart Trotter	...	28 Great King Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6QH	... <i>Circles</i>	albion.trotter@gmail.com
1992	Slovenia *	...	Mrs Breda Zagar	...	Kunaverjeva 1 SLO-1000 Ljubljana	... <i>Teozofska Misel</i>	zagarbreda@gmail.com
1921	Spain	...	Mrs Angels Torra Buron	...	Av. Vall d'or, 85-87 08197 - Valldoreix (Spain)	... <i>Sophia</i>	presidencia@sociedadteosofica.es
1926	Sri Lanka †	...	Mr M. B. Dassanayake	...	2-C/60, Maththegoda Housing Scheme, Maththegoda	... <i>The Sri Lanka Theosophist</i>	mbdassa@gmail.com
1895	Sweden	...	Mrs Ing-Britt Wiklund	...	Kalle Posts väg 48, S-702 29 Örebro, Sweden	... <i>Tidlös Visdom</i>	ing-britt@wiklund-orebro.se
1910	Switzerland †	...	Mrs Eliane Gaillard	...	17 Chemin de la Côte, CH -1282 Dardagny, Genève	... <i>The Lotus</i>	egaillard@bluewin.ch
1997	Togo *	...	Mr Kouma Dakey	...	S.O., A.R.T.T., BP 76, Adeta		
2013	Ukraine *	...	Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko	...	Office 3, 7-A Zhylianska St., Kiev 01033	... <i>Svitoch</i>	org@theosophy.in.ua
1886	USA	...	Mr Tim Boyd	...	PO Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60187-0270	... <i>The Quest</i>	admin@theosophical.org
1925	Uruguay *	...	Mr Ramon Garcia	...	Javier Barrios Amorin 1085, Casilla de Correos 1553, Montevideo		st.uruguay@gmail.com
1922	Wales *	...	Mrs Julie Cunningham	...	Bryn Adda, Brynisiencyn, Llanfairpwll, Anglesey, LL61 6NX UK	...	theosophywales@yahoo.co.uk

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Inter-American Theosophical Federation: *President:* Mrs Isis M. B. Resende, SGAS 603 conj. E s/n. Brasilia-DF, CEP 70200-630 – Brazil. Email: **imbresende@gmail.com**

Indo-Pacific Theosophical Federation: *President:* Mr John Vorstermans, 60B Riro Street, Point Chevalier, Auckland 1022, New Zealand. Email: **john@theosophy.org.nz**

Pan-African Theosophical Federation: *Chairman:* Mr Jack Hartmann, 9 Ronean, 38 Princess Avenue, Windsor E 2194, South Africa. Email: **hartmann.jack.c@gmail.com**

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