

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Closing of Convention, 2015-16

TIM BOYD

WE have been here together for this 140th Convention. I want to thank our three young members who gave their impressions, each one so different, and each one rounding out the picture of the possibilities of experience involved with this event. It was quite inspiring to hear. I thank Mrs Laura Rodriguez for reminding us of Joy Mills once again.

As has happened 139 times before, we have come to the end of this Convention. It has been a beautiful one. I think the quality of minds and frame of heart we were able to cultivate together has been very good work, not just for our benefit, but for what has gone out into the world — that which we do not see. Twenty-nine countries are officially represented this time. The world is here with us. It is a reminder of the fact that at every moment this is true. We take this occasion to be reminded of the simple fact that, from moment to moment, wherever we may be, we are connected. Within this theosophical movement which we are a part of, we are connected through this centre, Adyar.

This is the second Convention over which I have presided. I have been in this position for a very brief time. I came here from the United States, a very dif-

ferent country, and in coming here one was hopeful that the openness and support that would be required for this job would be forthcoming, but one did not really know. In this beautiful work, whatever experiences I have compiled during my life have led to this moment. This work is not one that could be done, on any level, unsupported. One of the things that has gone largely unsaid and unseen is the support of my wife Lily. It is a wonderful job and work, but it would not be the same without the support and commitment which comes from my home. The support that has been required to even allow myself to think about the possibilities that lie before us, I have found in abundance since I have come to Adyar.

I know you see changes here. Everything we see that has happened and is in motion is the result of a team of people of which you are a part. Specifically here at Adyar there is a solid team that is still in the process of developing. Because preparations for this convention have gone so smoothly this year, it is easy to think that this is just the way it is. I do not think you know what it took to get this place ready so that you do not have to think about it at all. It has been a

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remarkable work that the people here have done, from the very bottom to the top; and the top, in terms of the real work that has been done, stops below me. The work done, the mind that has been applied, and the ceaseless energy expended to make this place look like it does, to have been able to greet you all and make it so comfortable to share in the way that we have, are all the result of this team.

What seems to be revealing itself more and more is that, although we have so many needs here, the need that is unspoken often goes unrecognized. We have spoken about some of those things at this Convention, and I am overwhelmed with the response of generosity and openness of heart that has been shown by our members. I am quite confident that all of the things that we have talked about, you will be seeing with your physical eyes in the days and years to come. That is the small part. The big part is that we are learning what we need to learn to be of benefit to this world. The major thing that we have learned is the art and habit of cooperation beyond the normal limitations and obstacles that we place in our own way.

Every day we run into one another to accomplish the very deepest needs for us all. We do it very imperfectly — we always have. Anyone who thinks that there were the good old days where there was perfection of cooperation, when personalities were sublimated and in the background, is believing in a fairy tale. It is not the world we are living in and

that is the way it is supposed to be. All of us function at different levels, have different strengths and weaknesses. Our goal is to recognize the strengths and to recognize the common divinity. We have all talked Oneness. I do it as much as everybody else. But the *realization* of it is the goal that is before us, and it is not such a distant goal, because we have opportunities in every single moment.

Once again, we have come together and have done very good work. Whether we realize it or not, the current of this gathering is out there and afoot in the world, and that is a very good thing. So we can be happy and proud about that, but at this point we go home. For some of us we will travel for a few hours or days and will be in familiar surroundings with familiar people and the familiar problems that we all have to deal with. Something has been developed during our time here together that will serve us, a touchstone that we can reach out to and remember. The only work we have to do together in this world today is to remember who we are. And if we can remember that, then we will also know who is sitting across from us and will behave accordingly. We have it in us, and as the days go by we are going to be able to see it more and more. We have a great work to do in this world.

The world specifically needs the thing that we are trying to cultivate now. It is the gift that we have to give. All of us will be gone soon in 10, 20, 30 years from now; it makes no difference. It will not be long. The thinking perhaps is in

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what I can 'do', not what trace I can leave. We are all going to be leaving here. The ideal life is maybe the one that leaves no trace in the physical world. We do not put our print on the world, but on the hearts that come after us. We are all capable of this. That is the legacy and philanthropy that is within everybody's reach.

I am proud of the way in which our Theosophical members gathered here together, have been able to exemplify the

sense of reverence for one another, and the gratitude for the blessing of being in each other's presence. It is something that I want to be associated with and try to magnify.

With all of this, and with the wonderful contribution you all have made to make this moment what it is, now it is time for me to declare that our time together here as a Convention is over and so I can say that this Convention is closed. As always, thank you. ✧

We who are pledged to the work of the Theosophical Society must work 'to lift a little of the heavy Karma of the world'. Each of us bears a torch to show the path to Happiness for others. A time will come, though we will see it only in our next incarnation, when the curses called competition and the struggle for life, which dog the footsteps of humanity today, will have been as evil dreams of the night. We are working to create that new day's light and that happiness for all, when there shall be no distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour; when we know and rejoice in the only supreme fact of our immortal life as Souls, as gravity is the supreme fact of our earthly bodies, that Happiness is within ourselves, that the Way to Salvation starts from our own hearts, and that we need no temple or priest or book to show us the road. For we will have discovered that the Way, the Truth, the Life and the Joy are inseparable from the essential nature of every man, woman, and child.

My Brothers, we shall succeed in our stupendous task. We shall achieve our dream. For we work, but *not alone*. With us stand the Great Saviours of the World who have gone before us. Their Blessing is with us, their Strength will uphold us, as, in their name and for the love of mankind, we go forth into the world to lessen the load of human misery.

*Inaugural Address of C. Jinarājadāsa, President of the TS,
17 February 1946*

Passion, Dispassion, and Compassion

V. RAMASUBRAMANIAN

I feel both proud as well as humbled by the invitation extended to me to deliver the Besant Lecture as part of the 140th International Convention of the Theosophical Society.

Proud, since I perhaps happen to be the only sitting Judge of the Madras High Court, in independent India, to have ever been invited to deliver the Besant Lecture. I am aware that great lawyers like Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, Nani Palkhivala, Soli Sorabji, Fali Nariman and Ashok Desai; and great Justices like Venkatachalaiah, Jeevan Reddy, Dharmadhikari and J. S. Verma have delivered the Besant Lectures in the past, but no Judge of the Madras High Court appears to have been ever invited to deliver the Besant Lecture, at least from 1950 till date. This is despite the fact that it was Sir S. Subramania Iyer, a Judge of the Madras High Court, who was instrumental in incorporating the Theosophical Society in 1905 and of which he became the Vice-President in 1907. Justice Subramania Iyer's contribution was unique, since he served the Society as its lawyer, before he went

on to become a judge. At the peak of his judicial career as the Acting Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, he relinquished office, citing ill health. Apart from serving the Theosophical Society as its lawyer, he also served the Society by volunteering to be a witness in the famous child custody case, in the Court he presided over for more than twelve years. Towards his last days, Subramania Iyer lived the life of a saint with no more possessions than a pair of clothes and a *dhand* (staff) in his hand.

We, in this part of the world, believe that the number 108 is mystical. Therefore, in the Society where Justice Subramania Iyer was the Vice-President in 1907, I, his namesake Justice Ramasubramanian, have come to deliver the Besant Lecture after 108 years. This is the reason why I feel proud.

The reason why I feel humbled is that this is the soil on which the seeds of great philosophical thoughts of the 20th century were sown. This is the land where destiny demonstrated that its ways are always inscrutable. When the Theosophical Society anointed Jiddu

Honourable Justice V. Ramasubramanian is a senior Judge of the Madras High Court. He delivered the Besant Lecture at the international Convention, Adyar, on 1 January 2016.

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Krishnamurti as a World Teacher via the Order of the Star in the East, he denounced the claim that he was a Messiah. People thought that Annie Besant's predictions about Mr Krishnamurti being a Messiah went wrong. But, he later turned out to be one of the most celebrated philosophers of the 20th century, proving Annie Besant right and his own disclaimer wrong. Therefore, I feel humbled to have been invited to deliver the Besant Lecture.

Dear friends, I do not know how you chose 'Compassion and Universal Responsibility' as the central theme of the 140th Convention. The recent monsoon and the floods that devastated Chennai about three weeks ago, brought to the fore the compassionate face of this city and the universal responsibility that youngsters assumed to themselves to save the city. As soon as the floodwaters abated, we realized that compassion had not completely drained out of the hearts of the people of Chennai. Therefore, I feel that the central theme of this Convention was perhaps dictated from above, by the same forces that dictated many things to Madame H. P. Blavatsky, Col H. S. Olcott, and C. W. Leadbeater. Otherwise, the choice of the theme could not have happened by mere coincidence.

