

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.



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Cover: H. P. Blavatsky (around 1876–77) co-founded the Theosophical Society along with H. S. Olcott, W. Q. Judge, and others in 1875 in New York City. She passed away on 8 May 1991

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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.

Thinking about Adyar

TIM BOYD

I would like to share some thoughts about Adyar for those readers who may not already know. The Theosophical Society (TS) was founded in New York City, but it moved to India, and in 1882 its International Headquarters was established where it is now, in Adyar. Although it was founded in the US, the fact of history is that it actually began to thrive and come to life in Adyar, and then the Theosophical movement spread throughout India, and around the world.

As a place, the little patch of land on our gigantic globe that we point to as “Adyar”, and as our International Headquarters, has a presence and quite a history. Just in terms of the Theosophical movement, it is the place that H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) designated as the center for this movement to take its roots and go out into the world. She lived there, Col Olcott lived there, Annie Besant, J. Krishnamurti, Damodar Mavalankar, and all types of people have lived, grown, and given their impetus to this movement, drawing on something that they found peculiar to this particular place we call “Adyar”.

At Adyar my office is the space where HPB used to live. It is all one big room now, but previously it was two: where

she slept, and where she entertained company. My desk is ten feet from the Shrine where the letters from the Mahatmas were received. Every day I come in to the office, turn on my computer, and check my emails. Throughout most of the day I am forgetful about the nature and history of the place where I sit, but from time to time I remind myself. This place has a certain magnetism, and those who have been there are aware of it. Adyar is still the center for the theosophical movement in the world, the place from which it spread into the world, and toward which many look as an important part of this overall movement.

No matter what it is in life, the center is something of great importance, whether an atom or a galaxy, a planet or a human being. It is the center from which life is drawn and which determines the organism’s activities in the world. We have such a center in Adyar. I am fortunate to connect with members around the world, and one thing I observe is that the members within the TS who have actually had the opportunity to set foot in Adyar, to take in some of the experience of the place, are some of our most active members in Sections worldwide. They have linked themselves in an intimate way with the

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expression and meaning of this work. Somehow the experience of this place feeds something within us.

Those who have gone to Adyar have done so for a variety of reasons. Some go to connect with its history; we remember about the Mahatma Letters that came, the people that walked on this ground, and we want to experience that. But there is something more profound that goes on in the choice of going to Adyar. As much as the Adyar center is an idea, a place of history, and a geographical spot, it is also something more. It is an intuition of something more profound that utters itself within us, an unconscious knowledge to which we are available and able to respond at some point during our lives. That intuition leads us in a certain direction.

There is an expression by St Augustine that “our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee”, until we find some way of responding to that deeper voice that is continually speaking within us. Many of us have found in this Theosophical movement something that speaks to our need for a deeper level of connection. To the degree that we are able to lend ourselves to that, something happens within us.

Part of what we do is to try to bring ourselves into contact with that ever-present, deeper dimension of our being. Like me in my office, often it is ignored, but this connection can fuel our work at deeper levels. The kinds of things we are trying to do at Adyar are important, many of which are physical. Because we bring our physical bodies to a physical place, the body’s needs cannot be ignored. Then

we have an opportunity to interact at deeper levels. But we have to make the physical place hospitable for the body, and that is one of the things we are trying to do. As with anything that is done on a physical level, that is the grind, the more difficult process that we go through. But it is all part of one process.

In the theosophical movement there are many different branches that have grown from the original impulse. For the last couple of years at Adyar we have been working with members from our sister theosophical organizations. We are all part of one movement. For a number of years we had viewed ourselves as little islands floating separately in this tiny theosophical pond. But for the last few years we have made a point of it during our Conventions, and at other times, to invite our brothers and sisters from other theosophical organizations.

A couple of years ago we invited Mr Herman Vermeulen, head of the Point Loma group in the Hague. When he was addressing the Convention in Adyar he made the point that it was the first time in the organization’s history that a person who was the head of a different theosophical organization was speaking at a convention in Adyar! Until he said it I had not thought of it in those terms. It is only logical to include the entire group of people working toward a common goal. To share Adyar, this jewel of the theosophical world, with our fellow workers and members requires no thought whatsoever. But it is going to require an ongoing investment of our energies.

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In discussing how to invest our energies, Mr Pradeep Gohil, General Secretary of the Indian Section, has emphasized the power of our mind, thought, and visualization; and in talking about the nature of charity and service, Mr Esteban Langlois, General Secretary of the TS in Argentina, said that in giving money, food, or clothing, everybody will have limitations. But one thing that we can give most generously, upon which there are absolutely no limitations — except our own capacity and willingness to visualize and to think — is to send our goodwill toward this Theosophical mission to which we already feel connected.

Because of the limitations of our own conditioning we have underestimated our capacity to contribute to this movement of revitalization.

I would ask you to do this, remember Adyar from time to time, but remember it with a generosity of thought, with a visual capacity that sees the growth, the splendor, the broadening connections — not just for Adyar. If it is only about Adyar or the Theosophical Society, it is not enough. This organization and movement are here for the world, for humanity, and if we do not fuel its efforts in all the ways that we are able, we are the ones who lose. ✧

NOTICE

According to Rule 11(a) of the TS international Regulations, I nominated Dr Deepa Padhi as Vice-President on 18 March 2017. At the end of the voting period we received 28 votes in favor and 0 votes opposing from the General Council members. In view of the results confirming my nomination, Dr Padhi's term as Vice-President will be effective from 18 April 2017.

Tim Boyd
President

Theosophical Education

CHITTARANJAN SATAPATHY

FROM the early days of the modern theosophical movement, which started with the establishment of the Theosophical Society (TS) in 1875, its pioneers have taken great interest in education per se and the right kind of education in particular. In a way, a theosophist's approach to education was greatly influenced by two underlying considerations that Madame H. P. Blavatsky voiced in *The Key to Theosophy*:

1. When asked what she considered as due to humanity at large, she said, "Full recognition of equal rights and privileges for all, and without distinction of race, colour, social position, or birth."

2. To a query whether it is the duty of every member [of the TS] to teach others and preach Theosophy, she affirmed: "No fellow has a right to remain idle on the excuse that he knows too little to teach; for he may always be sure that he will find others who know still less than himself. And also it is not until a man begins to try to teach others that he discovers his own ignorance and tries to remove it."

The founders of the Theosophical

Society, Madame Blavatsky and Colonel H. S. Olcott, on their arrival in Sri Lanka in the 1880s did a great amount of work to restore traditional teaching by establishing Buddhist Theosophical Schools which within a few years grew to a hundred in number. This was of great significance to the revival of Buddhist culture and tradition there.

Col Olcott's pioneering work for educating the poor children from marginalized sections of society is well known. The concept that through education the underprivileged and disadvantaged can be enabled to stand on their own feet and fight for what is due to them was formulated and given a practical shape by him much before similar work was started by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar. Several Olcott Panchama Schools were started in and around old Madras. The first one that was started in 1894 by Col Olcott, using his own meagre financial resources, continues today and has since been upgraded recently as Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School. It was started as a free school with 45 students including 9 girls. Till today no fees are charged

Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy is former international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar. Talk delivered at the National Conference on Theosophical Education in Bhubaneswar, 23 Sept. 2016.