There is also another coincidence. On 13 May 2015, Pope Francis marked the second anniversary of his election as pontiff by declaring 2016 as an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. A jubilee year, rooted in the Old Testament, is a special year called by the Holy Father

for remission of sins and universal pardon. Since the year 1300, the Church has declared jubilee years every 25 or 50 years. The jubilee year traditionally starts with the opening of the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica, followed by the opening of the Holy Doors of the other three major basilicas in Rome: St Mary Major, St Paul Outside the Walls, and St John Lateran, as well as the holy doors of other basilicas around the world. The opening of the doors signifies God opening a new pathway to salvation, mercy, and grace. Therefore, the central theme you have chosen for this International Convention appears to be most appropriate.

The topic that I have chosen for this lecture is 'Passion, Dispassion, and Compassion'. While passion and compassion are attributes of *manas* (the mind), dispassion is an attribute of *buddhi*, the intellect. But, fortunately or unfortunately, it is the mind that either binds or liberates. This is why the Upanishads declared *manayeva manushyānām kāranam bandhamokshayoh* — the mind is the root cause for both bondage as well as salvation. When *buddhi*, the intellect, reigns supreme having absolute control over the mind, an ordinary emotion which takes the form of passion gains *viswarupam* (sublime form) to become compassion. In other words, it is dispassion, the Sanskrit equivalent of which is *vairāgya*, that transforms passion into compassion. This, in essence, is the connecting thread between passion, dispassion and compassion, which is why,

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I chose this topic to share a few of my thoughts. In a way, it can be stated that the two great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, were composed by sages who were known for their *vairāgya*, or dispassion. But they composed the epics in moments when they were overwhelmed by passion at the sufferings of other creatures, and when such passion transcended the normal emotional upheaval to one of compassion.

Most of you may be aware of the story as to how Valmiki composed the Ramayana. When Valmiki and his disciple Bharadwaja arrived at Tāmasa Teertham on the banks of the river Ganga, they saw a pair of *krauñcha* birds making love. Suddenly, a hunter appeared from nowhere and shot down the male. The great sage Valmiki, who had already renounced the world and was fully conscious of the inevitable cycle of birth and death through which every creature has to go, was suddenly overwhelmed by sorrow upon seeing the plight of the female bird. Overcome by passion, he said:

*mā nishāda pratishthām tvam agamah
śāśvateeh samāh
yat krauñcha mithunāt ekam avadheeh
kāma mohitam*

Scholars attribute three different types of meaning to this utterance of Valmiki. The literal meaning of this verse is:

‘O! ill-fated hunter, you have killed a bird when it was in lustful passion with its mate,

Therefore, you may not attain immortal life.

After making this utterance, sage Valmiki regained his composure and wondered how he could have been overcome by passion. He understood that he had uttered those words out of sorrow. But immediately, he also realized that this utterance was poetic, composed in a particular metre and also capable of giving an opposite meaning. Therefore, he told his disciple, *śokārtasya pravṛtto me śloko bhavatu na anyathā* (let this utterance be treated not as a curse, but as a sloka).

Thus, it is clear that the great epic Ramayana was born when a renunciate, who was supposed to be dispassionate, was overcome by passion at the sight of the suffering of a pair of birds. The passion ultimately transformed itself into compassion and a great epic was born.

Similarly, Mahabharata, composed by Krishna Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, was narrated by his student Vaiśampāyana immediately after a huge snake sacrifice organized by Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, was brought to a halt by a young lad named Āstika. The passion for revenge of Janamejaya had to be neutralised by Āstika, a lad of immeasurable compassion and *vairāgya*.

Interestingly, Veda Vyāsa did not attain fulfilment, even after codifying the Vedas into four, and composing the fifth Veda, the Mahabharata (*bhāratah pañchamo vedah*). Thus Vyāsa is said to have reached the banks of the river Saraswati in a perturbed state of mind.

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*tathāpi batame daihyo hyāthmā cha
ivāthmanā vibhuh
asampanna ivābhāti brahmavarchasya
sattamah*

Vyasa said to himself: 'Though I am fully equipped with everything that is prescribed by the Vedas, I feel incomplete and dissatisfied.'

It is out of this emotion that Srimad Bhāgavatam was born. Therefore, even those who have renounced the world and have attained a state of *vairāgya*, or dispassion, are at times moved by passion, which assumes a universal character, thereby becoming compassion. Therefore, passion, dispassion, and compassion constitute the three legs of a tripod on which our lives are mounted.

The words 'dispassion' and 'compassion' have as their root the word 'passion', though they convey emotions of the opposite nature. The word 'passion' has its origin in the Latin *patoir*, whose literal meaning is 'suffer'. This is why in Christian theology 'passion' is used to indicate the crucifixion, pain, suffering, or agony of Jesus Christ.

In religion, your passion is always measured by the amount of pain or suffering that you are able to take upon yourself. Take the case of Abraham from the Old Testament. The Lord himself declared Abraham to be a prophet. But, Abraham was ordained by the Lord to sacrifice his own son, Isaac. According to the Old Testament, Isaac was born to Abraham when he was 100 years of age through his wife Sarah, who was also old. Abraham's act is celebrated as holy from

the theological point of view, though it meant pain and suffering to him.

But, in the modern world, 'passion' does not denote pain and suffering alone. It is defined as an intense desire for something, or a very powerful feeling. Robert J. Vallerand, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Quebec, Montreal, did extensive research on passion and proposed a Dualistic Model of Passion for activities. His research showed that a large percentage of people have passion for a variety of activities. He classified such passion into two types, namely, Harmonious Passion and Obsessive Passion. Harmonious passion is one where the person controls his favourite activity. Obsessive passion is one where the favourite activity controls the person. For instance, if I am passionate about tennis and devote one hour in the morning for playing it, it is harmonious. But, once I get addicted to it and cannot resist the temptation to play on and on unmindful of my regular work schedule, it becomes obsessive.

What modern psychology has categorized as harmonious passion and obsessive passion is not something new to the world of religion and spirituality. We know that passion is born out of desire and it leads to attachment. When someone asked a guru whether it is good to have attachment, the guru narrated a short parable. Mulla Nasruddin was on a horse. The horse went around the same place again and again. When people asked him where he was going, Nasruddin replied: 'I do not know. Ask the horse.'

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Great teachers say that our desires should be like horses. We must be in a position to mount or dismount the horse when we want. Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa gave a wonderful narrative to explain this. While standing on the banks of a river, a man saw a black woollen blanket floating in the water. He jumped into the river and caught hold of it. When he attempted to swim to the banks, he felt that the woollen blanket was pulling him in the opposite direction. Terrified by this, the man attempted to discard it. But, then he realized that though he was not holding on to the blanket, it was holding on to him. A closer look revealed that it was not a woollen blanket, but a bear.

Paramahansa says that, to begin with, we jump into the river of samsāra and catch hold of the blanket of desire. Eventually, we do not possess it, but we are possessed by it. When we are in control of our desires, with an ability to discard them as and when we please, we are said to have harmonious passion. But, when desires take control of us, we suffer from obsessive passion.

Interestingly, the word 'passion' is synonymous with the word 'rage'. The Sanskrit equivalent of the word 'passion' is 'rāga'. What is 'rāga' in Sanskrit is 'rage' in English. In other words, both Sanskrit and English have similar words to describe the emotion of passion.

Passion is born out of desire that leads to attachment. The state of desirelessness, or non-attachment, is known as dispassion. The Sanskrit equivalent of the

word 'dispassion' is *vairāgya*. All the religions of the world accept the fact that desire leads to attachment and attachment leads to sorrow. The great Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar proclaimed, 'Once one's attachment to an object is removed, the pain and suffering that is likely to arise out of that object is also removed.' (*Thirukkural* 341, under the chapter named 'Turavu', or 'Renunciation')

Therefore, the oriental religions advocate *vairāgya*, or detachment, as the panacea for the ill of sorrow. The difficulty with *vairāgya* is that detachment, or non-attachment, is a disincentive to action or karma. The word *kāma* (desire) is only one letter short of the word 'karma' (action). The letter 'r' probably stands for *rāga*, which induces all human beings to achieve their *kāma* through karma.

In order to clear the doubt about the relationship between action and attachment, the *Bhagavadgītā* advocated a love for action, but a detachment towards the fruits of action, by proclaiming, *karmanyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadāchana*. If you carefully look at the background from which the *Bhagavadgītā* emerged, you may see that Arjuna, the greatest archer of all times, who had fought many a battle before Kurukshetra, and who never hesitated to kill fellow human beings on the battlefield, suffered from delusion, in a state of mind known as *vishāda yoga*. This was actually born out of his attachment to his own kith and kin. Since the enemy army was comprised of his cousins, teachers, grand-uncles, maternal uncles and nephews,

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he was overcome by confusion. But, if the enemy army was not comprised of relatives, would he have refused to fight? How did Arjuna, a great warrior, suddenly become a non-violent mendicant? After all, Emperor Ashoka faced the same dilemma at the battlefield. But, Ashoka's predicament was not born out of passion or attachment. It was born out of compassion that eventually led to *vairāgya*, or dispassion.