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from any of the students who go through a life-transforming experience at the school. Theosophists alone rose above caste considerations to be the first lot of volunteer teachers at the school.

One of the lesser known aspects of Col Olcott's work for reviving and opening several Sanskrit schools needs to be mentioned here. This was in line with the emphasis that the founders of the TS gave to traditional education and the learning of Sanskrit, a language in which many ancient books of divine wisdom were written. Equally important was Col Olcott's great foresight in establishing the Adyar Library and Research Centre, and collecting over 18,000 palm-leaf and other manuscripts and 45,000 books. It was for the first time that this library published the complete set of the 108 major Upanishads with original texts and commentaries in Sanskrit and an English translation.

The work of Dr Annie Besant, Col Olcott's able successor, in the field of education would require several pages to be adequately recounted. A number of schools and colleges bearing her name stand testimony to her work in the field of education. The founding of the Benares Hindu University would not have been possible but for her willingly surrendering the Central Hindu College in 1913 (which had been earlier established by her in 1898) along with the land and all other assets. Her work advancing the cause of women's education in the country and bringing the Scouts and Guides movement to India are well known. In

1913 she established the Theosophical Education Trust. Among other things she emphasized that education should make young Indians more religious, for she believed a nation must have spirituality. She was clear that education must foster national unity, discipline, perseverance, and a sense that all work is honourable, and must prepare students for public life.

Dr Besant elucidates her views further in *Education in the Light of Theosophy* (Adyar Pamphlet No.16). She says that the fundamental teachings of Theosophy have altered our views of children. They cannot be considered as souls fresh from the hands of God, but as immortal individuals taking birth amongst us after gathering experience from many such births earlier. Dr Besant says that to the Theosophist each child is a study, and instead of imposing his own will on the child, he tries to discover through the young body the features of the in-dwelling owner, who may be wiser than his elders. What Dr Besant says in this book was put into practice when she and other Theosophists educated the young J. Krishnamurti, who later went on to become a World Teacher, apart from establishing many schools seeking to provide a different kind of education for children.

Maria Montessori, the renowned educator, lived in and worked from the TS campus in Adyar. Four of her books, *The Absorbent Mind*, *Reconstruction in Education*, *Peace and Education*, and *The Child* have been published by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar. She recognises that children have their

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personalities and carry within them the beauty and dignity of the creative spirit. She is of the view that the school should not be a prison for children, ignoring the exigencies of their spirit and soul. The emphasis should shift from forcing them to fit society's molds, ignoring their actual needs.

Back in July 1940, the then President of the TS, George Arundale, published "A Statement of Principles of Education" regarding what he considered to be the fundamental principles of theosophical education. In that statement he talked of coordinating existing theosophical educational activities in various parts of the world, outlining the following principles of theosophical education:

- (1) True education must seek to help to encourage the growth of vital energizing forces of will, wisdom, and love in each student.
- (2) Students must be acquainted with the basic truths of unity and brotherhood of all life.
- (3) Students must realize that nothing grows alone and that there is nothing external which is not related to them.
- (4) Perfect justice and therefore perfect love rules the world.
- (5) There is a Great Brotherhood of religions.
- (6) There is a Great Brotherhood of the nations and all humanity, and

all of us are children of one life.

(7) Theosophical education should include study and exercises, whether physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual, designed to help the student tread the way of service, to be of a sharing and helpful nature.

If these principles have to be applied in our schools, and I have no doubt they should be, first of all we must have teachers who understand these principles and who are happy to imbibe and follow them.

Many of the schools supported by the members of The Theosophical Society today cater to the educational needs of the underprivileged which, with very few exceptions, merely enables them to get some employment. Though ethical and moral education is part of the curriculum in these schools, most of them do not really provide theosophical education. We need to reflect how best the present generation of Theosophists can address this issue. Another issue needing our attention is what Krishnamurti writes in *Education as Service*:

It is sad that in modern days the office of a teacher has not been regarded as on a level with other learned professions But really the office of the teacher is the most sacred and the most important to the nation, because it builds the characters of the boys and girls who will be its future citizens. ✧

Pāramitās: Ten Golden Keys

NICHOLAS C. WEEKS

There is an old saying which reveals a good motive for living nobly: “When one receives a drop of kindness, one should repay it with a bubbling spring.” H. P. Blavatsky’s guru mentioned the “debt of gratitude” as being “sacred”. Feeling grateful is nice, but is not really adequate, especially since we are all a Unity and of One Life. We must not block circulation of the harmonious forces of compassion, sympathy, and friendliness. “Ingratitude is a crime in Occultism.”¹

Duty is that which is due to Humanity, especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves. This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and moral bankrupts in our next incarnation. Theosophy is the quintessence of duty.²

Blavatsky was not explicit about why we owe this debt, but I suspect it is because of our indifferent attitude to the past drops of kindness that we accepted gladly, but did nothing to keep the kindness flowing freely. Our sacred duty is to repay the showers of kindness we

have received, over many lifetimes, from the Buddhas, Masters, gods, parents, and the rest of humanity. This divine duty will move us to tap our own bubbling spring of virtues. These will flow forth from our “fountainhead of utter wisdom”, as G. de Purucker called it.

If we truly wish to join in and work with the “altruist army”, then we need to recall the advice of Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva about the three selfless resolutions that will certainly lead one to become a bodhisattva, who will always benefit all beings:

Where the Buddha has instructed one, in a past life or vision, to generate this resolve;

Where one generates resolve in order to protect the Dharma;

Or where one generates resolve on account of pity for suffering beings;

Those possessed of at least one of the three motivations of this sort, will definitely find success.³

Bodhichitta resolve or aspiration alone is good, but practicing *bodhichitta* with

Mr Nicholas C. Weeks, theosophical scholar for many years, collaborated with his wife, Dara Eklund, in assisting Boris de Zirkoff to compile and edit a few of the H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings*.

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the *pāramitās* or perfections of virtue, is better. *Bodhichitta* means Wise Mind and refers to the aspiration to become someone who works for the spiritual progress of all beings, far into the future. For maximum effectiveness *bodhichitta* vows must be based on refuge in the triple Jewel of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Dharma is Buddha's teaching and Sangha means his bodhisattva disciples. When Franz Hartmann formally took refuge, (as Blavatsky and Olcott did a few years earlier), Blavatsky's guru wrote him a note in 1884 saying:

Above all, try to find yourself, and the path of knowledge will open itself before you, and this is so much the easier as you have made a contact with the Light-ray of the Blessed One [Buddha], whose name you have now taken as your spiritual lode-star . . . Receive in advance my blessings and thanks.⁴

Blavatsky gives a deeper meaning to the Three Jewels in her *Theosophical Glossary*:

The words "Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha", ought to be pronounced as in the days of Gautama, the Lord Buddha, namely "Bodhi, Dharma, and Sangha", and interpreted to mean "Wisdom, its laws, and priests", the latter in the sense of "spiritual exponents", or Adepts.⁵

This goal of becoming a bodhisattva is worthy of any sacrifice, as a sutra tells us:

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara asked the Buddha, "Why do you say the birth of

bodhisattvas is the most excellent among living beings?"

The Buddha replied, "There are four reasons. (1) Because that birth is constructed on ultimately pure foundations of good. (2) Because it is chosen intentionally, with conscious discernment. (3) Because it is based on compassion, to liberate sentient beings. (4) Because one can purify oneself and therefore remove the defilements of others."

Avalokiteśvara also asked the Buddha, "Why do you say bodhisattvas carry out far-reaching vows, marvellous vows, excellent vows?"

The Buddha replied, "For four reasons: (1) Bodhisattvas do know the bliss of nirvāna very well and can quickly realize it, (2) yet they relinquish immediate experience of the state of bliss and (3) arouse a mind of great aspiration to benefit living beings, without a personal object or expectation, and (4) therefore they remain in the midst of many kinds of suffering over a long time. That is why I say that bodhisattvas carry out far-reaching, marvellous, excellent vows."⁶

Before focusing on any golden *pāramitā* keys to the portals that open into higher realms of consciousness, let us recall some more fundamentals of this Path. The *Mahatma Letters* mention the basic methods, of which these three are the most important: "Chastity of thought, word, and deed; government of the animal passions and impulses; and utter unselfishness of intention."⁷

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Without this needed preliminary purification, the practice of the *pāramitās* will be feeble and fruitless. It may even lead to hypocrisy. The refinement of our three poisons of greed, anger and stupidity or attraction, repulsion and stagnation is fulfilled by using three principles. One of those rare supreme Adepts, Je Tsongkhapa, taught them as renunciation of greed and animal passions; and secondly, utter unselfish compassionate *bodhichitta* that replaces anger and irritation. The third principle is vast Wisdom, instead of our normal foolishness.⁸

One can see how the first two perfections of Giving and Virtue help to remove low desire and animal passions. Then number three, unruffled Patience, redeems anger, hate, and irritability. *Pāramitās* five and six transmute our stupid, foolish minds into great Wisdom. Energy, the fourth one, empowers all the other five. Blavatsky's central *pāramitā* of *vairāgya* (mentioned in her *Voice of the Silence*), or Dispassion, or non-attachment, pervades all the others. As the Buddha taught, *vairāgya* "is the best of all things".⁹ *Vairāgya* here means Nirvāna.

The last four *pāramitās* of the ten assist the six. One traditional way of connecting the last four perfections to the first six, is as follows: The 7th *pāramitā* of Skillful Means assists the first three in making virtuous karma. The 8th perfection of Vows, or Aspirations, strengthens number four, Diligence. The 9th *pāramitā* of Power greatly deepens number five, Meditation, and the 10th perfection of

jñāna, or Knowledge, expands number six, *prajña*, or Wisdom.

Blavatsky speaks of the *pāramitā* path as "thorny" and "uphill all the way". The *pāramitā* heights are crossed by a path still steeper than that of *Dhyāna*, or meditation, for the *pāramitās* require altruistic action on the ordinary plane of life, as well as virtuous action in the deeper realms of meditation. Here is some encouragement from a Mahāyāna sutra aimed at ordinary lay persons:

It is easy for those who have renounced family life and become monastics to activate *bodhichitta*. Yet, if one who lives as a lay person activates the *bodhi* mind and seeks to tread the bodhisattva path, that is truly inconceivable. Why? Because lay people are so entangled with many adverse causes and conditions. When any lay person activates *bodhichitta*, devas from every one of the heavens are all greatly surprised and pleased. Then they say to each other, "Now we have a future Buddha, a teacher of devas and humans."¹⁰

Another sutra says that a single repetition of the six syllable mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum" completes all six perfections. This completion means the seed of Buddhahood is well and sincerely planted in the fertile soil of *bodhichitta* vows and practices, thus assuring the future flowering as a Tathāgata.

Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva taught that there are three essential elements for the Mahāyāna path: (1) compassion for the suffering of all beings; (2) the altruistic *bodhichitta* resolve to fully unfold the

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buddha nature in ourselves and help all beings to do the same; and (3) wisdom that is all inclusive.

The *bodhichitta* vow or intent, by itself, is a powerful blessing to ourselves and others. It must be deeply held and never allowed to weaken. These two elements of compassion and *bodhichitta* may be the work of several lifetimes. However, as Kamalaśīla Bodhisattva reminds us: motive alone is not enough. We must discipline ourselves in order to help others to do likewise. Without our presence or words radiating the subtle yet real, higher energies that result from self-discipline, people are less likely to be reached. Practising the *pāramitās* is also necessary for attaining any of the ten grounds or stages of bodhisattvas. Je Tsongkhapa also agrees that the training methods to achieve Buddhahood are just those of the *pāramitās*.

These ten golden keys are all that is needed to open any portal to higher planes or “spheres of being”, as Purucker called these worlds. Mahāyāna Buddhism calls these portals Dharma Gateways into such exalted states and realms. Thus our “thorny way” leads to a surrounding world we will be a part of, as well as having a consciousness transformed by wisdom.

This essential training is basically twofold: the method of accruing virtuous karma, or merit, from the first five — Generosity, Ethics, Patience, Diligence, Meditation — and secondly, gaining Wisdom. The last four of the ten assist the first six. The karmic merit from practising

eight of these perfections is aimed at attracting or unfolding higher forces that match or resonate with the higher parts of this globe or higher globes. These more sacred energies will permit us to visit, and eventually reside in, these finer forms and realms, as well as inspire other beings to tread the Buddha Way. The other two *pāramitās*, number six, Wisdom, and number ten, Knowledge, will unfold the perfect Buddha mind.

The causes and conditions associated with the stages of bodhisattva practice are endless. The *pāramitās* are actually many more than ten. One sutra, the *Lalitavistara*, lists 108 perfections. But these ten perfections, (or just the six) are all that are required to ascend through the ten bodhisattva levels leading up to Buddhahood. Each one of the ten bodhisattva stages does include all of the *pāramitās*. But the first stage focuses on the first *pāramitā* of giving, the second ground emphasizes ethics, and so forth, through the rest.

Blavatsky says in *The Voice of the Silence* that the perfections are only keys to the Seven Portals, but are not the Portals themselves. This may only mean that initially the practice of the *pāramitās* is weak from our lack of Great Compassion. While we do possess these golden *pāramitā* keys, we lack the power, purity, and skill to use them. Only later, after much practice, will they function as vowed keys of compassion, which open the locks to the Portals. As Nāgārjuna says: “From compassion all aims are achieved.”¹¹ Great compassion is the panacea.

Golden keys are personal efforts

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toward always being generous, ethical, patient, and so on. Therefore, we practise the *pāramitās* until one or more comes naturally to us. When the personality is purified enough, then we may, before entering the first gate or portal (probably with a guru's help), "learn to live in the Eternal" and "learn to part thy body from thy mind", as *The Voice of the Silence* suggests. This is the meditative, esoteric work that is the Path leading through each portal. *Vairāgya*, the dispassionate central *pāramitā* of non-attachment, is required for the esoteric meditation, so inner obstacles or afflictions will not be empowered by attachment or repulsion to what may arise in meditation.