In the compilation of his famous lectures on *Bhagavadgītā*, the celebrated āchārya and *karmayogi* Vinoba Bhave narrates an interesting parable. Once there was a judge who had already given death sentences to hundreds of culprits during the course of his usual judgments. People thought he was wooden-hearted, but he considered himself a typical *karmayogi*. One day, the police brought a culprit into his court. Unfortunately, the culprit happened to be the judge's own son. Immediately, the judge began what we can term as 'judge *vishāda yoga*'. He started questioning the rationale of giving capital punishment. He questioned how a civilized society can impose the death sentence and how the death sentence can enable a culprit to rectify and improve himself? It then became clear that what prevented the judge from pronouncing the death penalty was not his sudden transformation to the path of ahimsa, but his attachment to his own son. The case of that judge was similar to that of Arjuna.

Thus, passion born out of desire, leads to attachment. Attachment leads to con-

fusion and engulfs one in sorrow. This is why the Indian scriptures advocated *vairāgya*, a sense of detachment, which we can term as dispassion.

The Hindu shastras speak about two types of *vairāgya*: *prasava vairāgya* and *śmaśāna vairāgya*. The first is the detachment that a woman develops towards marital love while undergoing labour pain. The second is the detachment that one develops in a crematorium after performing the last rites to one's near and dear. But, these *vairāgya*-s remain short-lived and are forgotten in a matter of hours, days or months.

The great siddha Thirumoolar said that the moment life goes out of the body, friends and relatives assemble and wail over the body, and the name with which the deceased person was called also goes. Mr/Ms/Mrs so-and-so, is no longer identified by that name, but identified only as a corpse. It is taken to the crematorium, burnt to ashes, and the people who accompanied it take a bath, and sooner or later forget the person, his memories, and also the *vairāgya* they gained temporarily at that moment. Therefore, our scriptures advocate *vairāgya* as a tool to overcome sorrow.

The difficulty with detachment is that it serves as a disincentive to work. Without desire and attachment, there is neither the passion nor the motivation to work. It is this dilemma that pushes people to the extremes.

Desire and attachment act as the prime movers for action, and action is inevitable

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to sustain the world. Thus all oriental religions advocated a desire of a different nature, different dimension, different force, and different type, which is actually compassion.

The story of creation and the answer to the questions, 'How did the world come into existence?' and 'Where did it come from?' can be found in a Vedic hymn, the English translation of which as presented by Swami Vivekananda, goes as follows:

Then there was neither aught nor naught,
nor air, nor sky beyond.
What covered all? Where rested all?
Nor death was then, nor deathlessness,
nor change of night and day.
Now first arose desire, the primal germ
of mind.
Sages, searching in their heart by wisdom,
found the bond
Between existence and non-existence.

Therefore, it is clear that the Vedas, which are considered to be the treasure-house of knowledge, declare that the universe came into existence from out of a desire. This desire of the cosmic consciousness is completely different from the desire that you and I possess. It is this desire which takes the form of compassion.

That takes us to the next question: 'What is compassion?' Is it simply a sense of sympathy or caring for the person suffering? Is it simply a warmth of heart towards the person before you, or a sharp clarity of recognition of their needs and pain? No, it is not. Compassion is a sustained and practical determination to

do whatever is possible and necessary to help alleviate the sufferings of others.

In 'Śānti Parva', the 12th canto of the Mahabharata, Yudhishtira asks Bhishma to tell him by what condition of mind could one kill his grief when he loses his riches, his wife, son, or father. Bhishma narrates the conversation that took place between a king named Senajit and a man of wisdom who visited his court. Senajit was grief-stricken due to the death of his son. The man of wisdom asked Senajit:

Why are you stupefied? You are yourself an object of grief, and why do you grieve for others? A few days hence others will grieve for you and in their turn, they will be grieved for by others still.

Upon hearing these words, king Senajit asked:

What is that intelligence, what that penance, O learned man, what that concentration of mind, what that knowledge, and what that learning, by gaining which you do not give way to grief?

Then, the person of wisdom replies:

Grief is the child of the disease created by desire. Happiness again comes when the disease of desire is cured. From joy originates sorrow, and sorrow comes again and again. Sorrow comes after joy, and joy after sorrow. The joys and sorrows of human beings are revolving on a wheel. Friends are not the root of one's happiness. Enemies are not the root of one's misery. Wisdom cannot bring on wealth; wealth cannot give happiness. Intelligence cannot

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give wealth, nor is stupidity the cause of poverty. Only a wise man, and none else, understands the order of the world. If objects of desire are renounced, they become sources of happiness. The man who follows objects of desire is ruined in that pursuit. When a person withdraws all his desires like a tortoise withdrawing all its limbs, then its soul, which is self-luminous, can see itself. Renouncing both truth and falsehood, grief and joy, fear and courage, the agreeable and the disagreeable, you may acquire equanimity of soul.

But even a man of wisdom cannot be devoid of compassion. In Buddhism, Avalokiteshvara is called the Buddha of Compassion. He is often represented in Tibetan iconography as having a thousand eyes that see the pain in all corners of the universe to extend his help. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Buddhahood. Shantideva, a Buddhist teacher, talks about how one can attain Buddhahood:

What need is there to say more?
The childish work for their own benefit,
The Buddhas work for the benefit of
others;
Just look at the difference between them.
If I do not exchange my happiness
For the suffering of others,
I shall not attain the state of Buddhahood,
And even in samsara, I shall have no
real joy.

Asanga was one of the most famous Indian Buddhist saints, who lived in the fourth century. He went to the mountains to do a solitary retreat, concentrating all

his meditation practice on the Buddha Maitreya, in the fervent hope that he would be blessed with a vision of this Buddha and receive teachings from him. For six years Asanga did not even have one auspicious dream. He was disheartened and left his hermitage. On the way back home, he saw a man rubbing an enormous iron bar with a strip of silk. When Asanga asked him what he was doing, he said, 'I'm going to make a needle out of this iron bar.' Asanga was astounded by the trouble people were prepared to give themselves over things that are totally absurd. Therefore, he returned to his retreat.

Another three years went by, still without the slightest sign from the Buddha Maitreya. So he left again, and soon came to a bend in the road where there was a huge rock. At the foot of the rock was a man busily rubbing it with a feather soaked in water. When asked about what he was doing, he said, 'This rock is stopping the sun from shining on my house, so I'm trying to get rid of it.' Asanga was amazed at the man's indefatigable energy, and ashamed at his own lack of dedication. So he returned to his retreat.

Three more years passed, and still he had not even had a single good dream. He decided, once and for all, that it was hopeless, and he left his retreat for good. On the way, he came across a dog lying by the side of the road. It had only its front legs, and the whole of the lower part of its body was rotting and covered with maggots. Asanga was overwhelmed

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with a vivid and unbearable feeling of compassion. He cut a piece of flesh off his own body and gave it to the dog to eat. Then he bent down to take off the maggots that were consuming the dog's body. But he suddenly thought he might hurt them if he tried to pull them out with his fingers, and realized that the only way to remove them would be by his tongue. Asanga knelt on the ground, and looking at the horrible festering, writhing mass, closed his eyes. He leaned closer and put out his tongue. The next thing he knew, his tongue was touching the ground. He opened his eyes and looked up. The dog was gone; there in its place was the Buddha Maitreya, ringed by a shimmering aura of light. Asanga asked Maitreya as to why he did not show mercy on him for such a long time. Maitreya replied:

It is not correct to say that I never appeared before you. I was with you all the time, but your negative karma and obscurations prevented you from seeing me. Your twelve years of practice dissolved them slightly so that you were at last able to see the dog. Then, thanks to your genuine and heartfelt compassion, all those obscurations were completely swept away and you can see me before you with your very own eyes. If you don't believe that this is what happened, put me on your shoulder and try and see if anyone else can see me.

Asanga put Maitreya on his right shoulder and went to the market place, where he began to ask everyone: 'What have I got on my shoulder?' 'Nothing',

most people said, and hurried on. Only one old woman, whose karma was slightly purified, answered: 'You've got the rotting corpse of an old dog on your shoulder, that's all.' Thus Asanga understood the boundless power of compassion that purified and transformed his karma, and made him a vessel fit to receive the vision and instruction of Maitreya. It is said that Buddha Maitreya, then took Asanga to a heavenly realm, and gave him many sublime teachings that are among the most important in the whole of Buddhism.

While talking about compassion, we must understand that it is far greater and nobler than pity. Pity has its roots in fear, and a sense of arrogance and condescension, sometimes even a smug feeling of 'I'm glad it's not me'. As Stephen Levine says: 'When your fear touches someone's pain it becomes pity; when your love touches someone's pain, it becomes compassion.' To train in compassion, then, is to know all beings are the same and suffer in similar ways, to honour all those who suffer, and to know you are neither separate from nor superior to anyone.