It is also taught in the Mahāyāna that the impetus toward the nobler life does not spring merely from our personal efforts, but also from our true nature or self. As the Tibetan Bodhisattva Gampopa writes, our Buddha nature, or potential, is the primary cause:

We need to attain unsurpassable enlightenment by freeing ourselves from the confused state of samsāra. But, is it possible for inferior persons like ourselves to achieve enlightenment even if we make the effort? Of course it is possible! If we make the effort, why doubt we would attain Buddhahood! All sentient beings, including ourselves, already possess the primary cause for enlightenment, the Buddha essence. As is stated in a sutra: The essence of the Buddha pervades all beings. [*King of Meditative Absorption*]

Another sutra says: All sentient beings

already have the Buddha nature. [*Small Parinirvāna*] Also, the *Sutra of the Great Parinirvāna* says: As butter permeates milk, likewise the Buddha potential pervades all sentient beings. And yet another sutra says: "Even though suchness is not different for any being, one is called Tathagata when it is fully purified. Therefore, all beings are of its essence."¹²

As Aśvaghosha, another Mahāyāna sage put it: Bodhisattvas who cherish their aspiration toward Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings, have had incalculable lifetimes to ponder on and gain a profound understanding of the divine principle of suchness and thus entertain no attachment to their attainments obtained through discipline.

Knowing that the nature of Reality is free from greed, bodhisattvas, in conformity to Reality, devote themselves to the *pāramitā* of Charity.

Knowing that Reality is free from defilements which originate from sensual desires, they, in conformity to Reality, devote themselves to the *pāramitā* of *śīla*, or Virtue.

Knowing that Reality is free from suffering, anger, and anxiety, they, in conformity to Reality, devote themselves to the *pāramitā* of Forbearance.

Knowing that the nature of Reality does not have any distinction of body and mind and is free from indolence, bodhisattvas, in conformity to it, devote themselves to the *pāramitā* of Zeal.

Knowing that Reality is always calm and free from confusion, they devote themselves to the *pāramitā* of Meditation.

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Knowing that the nature of Reality is always characterized by knowledge and is free from ignorance, bodhisattvas, in conformity to Reality, devote themselves to the *pāramitā* of Wisdom.¹³

This work of countless lifetimes seems daunting, even overwhelming to many. For most of us, a slow and careful approach is actually better than an overconfident one. Otherwise we race three steps forward and fall back two or more. Bodhisattva Hsuan Hua gave us some good counsel:

In order to cultivate all *pāramitās*, we have to choose one *pāramitā* to start out with. When we successfully accomplish one *pāramitā*, all the *pāramitās* will be accomplished. If it were not that way, how could we finish cultivating so many *pāramitās* in our limited life span? There are hundreds of millions of *pāramitās*. If we cultivated them one by one, when would we ever finish?¹⁴

Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva spends more time praising *dāna pāramitā* than any of the others. He says Generosity is the primary condition for the realization of nirvāna. So generosity is a good choice for a *pāramitā* to practise, and, in the fullness of time, to master. Generosity brings all manner of benefits; here are just a few of them:

Generosity serves as a treasure trove which constantly stays with a person. It destroys suffering and bestows bliss on people. It is a good guide showing the way to the heavens. It is an abode of goodness for it draws in good people. It is a

source of peace and security. When one reaches the end of one's life, one's mind remains free of fear. Generosity is marked by kindness, for it is able to bring about the rescue of everyone. It is the gateway to the accumulation of goodness and meritorious qualities.

Generosity destroys our poverty and cuts one off from wretched destinies. It is able to preserve and protect the fruit of karmic blessings and bliss. It provides the quality of freedom from a multitude of difficulties. It is the sanctum in which the mind remains free of regret. It is the origin of good dharmas and of one's cultivation of the Path. It is the bridge to the realization of the Path and entry into nirvāna. It is traversed by the Noble Ones, the great Masters, and those possessed of wisdom. Generosity is that which everyone else, including those of minor virtue and lesser intelligence, should strive to emulate.¹⁵

What approach should we take in cultivating these *pāramitās*? Here is one method: Avalokiteśvara asked the Buddha, "How should bodhisattvas cultivate these six perfections?" The Buddha replied:

They should cultivate them by five kinds of yoga practice. First is intense devotion to the subtle, wondrous teachings for bodhisattvas which deal with the *pāramitās*. Second is diligent cultivation of glorious knowledge developed by learning, contemplating, and applying ten kinds of Dharma practice. Third is preserving the *bodhi-chitta* intent in all situations. Fourth is associating with a guru. Fifth is constantly working to cultivate good qualities."¹⁶

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The ten Dharma practices mentioned condense all the various approaches to practising and engaging in the sacred Dharma. Although this is referring to Mahāyāna doctrines, texts and practices, all ten are applicable to theosophical doctrines, texts, and practices. Theosophy can be found in the altruistic or esoteric aspect of any religion. What are these ten essential practices?

They are (1) transcribing the words that form the basis of the sacred Dharma; (2) giving generously to the spread and translation of the teachings; (3) giving to those who teach it; (4) listening to the words of the Dharma; (5) studying Dharma texts; (6) memorizing the words that express the Dharma; (7) explaining their meaning to others; (8) chanting from memory; (9) taking the meaning to heart; and (10) meditating on this meaning single-pointedly and in the correct manner. It is taught that these ten Dharma activities condense all activities that relate to the sacred Dharma and that each one of the ten entails an immeasurable amount of good karma.¹⁷

There are literally volumes of teachings on the *pāramitās* in the bodhisattva collection. So here is one more source on the three kinds of each of the six major perfections:

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara asked the Buddha, “How many different kinds of each of the six perfections are there?” The Buddha replied:

There are three kinds. The three kinds of Giving are giving of teaching, giving of goods, and giving of fearlessness.

The three kinds of Discipline are the discipline of increasingly giving up what is not good, the discipline of increasingly developing what is good, and the discipline of increasingly benefiting sentient beings.

The three kinds of Forbearance are the forbearance of bearing injury, the forbearance of serenity in suffering, and the forbearance of truthful observation of realities.

The three kinds of Diligence are diligence as armour, diligence of concerted effort to increasingly develop good qualities, and diligence of concentrated effort to help sentient beings.

The three kinds of Meditation are meditation in a state of bliss without discriminating thought, still and silent, extremely tranquil and impeccable, thus curing the pains of afflictions; meditation that brings forth virtuous qualities and powers; and meditation that brings forth benefit for sentient beings.

The three kinds of Insight are insight focused on conventional worldly truth, insight focused on ultimate truth, and focused on benefiting sentient beings.¹⁸

The “Ten Grounds Sutra” (chapter 26 in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*) is a fundamental source on the ten *pāramitās* and ten bodhisattva stages of progress toward Buddhahood. Here are a few lines on the higher four perfections:

A bodhisattva’s bringing forth of countless expressions of wisdom constitutes the *pāramitā* of skillful means. A bodhisattva’s aspiration to develop supreme wisdom

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constitutes the *pāramitā* of vows. A bodhisattva's ability to remain invulnerable to obstruction or ruination by any non-Buddhist followers or by any demons, constitutes the *pāramitā* of powers.

A bodhisattva's accomplishment of knowing the characteristic features of all dharmas in accordance with reality constitutes the *pāramitā* of knowledge. But what makes a perfection a perfection? Buddha tells us: The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara addressed the Buddha and said: "World-honored One, why are these perfections called perfections?"

The Buddha answered the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and said:

Good son, there are five reasons: they are unattached, disinterested, irreproachable, non-discriminative, and fruitful.