Mother Teresa said:

We all long for heaven where God is, but we have it in our power to be in heaven with him at this very moment. But, being happy with him now means:

Loving as He loves,
helping as He helps,
giving as He gives,
serving as He serves,
rescuing as He rescues,

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being with him for all the twenty four hours,
touching him in his distressing disguise.

A Gift for God

The Sanskrit equivalent of the word compassion is *daya*. The Śāṅdilyo-panishad defines compassion or *daya* as *dayānāma sarva bhuteshu sarvatra anugrahaḥ*. *Daya* means compassion towards every object, every creature present everywhere. Since compassion is something that transcends *kāla*, *desa*, *vartamānam* — place, time, object, and action — it is nothing but love that is universal in nature.

We always identify the heart as the organ that melts to the sufferings of others. The Sanskrit equivalent of the word ‘heart’ is *hr̥daya*, which has as its root, the word *daya*. The person who is good-hearted is identified as *sahr̥daya*. Therefore, a person who has no compassion is universally termed as heartless.

Today, we are driven by a passion to be successful in life. But after succeeding, we realize that there is no fulfilment. Then we start making an introspection. I shall give you a real-life example. Some of the world’s most successful financiers met in 1923 at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Present were the president of the largest independent steel company, the president of the largest utility company, the greatest wheat speculator, the president of the New York Stock Exchange, a member of the cabinet of the President of the USA, the greatest bear on Wall Street, the president of the Bank of International Settlements, and the head of the world’s greatest monopoly.

These eight men together controlled more wealth than the US treasury. Success stories of these men had featured in magazines and journals for many years. But all of them had something in common towards the end of their lives. Charles Schwab, president of the steel company lived the last years of his life on borrowed money and died a broken man. Arthur Cutten, the greatest speculator died abroad insolvent. Richard Whitney, President of the New York Stock Exchange served a term in Sing Sing prison. Albert Fall, member of the US President’s cabinet was pardoned from prison to die at home. Jessie Livermore, the greatest bear on Wall Street, Leon Fraser, president of the Bank of International Settlements and Ivan Krueger, head of the world’s largest monopoly, all committed suicide. Thus seven out of those eight successful men ended their lives in tragedy and sorrow. So, of what use their successful career? This is why Adi Sankara commanded us to ask ourselves a question, *tatah kim?* So what? Of what use my money, my Mercedes car, my beach villa, my Swiss bank account, my turnover, my lifetime achievement award, my Forbes 20?

Dear friends, I came across a poem whose author’s name is not known. With due apologies to its author for infringing on his copyright, it reads:

Ready or not, someday it will all come to
an end.

There will be no more sunrises, no minutes,
hours, or days.

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All the things you collected, whether treasured or forgotten, will pass to someone else.
Your wealth, fame, and temporal power will shrivel to irrelevance.
It will not matter what you owned or what you were owed.
Your grudges, resentments, frustrations, and jealousies will finally disappear.
So, too, your hopes, ambitions, plans, and to-do lists will expire.
The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade away.
It won't matter where you came from, or on what side of the tracks you lived, at the end.
It won't matter whether you were beautiful or brilliant.
Even your gender and skin color will be irrelevant.
So what will matter? How will the value of your days be measured?
What will matter is not what you bought, but what you built; not what you got, but what you gave.
What will matter is not your success, but your significance.
What will matter is not what you learned, but what you taught.
What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage, or sacrifice that enriched, empowered, or encouraged

others to emulate your example.
What will matter is not your competence, but your character.
What will matter is not how many people you knew, but how many will feel a lasting loss when you're gone.
What will matter is not your memories, but the memories that live in those who loved you.
What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by whom and for what.
Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.
It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice.
Choose to live a life that matters.
We make a living by what we earn; but we make a life by what we give.

Dear Theosophists, to summarize, passion which is born out of emotion and is an attribute of the mind, if channeled properly, can be converted into Bhakti Yoga. Dispassion, or *vairāgya*, if consecrated as the *peetha* or foundation of all our activities, we may become *karmayogi*-s. But, if we have eyes that well up with tears and a heart that melts at the sufferings of all creatures, living or dead, animate or inanimate, we might possibly have reached the state of Gnana Yoga. This is how I look at passion, dispassion, and compassion. ✧

Compassion in its higher aspects ascends from general kindness, through tenderness in protection and guidance, to the noble heights of passionate sympathy.

G. S. Arundale

What is Enlightenment?

TOMMY WÅGLUND

WHAT is life? What is its purpose? What is Enlightenment?

In our lives, these are lofty questions of crucial importance to us. Sometimes, or maybe too often, we deal with these questions neither with the needed focus nor attention and spend our precious time with far lesser issues. Nevertheless, these eternal questions remain within us, even if buried deep below the surface of the consciousness for several years or even whole incarnations.

I am choosing one of these eternal questions — what is Enlightenment? To be sure, I will not answer it, as it is not answerable in ordinary language/words, but will try to highlight and examine some aspects of it:

- ◆ Why the question of Enlightenment is so important, and what is its place in the spiritual life.
- ◆ A simple and *pragmatic* definition of Enlightenment is proposed which is, from an absolute standpoint, far too simplified, but that can anyway be quite useful as a pointer for the human being who wants to proceed most effectively towards the goal of goals and does not want to waste many

years on matters not pertinent to a truly spiritual life. (When we start to develop a deep love for Life in our hearts, we do not want to waste resources that could help us with our further opening to it and increasing our profoundly unlimited sense of responsibility for protecting and nurturing it.)

- ◆ Also, examples will be given of what is not considered to be Enlightenment and what does not directly further it.

There are different terms to express more or less the same state as Enlightenment, for example, Liberation, Self-realization, God-realization, Awakening, and so on. These different terms, although referring to the same spiritual state, may have slightly varied connotations, and different individuals might prefer specific terms in given situations. A person with, for example, a Buddhist inclination, will not probably, normally like the term ‘God-realization’, but perhaps will prefer ‘Awakening’ or ‘Liberation’. I prefer the term ‘Enlightenment’ when talking about the matter very generally, but may switch to ‘Liberation’ or ‘Self-realization’ when

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talking about it in relation to my own spiritual Way, or any specific Way towards the sacred state (the Way hopefully including some fragrance of that final state each miraculous day). In this article all terms will be used.

These reflections and feelings about Enlightenment are the result of many years of meditation and yoga practice within the frame of my particular personal Way, which in itself is not static, but continually improves (hopefully) as a consequence of widening experience and deepening understanding that still has a very long way to go. Most important, however, for my understanding of the subject, is the teaching I have received from my meditation and yoga teacher/master, who himself received his teaching from Sri Aurobindo (the creator of Integral Yoga; the integral aspect is an important one for me personally). Especially important, in my view, has been the privilege to witness and in other ways experience my teacher's high-state meditations, that is, different *samādhis*, and, in particular, the *nirvikalpa samādhi*, a *samādhi* which, according to my teacher, is possible only for those who have reached Enlightenment. On some occasions I have also witnessed this ultimate *samādhi* with other teachers.

Enlightenment is what spirituality is all about, it is the reason why we are here on earth. To awaken is a huge step, in which we reach a completely new level of consciousness, which we can call a divine or Illumined level, above our human level. At the divine level our inner

beings, our souls, come to the fore and take charge of our lives, completely and permanently. What this means in detail, is absolutely beyond words, but here is a pragmatic definition of Enlightenment:

The basis of Enlightenment is the permanent transcendence of ego.

Nothing new, nothing extravagant, but profoundly important. And as such, terrifyingly simple, in a way.

Transcendence of the ego does not mean to destroy or to annihilate it. The ego is more or less associated with our human personality; we can say that it is our tendency, often very strong, to protect and further this personality in many, sometimes warped, ways. Basically, and from the beginning, the ego was a very good thing. Human beings needed a personal structure or profile, so the fact that such a structure was created and protected was not a black sin, it was a reasonable thing to happen (in human evolution, as well as in our individual evolution from birth) and in accordance with a higher will. But what was in the beginning a good idea, after a while, as we all know by personal experience, started to be problematic. It was and still is problematic because the personality protection exploded and became over-protection, an almost fanatic fixation to protect it at all costs and under all circumstances. In the great evolution it was of high priority that every individual received a clear and distinct personality to begin with — even if this personality did have some more or less

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erratic inner tendencies. The next step in the evolution was to fine-tune this personality and improve it to good standard. But here we are — it has become almost impossible now because over-protection has set in!