They are unattached because they are not attached to the opposites of the perfections. They are disinterested because the thought [that accompanies them] is not bound to the maturation or reward resulting from any of the perfections. They are irreproachable because such perfections have nothing in common with defiled states and are apart from implementing evil methods. They are non-discriminative because the specific descriptions of these perfections do not cling to their literal meaning. They are fruitful because such perfections, when practiced and accumulated, turn toward and seek the result of supreme awakening.

"World-honored One, what are the opposites of these perfections?"

Good son, you should understand that there are six such [opposite vices].

The first is looking out for one's own advantage in seeking happiness by hankering after pleasure, wealth, and power. The second is looking out for one's own advantage in indulging the pleasures of body, speech, and mind.

The third is looking out for one's own advantage in being impatient when humiliated by others.

The fourth is looking out for one's own advantage in not bestirring oneself to practice and in being attached to pleasure.

The fifth is looking out for one's own advantage in the hectic confusion and wild activity of the world.

The sixth is looking out for one's own advantage in the fabrication of what one sees, hears, understands, knows, and says.¹⁹

As G. de Purucker sums up:

We follow the age-old precepts of the Masters of wisdom and compassion, as they have been handed down to us from immemorial time: live nobly, think nobly, feel nobly, do your duty to all at all times and in all places, and by all men. In addition [to the Esoteric Section pledge] if you wish to undertake another aspect of the chela training, one which is the invariable practice in our own School, then follow the teaching of the ten *pāramitās* of Buddhism, which are always followed in the true schools of esoteric training, and which we attempt to follow. The *pāramitās* are ten, and the ten are for those who intend

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to devote all their life to that resigning of the lower self to the higher in service to the world. There, in these rules, is the whole path of achievement.²⁰ ✧

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8. Tsongkhapa, *Three Principles of the Path* (many versions).
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12. Based on *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, Snow Lion Publications, ch. 1.
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14. From *Avatamsaka Sutra*, chapter 18 comments.
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What is Yoga?

TRÂN-THI-KIM-DIÊU

Preliminary

Every human being has the *duty* to realize his divine nature and has the *right* to walk his own way towards the Divine. The way itself is no different from yoga, or religion — the reunification of self with Oneself or the Divine. The need for practising yoga, and prior to this, the pondering over the issue of human nature and destiny is a testimony of the maturation of the soul. The feeling of something lacking despite occupations, the dissatisfaction incurred by these, together with moments of unhappiness, prove that knowing intellectually becomes insufficient at a certain moment.

Practising yoga actually does not necessarily mean going to one of the numerous yoga schools. Who can do so nowadays? And would it be wise at all to do so? The exposition of the six great philosophies (*shad-darśana-s*) together with the explanations on the various kinds of yogas — from the beginners' to the royal kind — will not be of any help if they remain on the level of theory, because, to refer to Nāgārjuna, one of the greatest minds, all intellection without

Self-realization amounts to nothing. In the Iron age (*kali-yuga*) time is no longer for speculation. It is time for realization.

What yoga can be

Inspiration can come from many sources to be used as ingredients for one's own spiritual growth, provided one ponders over them rightly and applies them appropriately through one's life, like an experiment. Along the same lines, yoga can be at the same time or successively — but unavoidably — all of these following types: skill in action, annihilation of modifications of the mind, purification, comprehensive study of self, self-surrender to the Divine, and so on. Each one of these is true and valuable; each defines a form of yoga.

Skill in action is the characteristic of karma yoga. Annihilation of mental modifications is the end of rāja yoga. The latter culminates with samādhi, a state in which the function of the mind cannot possibly be described. Purification, comprehensive study of self, and self-surrender to the Divine are the cornerstones of yoga. H. P. Blavatsky used to say that studying

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occultism — through theosophical literature such as *The Secret Doctrine* — is jñāna yoga. No doubt, this way is also a valuable and long way like the other ones. Bhakti yoga seems to be the fittest for devotional disciples. As highly inspiring as Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* are — on which Dr I. K. Taimni's commentaries enchant all students' minds — Narada's *Bhakti Sutras* bring in the element of unconditional love-devotion from the aspirant towards the Divine, from the pupil towards the Great Ones who teach out of the Truth they possess. One often reads that the way of devotion is the shortest. One may assume the reason: perhaps it resembles a shortcut through the maze of existence.

Yet common to all yogas, the sine qua non seems to be “purity of motivation”. Indeed, when Lord Krishna, as related in the *Bhagavadgītā*, amidst the battle of Kurukshetra (the battle between good and evil) discloses to Arjuna the secret nature of action, “Yoga is skill in action”, this advice is meant *only* for Arjuna. It would be unthinkable that Krishna would advise the same to — let us say — Karna, the ambitious (and outcast because of ignorance of his origin), or to Śakuni, the cheater in gambling. The reason is quite obvious: Arjuna stands for the disciple striving for his realization and asking for instruction, whilst Karna is still ruled by the lower nature, seeking success in action for his own sake and driven by vanity and anger; Śakuni, on the other hand, does not have the right motivation and the right understanding of the true

nature of Mahā-Lilā — the divine game; he does not gamble, he cheats.

Let us, all the same, imagine Krishna saying “Yoga is skill in action” to Karna. The latter would say he does not need such advice, he has the skill already. But his skill serves only his ambition. The same applies to Śakuni; he also has skill: he wins every game over Yudhishtira, the king to be. But Śakuni's skill serves a wrong cause.

For the many Karnas and Śakunis on earth, yoga must be first “related to something that purifies the skill and transcends the motivation”. Krishna's advice works for the whole of humanity only when the recipient has already gone through the preliminaries. Therefore yoga is skill in action only when the preliminary work has been done.

Purifying motivation seems to be the first step of preliminary work. Learning intelligence in thinking is the second. This work is so essential that in several civilizations different spiritual teachers have repeatedly emphasized it. Most recently known to us, Alcyone (J. Krishna-murti) in *At the Feet of the Master* reminds us of the need for wholeheartedness in all action and the essential role of discrimination. He considers wholeheartedness as a selfless state of mind, which is also love-compassion. He puts at the same level the learning and applying of intelligence and discrimination, which is the first and last step of spiritual development. Discrimination cuts and carves the human diamond-soul to make it a god.

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Remarkable is the order of the content of this little book, pointing to an excellent way of teaching. Indeed, the part dealing with right conduct (*shatsampatti*) — which is just a chapter in the *Vivekachudāmani* — is placed between discrimination (*viveka*, the first and last step) and love (*mumukshatva*, the qualification). This means that the beginning and the end of the journey are displayed before teaching the behaviour — that is, how to live ethically, how to journey rightly through the cycle of human experience. Then finally the warning comes, that all moral practices would be of no value without love.

One may say that yoga is altogether purity of motivation, intelligence in thinking, and skill in action. *And perhaps, furthermore*, it is conscious harmonization of all aspects of a human being so that eventually all of them operate under one will, that of the Divine. On a larger scale, this implies complete and perfect reflection of the Divine on the lower planes of manifestation. But then what is the Divine?

A tentative step further

Theosophy teaches that the Divine is at the same time the primeval source from which all beings originate and the ultimate goal to which all beings are meant to return. It is also the inexorable end of the universal evolutionary journey. Without using technical terminology, one can identify the Divine with the ultimate Reality. Reading through most theosophical literature, one may observe that

the term “Divine” is used whenever a sense of devotion is implied, and the term “Reality” is used when pure Reason or Intellect (or the higher *manas*) is involved. An aspirant in bhakti yoga would prefer to refer to the Ultimate as “Divine” instead of “Reality”, whilst an aspirant of raja yoga would do the reverse. It is easily understandable that science does not use the term “Divine”, but rather tentatively touches the concept of reality.