For us, poor fellows, this means that we have to study the over-protection and try to overcome it, parallel to our improvement of our inner dispositions. This is the transcendence of the ego, eventually liberating us and uplifting us to a soul-managed life. We shall continue to have a human personality, ‘quality assured’ this time, which also preferably has some reasonably relative stability over time, even if we also can see beyond the personality and by no means are fanatic about it. This means that the ego is not wholly destroyed. It is transcended. It has got a new job, an important job — to keep an eye on the personal integrity, but not in the old ‘CEO’ position. Now the ego does not take big decisions but only reports its observations to the new and legally commissioned CEO (the soul), who makes the decisions.

There are some problems with us, with our lives, but there is no reason to cast out the baby with the bathwater. The ego complex is not a dark sin, it was something worked out by evolution, and our job is not to create a whole bunch of guilt feelings because we have egos. We are not alone having an ego, everybody has, so also the saints and sages. The ego was a good idea from the beginning, and it still is, which took evolution to new levels. But now, the

time has come to go beyond it, though include it in a new but quite decent job position.

The question arises – how can we go beyond the ego? That is a good one. Still it has to be fine-tuned a bit, to the next version: how can *ordinary* human beings go beyond their egos?

The answer is: they cannot! At least not if we mean a most perfect and permanent transcendence. We humans can do some of the needed work, which is not the perfect thing, but good enough. Our souls make the rest — at their chosen hour, not at the time we think is the best.

So the job is a joint mission, shared by our human level and our soul level, where the soul level takes care of the magic as long as we do the needed work on the ground. When we are not enlightened we are not enlightened — we cannot do things that solely belong to the liberated life. We proudly declare that we shall do this or that (high matters), but the problem is, we cannot. It is important that we focus on the things that are possible for us, which are relatively small things, but important ones in the long run. I think and feel that this is something extraordinarily beautiful, to work in a joint mission with my own soul, and to know that my soul has quite another spiritual capacity than myself on the human level. Our task as human beings is to listen very carefully to the innermost voice and do our duties, improvements, and different services, most sincerely, and most patiently. Sooner or later, after years or lifetimes, things will start to

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happen, big things or small, but still, important things. We shall not think too much of when it will happen, but see our immediate goal in the present day, to do our best — intensively and with dedication take on this particular, marvellous day, as a brilliant goal in itself. That kind of attitude is the best Way to reach the golden shore of our eternal realization.

But back to the original question — what on Earth can we do to go, to some degree, beyond the ego? There are many steps that can be undertaken, steps that we all know from different Yogas or Ways, and I will not repeat them here. But the most crucial thing that must happen (and that is something that is up to us human beings) is to create the will within us to transcend the ego, and reach the shore of Enlightenment. We must WILL it! It must be clearly envisioned and felt. A strong centre in us with this WILL and VISION and UNDERSTANDING must be created. I know some teachers (my own for sure) who claim this to be more than half of the journey. We must have the driving force needed. The rest of it is to make a particular journey; simply speaking — the journey from the head to the heart. Because, it is really great, there is never any ego in the heart! Never for a second!

This is a most powerful truth that is terribly neglected, and at the same time, our greatest hope. The ego is in our heads, in our thought world. To transcend ego means to transcend thoughts. And to transcend thoughts does not mean to destroy them or annihilate them, because

they are also important, at the very least, for survival. But we have to see beyond them and give them another job position, that is, not let them keep the CEO position, but place them further down in the organization (or more in the periphery, not in the centre). The new CEO at this stage — is our hearts! And we have to awaken our sensitivity to our hearts tremendously, so that we can feel what is going on deep inside our hearts, nay, our *innermost* hearts, because in this sacred but available place, our soul vibration can be felt, most subtly of course. We associate our heart mostly with the capacity to love people around us in the world, and that is both true and important. But the heart has a greater capacity, because deeper within, in the innermost, the heart has contact with the soul, real but subtle contact.

As long as we are on the human level, all this can be improved, but it cannot be perfect, we will always have our problem with our egos, and so on. But that is okay, the important thing is to do our best, persevere and continue, and definitely not be guilt-ridden, because we are only humans! One day, for long and faithful service, we will receive a big gift from our own soul, a free entrance to its eternal kingdom. Along the Way, I think it is helpful to get a feeling for Masters, best achieved from meditating on Masters. If one does not have a personal Master one can choose a 'world' Master, like Jesus Christ, the Buddha or Lord Krishna (another example is given at the end of the article). Even if we try our best for

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many, many years, it is very possible that we may not reach full awakening in this incarnation, but we can be pretty sure that we have laid a solid foundation to continue the quest in the next chapter of our soul-journey. If this seems a little too abstract an achievement, the following statement from a strong present teacher can be inspirational (and true):

To have a strong and sincere aspiration for Realization (to want it more than anything else), manifested in a one-pointed spiritual life, is second best to Enlightenment itself, and in many respects not far from it.

This we can achieve in our lifetime with the right attitude, good teachers, and so on. To my human understanding, these are very, very sweet words — and words that I definitely can have faith in.

To seek Enlightenment is the only real thing to do for spiritual human beings, on top of survival and an otherwise sound and reasonably happy and balanced life; and the Way is by *transcending ego*, as discussed. In order to do that, we are not helped (directly) by studying the Theory of Relativity or other physical, biological or chemical sciences. We are not likewise helped by intensely studying metaphysics of any kind, even if this is quite natural and human as a first step, but also something that must one day come more or less to an end. We are not helped (at least not directly) by giving more and more

trouble to our heads — all the beautiful sciences mentioned can be of great value in other ways, but just not for ego-transcendence (which must come first).

The theme in this article would have been absolutely impossible for me to have any idea about, were it not for the compassionate instruction of several different teachers, my personal as well as others. Coming to the end of this short article I will now just mention the name of a teacher whom I respect more and more (as a strong catalyst for the development of concentrated inner energy, as well as providing guidance for us to keep a good 'line' in everyday life), and for whom I have great gratitude and love. This immensely advanced and helpful teacher (for any phase of the spiritual path towards Enlightenment) is our own N. Sri Ram. Studying him and meditating deeply on him has, for me, in my present situation, been highly rewarding, and will continue to be. A personal encounter with a fellow theosophist in Sweden (my native country) and a very ardent follower of N. Sri Ram's teaching, Mr Curt Berg (who passed away at an advanced age a few years ago), has considerably helped me to understand the spiritual greatness of N. Sri Ram. They are both here, on the inner side, heartily thanked.

I now end this article by sincerely thanking you ALL, beloved members of our large, global spiritual family! ✧

**Your greatest awakening comes when you are aware
about your infinite nature.**

Amit Ray

The Psychology of Yoga

SIMON WEBBER

THE Theosophical Society has an important but challenging mission — to create a nucleus of a new society, a ‘theosophical’ society, one that is based on altruism rather than on self-interest. Membership in the Society has as its sole requirement that of being in sympathy with its three Objects.

A key question members of the Society may want to consider asking themselves is: ‘What is required to create this “theosophical” society?’ We could consider many answers to this question; for example, one could get more involved in the Society’s work at the local or national level, or even international level. This may take the form of administration or teaching, or both. Additionally, one could focus on more in-depth study and meditation, thereby making oneself more susceptible to spiritual impulses.

All of these answers have merit, as they encompass three key aspects of living a spiritual life: service, study, and meditation. Let us consider, however, another answer, one that may help us in having more clarity of perception about our *dharma* as members of this Society.

Creating a ‘theosophical’ society requires an understanding of the ‘psychology of yoga’. This understanding involves what Jiddu Krishnamurti referred to as ‘integrated intelligence’, where the mind and heart meet to allow us to have deeper insight about our true nature and how to behave accordingly.

‘The word *yoga* is derived from the root *yuj*, which means to unite or to join together’ (Ravi Ravindra, 1998, p. 53). Dr Ravindra goes on to say that ‘through yoga, the attempt to eliminate the obstacles to the natural unfolding and development of the human being is made, so that the person’s true and real nature may be realized’ (ibid, p. 52). This definition highlights an important and key point about the psychology inherent to yoga, namely, that as individuals we are not attaining anything, but rather, there is a letting go of self-interest and acquisition, to reveal one’s latent Divinity within.

Theosophy provides an excellent framework that allows us to see the purpose of evolution and where we, as human beings, sit in the scheme of things. And so it is for yoga. The human being,

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we are taught, is, as Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton said, ‘that of the Highest privilege’ (Bulwer-Lytton, 1895). Or, in other words, we are spiritual beings, and as such, we are encouraged, through yoga, to realize this, to know that we are more than the culmination of physical possessions, emotions, and thoughts — this personality we take ourselves to be.

As the *Bhagavadgītā* says:

Never the spirit was born;
the spirit shall cease to be never;
Never was time it was not;
End and Beginning are dreams!
Birthless and deathless and changeless
remaineth the spirit for ever,
Death hath not touched it at all,
dead though the house of it seems!
(2:20)

Thus, we start with the premise that, *here* and *now*, we are sparks of the Divine. Therefore, yoga is a process of ‘eliminating obstacles’, removing the dust from the mirror, or stilling the ripples on the lake (to use other analogies), so that the *ātma* or spirit is perceived or realized.

The great sage Patanjali, in putting together aphorisms on yoga, provides us with a definition of yoga which again points to the psychology inherent to yoga: ‘Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of consciousness’ (Feuerstein, 1989).

Through yoga, we are simply encouraged to stop what prevents us from perceiving Reality, which, as the sages have been telling us throughout the ages, is the movement of thought. When the mind is still, Reality is perceived clearly,

without distortion. We no longer see, as it is expressed in the Christian tradition, ‘through a glass, darkly’ (1 Corinthians 13:12).

This clarity of perception, or realization, however, does not entail any form of ‘psychological becoming’ — the idea that ‘I’ as an individual will attain anything. For, the psychology of yoga is a process of negation rather than affirmation. As a contemporary sage, Nisargadatta Maharaj, said: ‘you would not seek what you already have. You yourself are God, the Supreme Reality’ (Maharaj, 1973, p. 240).

Throughout countless lives, we have built up an identity, an individuality that considers itself ‘something’. During each incarnation we continue to build up this sense of ‘I’, an ego built on identification with external circumstance. H. P. Blavatsky points out that incarnation is important, in that a spirit (or celestial being), divine in essence, is not pure enough to be *one with the All*. Incarnation is required to realize the Self (Blavatsky, 1987)¹.

There comes a time, however, in the course of evolution when the human being needs to refocus and to stop identifying with what is transitory during each incarnation in order to realize the Self. The psychology inherent to yoga typifies this as a reversal of this process, where there is a movement from continual identification with name and form, to identification with Reality.

Theosophy suggests there are two significant moments, where this happens

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in the evolution of consciousness. The first, is when the human being becomes an accepted disciple of an Adept, or spiritual teacher. We, then, no longer have self-aggrandisement as our goal in our daily lives, but rather are working for the good of humanity. As HPB points out, when one becomes an accepted disciple, personality must disappear and one must 'become a mere beneficent force in Nature' (Blavatsky, 1948)². In the Buddhist tradition, it is described as *Sovan*, one who has 'entered the stream'. In Hinduism, it is called *Parivrājaka*, the 'wanderer', one who, as C. W. Leadbeater says, 'no longer feels that any place in the three lower worlds is an abiding place of refuge' (Leadbeater, 1925, p. 182). In the Christian tradition, it is symbolized by the Birth, a new beginning and awakening in consciousness.

The second significant moment is when there is a dissolution of the 'I' or ego (individuality), which considers itself as a separate entity from the rest of the Cosmos. This is what HPB referred to as the 'great heresy' — the belief in a self, separate from the one universal infinite Self (Blavatsky, 1968)³.

In the Buddhist tradition, a human being who has attained this level of awareness is known as an *Arhat* — a venerable or perfect one. In Hinduism he is called *Paramahansa* — a person with high spiritual realization. It is the stage above *Hansa* — the swan, which symbolizes spiritual discrimination. In Christianity, it is symbolized by the Crucifixion, followed by the subsequent

resurrection and ascension. Sir Edwin Arnold, in *The Light of Asia*, expresses this as:

Many a house of life
Hath held me — seeking ever him who
wrought
These prisons of the senses, sorrow-
fraught;
Sore was my ceaseless strife!
But now,
Thou builder of this tabernacle — thou!
I know thee! Never shalt thou build again
These walls of pain,
Nor raise the roof-tree of deceits, nor lay
Fresh rafters on the clay;
Broken thy house is, and the ridge-
pole split!
Delusion fashioned it!
Safe pass I thence — deliverance to obtain.

The reorientation of how one's incarnation should be lived, as described above, entails that in our spiritual practice we are no longer perpetuating a sense of 'I' — an ego, a separate self — wanting to acquire and continue its existence. This is the heart of the psychology of yoga.

In the Christian tradition, we find this idea. St Paul expresses it quite simply: 'I die daily' (1 Corinthians 15:31). Similarly, the symbol of the cross in Christianity also expresses this idea. The horizontal axis represents the way of the world and the vertical axis represents the spiritual dimension. At any given moment, we have the choice, either to act from self-interest and remain at the same level — of the world — or act from

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selflessness and change levels, moving to experience deeper levels of awareness of spirit, or unity. As the Hasidic saying goes: ‘There is no room for God in him who is full of himself.’

Socrates, the Greek philosopher, also alluded to this idea when he pointed out to his friends on the last day of his life in prison (before his execution), that death should not be feared by one who has ‘died’ each day of his life. By this, Socrates meant that if we, in living a spiritual life, train ourselves to live in a state as close as possible to death (that is, not associating with the follies of the body, but focusing on the spirit), then when the dissolution of the physical body comes, there will be no distress. Socrates mentions that if there is distress, it shows that a person is

not a lover of wisdom but of the body, and clarifies this by saying: ‘True philosophers make dying their profession’ (Tredennick, 1969, p. 113).

Creating our ‘theosophical’ society provides members with a sacred opportunity, one that allows us to forget ourselves in the service of humanity. To do this, we need to be cognizant of the psychology inherent to yoga. HPB encourages us to do just that in her last letter to the American Section’s Annual Convention in April 1891:

If every Fellow in the Society were content to be an impersonal force for good, careless of praise or blame so long as he subserved the purposes of the Brotherhood, the progress made would astonish the World.

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Footnotes

1. Reprinted verbatim from the original edition first published in 1889.
2. First reprint by TPH of this book.
3. First miniature edition; reprinted from the original edition published in 1889.

Olcott ‘Thatha’*

LAURA RODRIGUEZ

IT is said that if at some point we look back at our life’s events we can clearly connect those experiences which have led us up to who we are today. In the same way, we can do this when exploring the life of those few outstanding individuals whose inner nature impelled them to work for the benefit of all humanity.

About Colonel Olcott, much has been said, and maybe you know more, however, let us remember this extraordinary being by pointing out some of the facts.

He was born in 1832 in the state of New Jersey and grew up the eldest of six children on a farm. In his early days he gained fame by establishing a model farm for scientific agriculture, and soon thereafter a pioneer agricultural school where systematic training was given. At the age of twenty-three, he was offered the Chair of Scientific Agriculture in Athens by the Government of Greece, which he refused. Soon afterwards he was offered the Directorship of the Agricultural Bureau in Washington DC,

which he also declined. He played an important role in eradicating corruption in the US Army, and also gained a reputation in journalism.

The former President Radha Burnier, in her article entitled ‘Colonel Olcott — A Superior Man’, said:

This early outstanding success was due to his initiative, energy, and devotion to the welfare of humanity. What he did was not out of desire to distinguish himself or make profit; a pure spirit of altruism animated his actions.

Later, in 1875, he founded the Theosophical Society with H. P. Blavatsky and others, and travelled all around the world. As he expressed in his last message, he wanted the members of the society to ‘carry on the grand work of proclaiming and living the brotherhood of religions . . .’ and ‘. . . to impress on all men on earth that there is no religion higher than truth, . . . and that in the brotherhood of religions lies the peace and progress

* Tamil for 'grandfather'. *Olcott Thatha* is the title given to a small illustrated book in memory of Col H. S. Olcott, created in July 2015 by students of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School in collaboration with graduate students of the George Washington University Art Therapy program.

Mrs Laura Rodriguez is a volunteer from Argentina working at Adyar. Talk given on Adyar Day, 17 February 2016.

Olcott 'Thatha'

of humanity.' Radhaji also said: 'He made his mark in many fields because, wherever he lived and worked, he manifested qualities of heart and mind which made him worthy to be called a "Superior Man", a term that Confucius used.' We can see that these qualities guided every action he accomplished in life.

I am not about to describe in detail the many roles he played during his whole life but, instead, I would like to highlight his remarkable contribution towards the uplifting of humankind through his deep and major concern for the poor and their education. When Olcott arrived in India in 1879, he was not merely interested in education in general, but, particularly, in the education and empowering of the Harijan community of India, in those days known as Pariahs or Panchamas.

His first organizing efforts in this direction had been made in the early 1890s in connection with the Buddhist education movement in Ceylon and the revival of religious education among the higher caste Hindus. Through the establishment of Buddhist Theosophical Schools in Sri Lanka and Sanskrit Schools in India, he started a movement seeking to educate the local population through vernacular languages, Pali and Sanskrit, and to instruct them in their own rich tradition, culture, and philosophies. His aim was to revive in the Indian people pride in their own culture which was being lost to them, and a sense of intrinsic value of their own arts and crafts.