Science is the relatively recent set of methodologies investigating the physical world in order to know its mechanism, its structure, and its nature. It is recent indeed, compared to the geological scale of time. In the late 20th century, science, supposedly acting as our great “ally”, leads the mind to wider concepts of matter, space, time and consciousness. “The crest wave of the human intellect” is wondering about the borders of true science and spirituality, daring to take the risk of being on neither one side nor the other. Doing so it makes use — with or without knowing it — the hints given by the highly evolved teachers, the Adepts of Occultism. Those Adepts — according to their own words — have at the risk of their lives dived into the deep ocean of consciousness to bring to the surface pearls of Truth (*The Mahatma Letters*, 9). It is as if the Adepts left the door of insight half open by mentioning the possibility of further knowledge on matter, space, time and consciousness, then science tentatively gives a push to widen the entrance, and all the rest is to be investigated and accomplished by each

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human individual. Thus as the door of insight is opened more widely, it consequently eases the passages for others to come.

Each human being is a world of his or her own. This world is composed of the inner and the outer. Both are included and interpenetrated, to put it simply, by space. Less evolved humans tend to separate the inner from the outer world, and live with this dichotomy, either permanently or at times. The most evolved ones, the realized mystics, live simultaneously in the two worlds, sublimated into one, and identified with space. The *here and now*, most degraded by the hedonistic trend nowadays, is in fact the ultimate condition of space, where there is no time, but just duration.

The incursions of space in the human individual's consciousness provide moments of emptiness, where time is transcended as well as other conditions of living. It dissolves the personal ego for a fraction of time and brings in a new insight into consciousness and the brain. This may occur during an intense state of appropriate prayer — or right concentration — when the whole “stream” of the mind-substance focuses itself in a single direction, that is a deeper, wider, and higher (all three terms are equivalent) level of its own environment and structure, and eventually reaches the ultimate most refined state of its substance — space.

One point needs to be clarified: space as defined by science is not the space we are trying to convey here. For science,

space is this which contains all the universes, the theatre of all cosmic phenomena; it is outer objective space. Space in our sharing is that which pervades all and includes the outer objective world as well as the inner subjective one. Every level of consciousness has its own reality; the ultimate level, the ultimate Reality, must have something to do with space. The state of consciousness in *samādhi*, supposedly the direct experience of that Reality, also must have consequently something to do with space.

What is space then?

Space was, is, and will be. As the Proem of the *Two Books of the Stanzas of Dzyan* defines it, it is *that* which remains when all will be dissolved. Questioned about what will remain at the end of a great cycle of manifestation or *manvantara*, Plato — as reported in the conclusion of the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine* — answered: goodness. Theosophical literature sometimes identifies space with *ākāśa*. The latter is the ultimate cosmic substance in Vedantic philosophy, the substratum of sound. It is called elsewhere the *universal solvent* and *anima mundi* (world soul). The Advaita Vedānta system defines it as *mulaprakṛti*, the root-matter, Purusha veiled by *māyā*. In Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching, it is called *alaya*, the primeval, basic and ultimate stratum of consciousness. And the Nepalese esoteric Buddhists in their precincts name it *svabhavat*, the essential quality of the root-matter *as such*, meaning the immutable essence of

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root-matter, in its eternal motion. *That which is IS Reality*. Space is then both the substratum and the essence behind it, or Reality.

The term *svabhavat* is composed of three parts *su, sva, bhava*; *su*, meaning the good, perfect, beautiful, *sva* the quality of something as it is, and *bhava* the quality of being. The immutable essence of the root-matter is *not only* in eternal motion, it is *also* perfect and good. This can be related to the Buddhist qualification of *karuna*, love-compassion that characterizes the level of *alaya*, the ultimate stratum of consciousness pervading all; which is to say that at the beginning and the end of manifestation, love-compassion dwells at the root of its foundation, and that this love characterizes Reality.

Consequently and consistently any intimation to Reality awakens consciousness to love-compassion. Likewise, when the defensive limits of the personal ego dissolve themselves in the universal solvent, love-compassion appears in emptiness of the ego and testifies for the sense of Reality. Since space or Reality — where consciousness is rooted — is eternal, living with the conscious presence of space is to live in the eternal. *Yoga is to live with a growing sense of Reality*.

Awareness of the substratum that sustains all things

Living with a growing sense of Reality puts everything on its own relative level. Whilst dealing with daily occupations, the mind keeps in its background what is

essential-vital contrasting to what is only *important-useful* to be accomplished in the outer world.

Measured with the Unity that is space, all things will appear worthless because of their impermanence. None of them any longer can have a glamour on the aspirant-disciple's mind: wealth, sensuality, and above all the sense of power. Wealth and sensuality belong to the physical and astral planes. They are less subtle than the sense of power, which belongs to the mind. The mind — by its power — can master the desire for wealth and sensuality, but not the desire for power, because the lower mind, this earthy part of *manas*, invested in the personal ego, draws its power from a higher power and makes use of it by derivation. Just like fire cannot extinguish fire, the mind cannot have mastery over the sense of power.

Nonetheless, the lower mind can get out of its own labyrinth by an act of refusal from (or denial of) identification with a lower plane. It is an act of integration which sends the mind forth towards the principle of discrimination (*buddhi*). The lower mind lets itself go, and doing so constantly it allows at times incursion of space. In fact, this action of letting go can only be done either by love or by will — but not by reason. It comes from the strength of will, of *ātmā*, the highest spiritual principle in an individual. Emptiness occurs when the ego vanishes: emptiness of limits, realization of the illusion of names, shapes and forms. That emptiness is but con-

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scious presence. *Awareness of the substratum that sustains all things is part of realization.*

In that flow of consciousness within consciousness, all questions are reabsorbed and washed away. Yet, this state also follows the rhythm of appearance, development and end. When it ends, essential-vital questions that were in the background of the mind appear naturally again. The questioning will continue, enriched with new insights but will not

have any final satisfactory answer; this questioning is also part of realization. The alternation of realization and questioning will help to further expand the boundaries of mysteries. One after another they will be unveiled. And yet there will be always another veil behind and beyond, until the last one, the ultimate Mystery, the surpassing of which would make the Diamond-Soul a Dhyān-Chohan, or a Buddha. Yoga at that level may be called the *yoga of theosophy*. ✧

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I feel that no one can lead another to truth, because truth is infinite; it is a pathless land, and no one can tell you how to find it. No one can teach you to be an artist; another can only give you the brushes and canvas and show you the colours to use.

J. Krishnamurti

Beyond Illusion

SONAL MURALI

IF there is one common thing that all of us desire it is wishing for peace and harmony — a wholesomeness to our existence — because increasingly the world has stopped making sense to many. However, any attempt at wholesomeness is being continually nullified and sabotaged by the sense of individuality that is on the rise and importance given to it today. That results in a deep sense of separateness, separateness creates divisions, divisions create in turn insecurity — due to insecurity there is an urge to be identified with dogmas, ideologies, groups, and so on. And this is the antithesis of wholesomeness since there is a tendency to look outside for solutions.

The interaction between the self and the physical reality comprises what we call life — the interaction between the inner and the outer, our existence in Existence itself — so we need to understand what is happening there if we wish to know why this wholesomeness is eluding us. The world that we perceive seems very real to us, actually the only reality that we know of. The sunrise, the fragrance of flowers, emotions, this

theatre, the humidity, the lunch that I ate, all of us sitting here, it is all very real and it is corroborated by the fact that everyone here too perceives it similarly.

As we go through our day-to-day experiences, the fundamental questions arise. Is there a purpose to existence? Is there a purpose to my existence? Is the world out there somewhere resting on something and we are looking at it from the space above with ourselves as minuscule beings who want to feel significant, or is the entire world only a subjective projection of my brain? Is my reality different than the reality of others or is there a reality that is unchangeable?

Why is consciousness subjective? After a traumatic event, we even use the expression, “my entire world was shattered”. It is as if for a very brief moment realizing that the premise on which the world was built in my inner reality, came crashing down.

What is real for us is what we feel, what we see, what we experience. We perceive the world through the window of senses. But the catch is that the window here is transparent, and we are not aware

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of the window being there. We are not aware of the medium. However, we soon realize that the physical reality is not the same for everyone, as it is not only through the window of the senses that we perceive the world, but also through our emotions, our moods, languages, knowledge, cultures, science, through time — identifying either with past or future.

Slowly we realize that we see the world only through our own subjective reality. So then, is our collective perception of the world just an aggregate of subjective realities? That seems so, because a scientist or an artist born at the wrong time in the wrong place can be burnt at the stake or not understood for decades till the collective perception of the world evolves. So we are standing on rather shaky ground since our entire belief systems and actions are based on conclusions derived from an understanding of the world that seems to be changing and does not have any fundamental solidity. Yet on the other hand, the world is very real and it is there for me every morning when I wake up. And it is the same world that I went to sleep in. My family and friends also wake up to the same reality. We live our conscious lives in a single reality.

Neuroscience demonstrates that the content of our conscious experience is not only an internal construct but also an extremely selective way of representing information. Moreover, it is only an infinitesimal fraction of what actually exists out there. To make matters worse, all theological doctrines keep man at the

centre of the entire scheme of things, and not just at the centre but at the highest pinnacle, at the apex.

There is an inherent limitation in our sensory organs since they evolved for reasons of survival and not to understand reality in all its completeness which is unfathomable. So our brains generate a world-simulation in our minds which is only an image. Then they generate an inner image of ourselves. This image includes our body, psychological states, our relationships, and so on. This internal image has a cohesiveness about it and it is the “self” which has a continuity and a thread. And this self-model is placed within the world-model which creates a centre. And it is this centre that we call the “self”. So our entire conscious lives are lived in this ego tunnel. We are not in direct contact either with the outside reality or with ourselves.

Some people have interpreted the “Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle” as cohesiveness rooted at the subatomic level. At that level we are a completely different person than we were a few years ago. The memories that are stored at the cell level get passed on to the next generation. So we can be a completely different person tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. But alas, we are not! Because we are constantly writing a script for the next generation of cells for our body and mind matrix to work out.

We seem to be living in a simulated world created by us — “virtual self in a virtual reality”. If a painter is painting a landscape then he cannot be in the

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painting. So if he *is* in the painting then some other painter must be painting. And if you want that second painter in the painting then it has to show a painter painting the landscape that the second painter is painting. And it can go on like this ad infinitum.

Metaphysics understands reality as “the world without spectators”, or equally one-sided by constructivism as “the world of spectators”. Both are two sides of the same coin and actually the way duality operates.

Recalling here Plato’s oft-quoted Allegory of the Cave where shadows dancing on the wall are perceived as the reality, the question here would be: what is real and what are the shadows? Are the objects behind the people, the people themselves, and/or the cave itself the shadows? Does the object exist because of the spectator?

And this is how the ancient wisdom has described Māyā. The entire perception of the world is only representational. As J. Krishnamurti has said, “the word is not the thing”.

The world *about* which we think is not identical with the world *in* which we think. It is this duality that seems to be the crux of the problem. Reality perceived through the tunnel of the Ego seems to be an illusion. All mystics who have experienced say this: it is stated in *The Cloud of Unknowing* that you cannot know God with words or ideas. Put everything you know under the “cloud of forgetting”. So be careful you do not pray in your imagination.

Take either the top-down approach of science and metaphysics or the bottom-up approach of neuroscience and constructivism, all are in agreement that the world is not what it appears to be. Even the certainty of matter at the gross level is mysterious. Both the momentum as well as the position of an electron cannot be determined theoretically even. When we try to measure the momentum of an electron, it would have changed its position in unpredictable ways. The famous physicist Fritjof Capra says, “We cannot say that an atomic particle exists at a certain place nor can we say it does not exist.” And this corresponds with what wise men across all traditions have experienced. St Augustine says:

I beheld these others beneath Thee, and saw that they neither altogether are, nor altogether are not. An existence they have, because they are from Thee; and yet no existence, because they are not what Thou art. For only that really is that remains unchangeably. . . .

In the beautiful words of the German poet Rilke:

We behold creation’s face as though
reflected in a mirror
misted with our breath.
Sometimes a speechless beast
lifts its docile head
and looks right through us.
This is destiny: to be opposites,
always and only to face
one another and nothing else.

Reality is like a mantle of foam that the

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ocean clothes itself with, ever renewed and never the same.

This is also how Shankaracharya has described Māyā. Moreover it is to be inferred by one of clear intellect only from the effects it produces. And what is the effect that Māyā produces? Attachments, aversions, dreams, fears, and thoughts; all memories, cognitions, and mental modifications — all grounded in Māyā. The melancholy of Arjuna in *Mahābhārata* is a classic example of the effect of Māyā. He lost his discriminating wisdom. And how? From the idea that “I am theirs and they are mine”, created by affection and attachment, which in turn created sorrow and delusion, he lost his *viveka*, his discriminating wisdom. Māyā operates by deception (*kapat*). *The Voice of the Silence* asks us to mistrust fancy’s false suggestions. It says, “Mistrust thy senses, they are false. . . . look inward.”

According to Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, it is not even easy to state at what time we exist because there is no single, absolute simultaneity; there is no simple now in which all events which are occurring right “now” can be measured. Time itself is only a kind of illusion of “moving” beings. And yet time is very real to us.

Quantum physics reveals why the hidden, energetic substratum of “matter” is so difficult to pin down. In a quantum world, the atom does not have a locality until it is observed. The observer is inextricably interwoven with the observed, populating many “worlds within worlds”.

So the world in this sense seems most

strange, inexplicable and inscrutable. And yet there is a kind of general broad view of the world, the environment, the societies that exist which we feel is common to all of us. But is it so? Is the world an organic whole or is it made up of “worlds within worlds”?