In 1880, when Olcott arrived in Ceylon,

their great culture was in a deplorable state. There were only three Buddhist schools in the whole country, although the population was predominantly Buddhist. The educational system was dominated by the Christian churches. This was because there was a law in Ceylon which prevented the founding of any school within a certain number of miles of an existing one. As there were missionary schools in every centre, monopolizing all the good sites, it meant that Buddhist Schools could either not be founded at all, or only at out-of-the-way sites. So he went to London, and there pointed out the iniquity of a law which denied to a nation the education of its children in its own religion. The Government gave way to the cry for justice; the law was repealed in spite of all the efforts of the missionaries to prevent it, and the Buddhists were free to build their own schools in their own villages. Further, he helped the Buddhist movement not just in Ceylon, but throughout Southeast Asia.

Later, in 1894 Olcott initiated a movement for the education of the underprivileged children in and around Chennai. This social group was outside the four castes of Hinduism, called the fifth, or the Panchamas. They were considered as outcasts and colloquially referred to as Pariahs, or 'untouchables', a word considered to be extremely offensive today. A Pariah child could never dream of attending any school, including the schools run by the British Government. Through his movement

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a number of Panchama (Harijan) free schools were established employing qualified teachers who were theosophists and rejected the prevailing system of caste and untouchability.

Though the first school started in 1895 with 55 pupils; by 1906, it had grown to 5 schools with 731 students. The names of the schools were Damodar School, Olcott School, HPB Memorial School, New School and Tiruvalluvar School. As time passed, and owing to financial difficulties, it was found impossible to carry on work in all the schools. Therefore three schools within the Municipal area of the City of Madras were transferred to the local authorities and by 1930, only two schools were left. Later in 1933, similarly, the HPB Memorial School was handed over to the Labour Department of the Madras Government and only one was left, the Olcott Harijan Free School, which after Olcott's death in 1907 was renamed the Olcott Memorial School in his honour. The school is entirely supported by donations from theosophists and others from India and other countries.

It is endearing to read some experiences and memories of people who passed through the Olcott Memorial School, who used to study or work in the School. For example, here is an anecdote of a retired teacher, C. Iyakannu, who said:

Col Olcott often used to visit the School and indicate to the teachers the right methods of educating children. Receiving such education, many students acquired

general knowledge, also proficiency in some trade, and were able to progress in life. Many became teachers, good writers and true workers. I am very glad to say that I am one of the students who was educated in the School and came to success in life thereby. I worked as a teacher in the School from 1909 to 1950, when I retired.

The current headmistress of the School is also a graduate of the Olcott School.

Another moving memory was related by Felix Layton, the former principal and correspondent of the Olcott Memorial School during N. Sri Ram's presidency. When Sri Ram, who was Chairman of the Managing Board of the School, asked Mr Layton to become the Principal, he accepted happily. When Layton was about to retire, he said:

Once near the end of my service in the School, I was sadly pondering how much real value this work had, when my old friend P. S. Krishnaswami said to me: 'It is such a pleasure to visit the Olcott School these days.' 'Oh', I said, 'And why is that?' 'Because,' he said, 'I see so many smiling faces, and students and teachers seem so happy.' And then I realized how much value the work had. For when students and teachers are working with enthusiasm and for the ideals of the School, and when they are happy doing so, you may be sure that much is being done for the future of the students and the nation.

Let me share a really beautiful experience which makes me feel grateful towards Olcott and his legacy. I had the opportunity to talk with a girl who

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attended the Olcott School. I knew she had graduated a few years ago and wanted to know what it had meant to her to study in the School. We had a lovely conversation; she told me about the activities they had, all that they learned to do and also about how gentle and careful the teachers and the Director were. In addition, she shared how fortunate she felt about her opportunity, after graduating, of continuing her education at the university level thanks to a scholarship facilitated by the Director and the School. At the end of our conversation, after a brief silence, I told her, 'So, you have good memories of the school', and she replied, 'Yes, sweet memories'.

We have linked very few events in the life of Olcott, but probably enough to realize the extraordinary being that he

was. On this Adyar Day, I decided to mention his contributions to education and to render homage to this unusual being and his work. This is because he inspired in others the same urgent need for education, love, and compassion. Today, 121 years after the foundation of the School, Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School, with its more than 450 students, is undoubtedly one of his major legacies.

To quote Colonel Olcott again, I would like to finish with his aspiration:

To what highest good do we aspire? What *is* the highest good, but to know something of man and his powers, to discover the best means to benefit humanity — physically, morally, spiritually? To this we aspire: can [we] conceive of a nobler ambition? ✧

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

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S. HARIHARA RAGHAVAN, *PUBLISHER*

Theosophy as a Living Power

BORIS DE ZIRKOFF

IT should be constantly borne in mind, when discussing ideas and events pertaining to the Theosophical Movement, that Theosophy is primarily and essentially *a way of life*. It is not merely a system of technical teachings or a body of doctrines intended for the intellectual gratification of voracious minds who delight in filling the spiritually barren chambers of their intellect with high-sounding terms.

It can never be too often repeated that Theosophy is above everything else an ethical doctrine, a pattern of ethical behaviour, and a manner of ethical conduct. These Ethics are based on sublime teachings embodying the facts of Nature's structure and operation. But these teachings alone, unrelated to the way of life, and considered as a mere intellectual system of thought, are not only sterile, but positively mischievous and productive of a subtle brand of selfishness and moral stagnation.

Therein lies the danger of an intellectual approach to the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom. This danger can be avoided only by a sincere and constant effort on the part of the student to put



Boris Mihailovich de Zirkoff
1902–1981

into practice the precepts he has intellectually learned, and to apply in daily life those basic thoughts which he has understood to be the foundation stones of spiritual life.

In this way he will avoid the danger of severing his mind and heart from the collective mind and heart of mankind, or the community of which he is an integral part. There are students who have achieved a very profound understanding of the purely intellectual aspect of the theosophical teachings, but who remain nevertheless ethically sterile members of their community. They are aloof in their

Mr Boris de Zirkoff was a close relative of H. P. Blavatsky's father and compiler/editor of her *Collected Writings* in 25 volumes. Reprinted from *Theosophia*, Volume VI, No. 3, Sep-Oct 1949.

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attitude to life, and bear no vital relation to the human sorrows and problems surrounding them. They live in self-made ivory towers, unconcerned about what is going on around them, usually unperceived by others, and probably largely undisturbed.

There are others who may or may not have achieved a thorough grasp of the intellectual intricacies of the Ancient Wisdom, but whose minds and hearts are attuned to the wide-spread suffering of men and women, in their blind search for release. They keep their contact with mankind, they share the collective sorrow and joy which are part of the web of life, and they carry their growing understanding of Nature's truths into the midst of the teeming millions, where the need for Light is the greatest.

It is essential for the student of the age-old wisdom to keep at all times his link with mankind alive and strong. It is his only way of ultimately understanding the cause of human misery and pain, as well as of human pleasure and joy — and this not by immersing himself in them, but by attuning his heart and mind to their vibratory rate and gathering intuitively, intellectually, and psychically, an awareness of the states of consciousness which these various conditions offer for the growth of the soul.

It is of great importance that the student of Theosophy become a constructive part of the community in which he lives, a center of light and knowledge, emanating warmth of soul and strength of character, for others to observe and

partake. He should be — in some unobtrusive manner — a source of information regarding the laws of life and of new courage and hope to those who are in trouble; and he should in due course of time become recognized as a fountain-head of ideas and plans which, if listened to and carried out, would improve the ethical climate of the community and raise its moral and intellectual standard above the average. Such things have taken place more than once, and they can be repeated in a thousand other instances, if only the majority of students were to 'descend' from their lofty tower of mere intellectual thinking, and forge the necessary links of human compassion and interest which are so essential to this purpose.

It is supposed by some people, that our individual efforts can at best be but very small and their influence negligible. This is the type of shallow thinking which does not take into consideration some of the main factors contained in this equation. It should be distinctly remembered that spiritual thought is a great deal more powerful than mere mentation, and the latter more powerful than mere wishful thinking. The range of creative spiritual thought has not yet been determined, and the manner in which it brings about its effects is largely unknown, except to trained and advanced occultists who deal with these matters experimentally.

Every thought directed towards true spirituality — which is invariably one with selflessness, impersonality and sympathy

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for others — has an enormous range, potency, momentum and intensity, as compared with mere intellectual thinking or perchance mere mental and emotional 'wishing'. It strikes like lightning upon responsive minds and hearts, and contains within itself alchemical powers of self-perpetuation and recreation unknown on any of the lower planes of human action. It is also in league with the rest of the spiritual agencies at work continuously in the world. The result is that a definite spiritual effort on the part of one student, in a given direction, may very well give rise to a chain reaction of effects the range of which would seem to be quite inexplicable on purely mechanistic grounds. Spiritual thought has its own repercussions on other planes. The laws of 'thought-resonance' and of 'thought-overtones and -undertones' are practically unknown to modern science, and constitute a higher type of science which is known in its fullness but to high initiates, though each one of us can learn at least its ABC.

The carrying out of true, social reforms directed to the amelioration of the conditions under which most of humanity lives today, is not a matter of money, political power, personal fame, or worldly influence. It is primarily a matter of spiritual creative thinking, mostly on the part of a few. One thought given birth to at the cyclically right time, and directed into the first open channel that may present itself, can impregnate a large number of human minds and hearts, each one of which becomes a center of

outgoing spiritual force directed towards the same objective. The cumulative result of this chain reaction has at times produced some very startling results, responsible for some of the most important events in social reform and the development of modern scientific thought. Among these results could be mentioned such widely separate movements and events as the Keltic Literary Revival, the National Independence of India, the Abolition of Slavery in the USA, the discovery of the electron, the therapeutic usage of music, the abrogation of a number of restrictive covenants based on racial discrimination, and a number of other marked changes which have taken place in recent times upon the stage of human history, both in the Orient and the Occident.

Lest we be misunderstood, it should be stated here unequivocally that the Theosophical Movement is strictly and traditionally non-political and unsectarian, paying no attention to, and engaging in none of the political controversies of the day, which are here today and gone tomorrow, to be probably superseded by other controversies and arguments. But while it is non-political as a Movement, it not only recognizes the right of every student of Theosophy to take part, if he pleases, in whatever may be constructive and useful in the political set-up of his respective land, but actually urges him to partake, as an individual, as a citizen or subject, and as a professed humanitarian, in the process of just, enlightened and progressive

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social reforms whose aim is, as expressed by one of the Masters, 'the amelioration of the condition of the poor.' And not only is he urged to participate in this process, but expected to take individual initiative to originate new movements and moves aimed at the eradication of corruption and evil in the social structure of the day, by means of humanitarian, social measures and reforms, free of party politics and devoted to the welfare of all

mankind, irrespective of race, creed, colour, political affiliations or religious background.

Universality is the keynote of a true Theosophist. Wherever sectarianism and parochialism show their ugly faces, Theosophy can exist only in name. When manifesting in universality of views and the highest embodiment of Ethics, it becomes a living power in the hearts of men. ✧

Early in 1981, the twelfth volume of the *Collected Writings* series was published, and the next two volumes were at the printer. Radha Burnier, President of the Theosophical Society based in Adyar wrote to 'Dear Brother Boris' on February 23rd:

The members of the General Council and myself, unanimously considered you as the fittest person to receive the Subba Row Medal now. The work you have done in preparing the *Collected Writings* of our great Founder, H. P. Blavatsky, is monumental. Every token of the appreciation that is felt in respect of your lifelong labour, appears to be inadequate. However, in grateful recognition of your untiring efforts during several decades, to make available to the world the wealth of knowledge contained in HPB's writings, I have the honour to request Miss Joy Mills to present to you, on behalf of the Society the Subba Row medal.

Radha Burnier truly appreciated the breadth and depth of scholarship that went into the *Collected Writings* project, since during the 1950s she had responded with patience and precision to hundreds of questions that Mr de Zirkoff sent to the Adyar Library and Research Centre concerning Sanskrit and Tamil terms. Many other friends and coworkers wrote of Boris de Zirkoff when, after a long illness, he passed away on March 4, 1981. A final issue of *Theosophia*, the Tribute Issue, was filled with letters praising their friend's dedication, scholarship, and helpfulness, his wit, humor, and simple, undemanding lifestyle. Joy Mills quoted a letter Boris had written to her:

The only thing I live for and work for is the perpetuation and dissemination of genuine Theosophy whether it be through the words of HPB or those who have remained true to her message and the instructions of Those standing behind her.

<http://www.theosophy.wiki/en/Boris_de_Zirkoff>

Theosophical Work around the World

Australia

The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, was the key speaker at the 2016 National Convention of the Australian Section, held in Perth during 16 – 23 January. Mr Boyd and his wife, Lily, were warmly welcomed by the members and their visit was greatly appreciated.

The theme for the week was ‘Today’s World Problems: Insights from the Wisdom Tradition’. During the Convention, Mr Boyd gave a public lecture on ‘Urban Spirituality: the Ageless Wisdom in a Crowding World’ at the University of Western Australia, as well as several other lectures during the week, along with an interview through which members got to know him better. Presentations were also given throughout the week by a variety of Australian members, providing many windows onto the theme. The traditional day outing during the Convention included a trip to Perth Branch, located directly opposite a picturesque park, not far from the centre of the city. Members of the Branch generously provided afternoon tea for the delegates. One member of the New Zealand Section and an additional member of the American Section were present during the week, as well as members from around Australia. All in all it was a most memorable and historic gathering, held during the first trip to Australia by the international President and his wife.

India

The centenary of the Cuttack Lodge in Odisha, India, chartered by Dr Annie Besant in 1916, was celebrated on 13–14 February, along with the 51st Annual Convention of the Utkal Theosophical Federation. The International Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, was the chief guest. He spoke on the conference theme, ‘Theosophy: The Eternal Wisdom’, and highlighted the present-day challenges before the Theosophical Society. He also gave a public lecture on the theme, ‘Enlightenment through Self-Surrender’. Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary of the Indian Section, was the guest of honour. There was a TOS session where he gave a talk on the theme, ‘Love and Service: Direction and Vision of Universal Brotherhood’. Mrs Manju Sundaram was the chief speaker at the session devoted to the centenary program. She spoke on the theme, ‘Theosophy: the Path of Unfoldment’. The conference also had a programme of short talks on ‘Quest for Truth’, a symposium on ‘Theosophy and the Modern World’, a Theosophy-Science lecture on ‘Science and Spirituality’, a Seminar on ‘Theosophy in Practice’, and a Youth Conference on the topic ‘Human Values’. A research professor, Dr F. M. Sahoo, also delivered an address on ‘Relevance of Theosophy in Life’. In the course of the centenary

Theosophical Work around the World



Delegates at the 2016 National Convention of the Australian Section held in Perth from 16 – 23 January.
Front row middle: International President, Mr Tim Boyd; National President of the Australian Section, Mrs Linda Oliveira; and Mrs Lily Boyd



Participants of the 51st Annual Conference of the Utkal Theosophical Federation and the centenary of the Cuttack Lodge. *Second row from back:* International Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy; Mrs Kusum Satapathy; General Secretary of the Indian Section, Mr S. Sundaram; and Mrs Manju Sundaram



Students of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School pass through the portico of the Headquarters Hall in the morning of Adyar Day, 17 February 2016

Theosophical Work around the World

celebrations, mementoes were presented to members with 35 to 52 years of membership, prizes were distributed to school and college students who participated in debate and essay competitions, and two books were released along with the centenary souvenir. One of the books was a compilation of biographies of Madame H. P. Blavatsky, Col H. S. Olcott and Dr Annie Besant in Odia, and the other book was by Professor S. Patro, titled *Infinity and Beyond*. The conference and centenary celebrations were well organized by Mrs Amiya Mohapatra, Bro. J. K. Sahoo, Mr Ashutosh Pati, and other members of the Cuttack Lodge.

Adyar

Every year members around the world celebrate the Adyar Day on 17 February. At Adyar this year, the celebration started with a procession of about 200 students from the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School, singing a couple of songs and walking through the portico of the Headquarters Hall. The international Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, welcomed all, and spoke highlighting the importance of the Day. Mrs Laura Rodriguez, a volunteer from Argentina, talked about the life and work of Col

H. S. Olcott, paying special attention to his work for education. Mrs Veena Ramachandran, Superintendent of the Leadbeater Chambers, related a few interesting facts from the life of C. W. Leadbeater. Mrs Clemice Petter, a volunteer from Brazil, drew attention to Jiddu Krishnamurti as a son of Adyar, and conveyed some impressions of him collected by those who have met him in person. Several incidents have taken place around this date to make it a special day. Col Olcott and J. Krishnamurti passed away on 17 February (in 1907 and 1986 respectively), and Giordano Bruno, a previous incarnation of Dr Annie Besant, was burnt at the stake on that day in 1600. C. W. Leadbeater was born on 16 February.

On the evening of the same day, the new Great Banyan Audio-Visual Centre at Adyar was inaugurated at the Garden of Meditation in a small ceremony. This was followed by the playback of a talk by N. Sri Ram, the fifth international TS President, on 'Theosophical Work'. This Centre is meant for members to listen to recorded talks, watch videos and movies, and listen to music. To start with, there will be monthly gatherings in the Garden of Meditation. ✧

Let every moment be perfect in itself and a beautiful prelude to the next, not by anticipating what is to come in vain expectation and hope, but by completeness in meeting the demands of the present. . . . Release yourself from fears born of unhappy memories and equally from preconceived hopes of fulfilment — from all that is a product of the mechanical aspects of the mind.

N. Sri Ram

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