Take for example this Adyar Theatre. There is an event and there are many people here, with different expectations, preferences, group dynamics, in different states of mind and moods, creating their own world. There are also the people who are working behind the scenes, watering the plants, putting chairs in their places, managing the sound systems. There are also innumerable insects here. There must also be invisible bacteria. At the subatomic level, activities such as cell division and hormonal fluctuations, are taking place. How does my world overlap with the world of the millipede on the leaf here? Is the millipede here aware of this event, and whether we are excited or happy or reflective? But they are all components to this event. And the same applies to other worlds existing in parallel in different dimensions that we are not aware of. Are we connected at some level, or are these “worlds within worlds” and still part of one cohesive world — one organic whole? And how limited our perception of this world is through our field of senses! And the perception becomes extremely limited and narrow if I were having a headache or a toothache right now.

But we do not realize this since we have corresponding representational

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corroboration from other people populating the earth. And yet for each person the experience is only through his or her ego tunnel, the inner landscape that through consciousness is blending it all and giving it a cohesiveness, a centre which we call “self”. An eddy created in the stream of consciousness, as Krishna-murti would say. The small whirlpool is our login into the collective delusion. And the script is being written by ourselves.

What is then beyond illusion? Madame Blavatsky introduces the concept of “progressive awakenings”. As we rise in the scale of development we perceive that during the stages through which we have passed we have mistaken shadows for realities. And with the upward progress of the Ego a series of progressive awakenings take place, each advance brings with it the idea that now, at last, we have reached “reality”. But only when we shall have reached the absolute Consciousness, and blended our own with it, shall we be free from the delusions produced by Māyā [illusion].

Krishnamurti called it “stepping out of the stream of consciousness”. He also asks what the original ground from which all things rise is. Meditation is to come upon that ground which is the origin of all things and which is free from time. And blessed is he who finds it, for then we would have found Unity and everlasting Peace. We would be in the world but not of it. The “self” that was constantly in the throes of Māyā, a perceived separation, would operate from compassion and empathy.

The word “Māyā” is derived from *ma*, “to measure” or “by which is measured”, and is an illusive projection of the world by which the immeasurable appears as if measured. Name and forms are superimposed upon Brahman. As long as one sees the duality, one is dwelling in the realm of ignorance. “Shun ignorance” and likewise “shun illusion”, we are told. “Avert thy face from worldly deceptions; mistrust thy senses — they are false.”

Thomas Metzinger says in his book *The Ego Tunnel* that probably we are one of Nature’s best inventions. We are a conscious model of the organism as a whole that is activated by the brain. As a biological organism, a human being can consciously conceive of itself (and others) as a whole and can interact with its internal world as well as with the external environment in an intelligent manner. We are unique in the sense that we can catch ourselves in the act of knowing.

The real does not die, the unreal never lived. Everything known is the shadow of reality and once we agree to be guided from within, life becomes a journey into the unknown. The same thing is told by the Christian mystic, “Crush all knowledge and experience of all forms of created things, and of yourself above all”.

The real does not die and the unreal never lived. We have to let go of our attachment to the unreal and the real will swiftly and smoothly usher in. We are the source and heart of all. We need not get at it, for we are it.

The choice of change lies within us, from moment to moment. ✧

What the Modern Theosophical Society is Not

H. P. BLAVATSKY

ENQUIRER. Your teachings, then, are not a revival of Buddhism, nor are they entirely copied from the Neoplatonic Theosophy?

THEOSOPHIST. They are not. But to these questions I cannot give you a better answer than by quoting from a paper read on “Theosophy” by Dr J. D. Buck, FTS, before the last Theosophical Convention, in Chicago (April 1889). No living theosophist has better expressed and understood the real essence of Theosophy than our honoured friend Dr Buck:

The Theosophical Society was organized for the purpose of promulgating the Theosophical teachings, and for the promotion of the Theosophic life. The present Theosophical Society is not the first of its kind. I have a volume entitled: “Theosophical Transactions of the Philadelphian Society”, published in London in 1697; and another with the following title: “Introduction to Theosophy, or the Science of the Mystery of Christ; that is, of Deity, Nature, and Creature, embracing the philosophy of all the working powers of life, magical and spiritual, and forming a practical guide

to the sublimest purity, sanctity, and evangelical perfection; also to the attainment of divine vision, and the holy angelic arts, potencies, and other prerogatives of the regeneration”, published in London in 1855. The following is the dedication of this volume:

To the students of Universities, Colleges, and schools of Christendom; To Professors of Metaphysical, Mechanical, and Natural Science in all its forms; To men and women of Education generally, of fundamental orthodox faith; To Deists, Arians, Unitarians, Swedenborgians, and other defective and ungrounded creeds, rationalists, and sceptics of every kind; To just-minded and enlightened Mohammedans, Jews, and oriental Patriarch-religionists; but especially to the gospel minister and missionary, whether to the barbaric or intellectual peoples, this introduction to Theosophy, or the science of the ground and mystery of all things, is most humbly and affectionately dedicated.”

In the following year (1856) another volume was issued, royal octavo, of 600 pages, diamond type, of “Theosophical

Extract from *The Key to Theosophy*, Theosophy Company (India), p. 16–21.

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Miscellanies". Of the last-named work 500 copies only were issued, for gratuitous distribution to libraries and universities. These earlier movements, of which there were many, originated within the Church, with persons of great piety and earnestness, and of unblemished character; and all of these writings were in orthodox form, using the Christian expressions, and, like the writings of the eminent churchman William Law, would only be distinguished by the ordinary reader for their great earnestness and piety. These were one and all but attempts to derive and explain the deeper meanings and original import of the Christian Scriptures, and to illustrate and unfold the Theosophic life. These works were soon forgotten, and are now generally unknown. They sought to reform the clergy and revive genuine piety, and were never welcomed. That one word, "heresy", was sufficient to bury them in the limbo of all such utopias.

At the time of the Reformation John Reuchlin made a similar attempt with the same result, though he was the intimate and trusted friend of Luther. Orthodoxy never desired to be informed and enlightened. These reformers were informed, as was Paul by Festus, that too much learning had made them mad, and that it would be dangerous to go farther. Passing by the verbiage, which was partly a matter of habit and education with these writers, and partly due to religious restraint through secular power, and coming to the core of the matter, these writings were Theosophical in the strictest sense, and

pertain solely to man's knowledge of his own nature and the higher life of the soul.

The present Theosophical movement has sometimes been declared to be an attempt to convert Christendom to Buddhism, which means simply that the word "heresy" has lost its terrors and relinquished its power. Individuals in every age have more or less clearly apprehended the Theosophical teachings and wrought them into the fabric of their lives. These teachings belong exclusively to no religion, and are confined to no society or time. They are the birthright of every human soul. Such a thing as orthodoxy must be wrought out by each individual according to his nature and his needs, and according to his varying experience. This may explain why those who have imagined Theosophy to be a new religion have hunted in vain for its creed and its ritual. Its creed is loyalty to Truth, and its ritual, "To honour every truth by use".

How little this principle of Universal Brotherhood is understood by the masses of humankind, how seldom its transcendent importance is recognized, may be seen in the diversity of opinion and fictitious interpretations regarding the Theosophical Society. This Society was organized on this one principle, the essential Brotherhood of Humanity, as herein briefly outlined and imperfectly set forth. It has been assailed as Buddhistic and anti-Christian, as though it could be both these together, when both Buddhism and Christianity, as set forth by their inspired founders, make brotherhood the one essential of teaching and of life.

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Theosophy has been also regarded as something new under the sun, or at best as old mysticism masquerading under a new name. While it is true that many societies founded upon, and united to support, the principles of altruism, or essential brotherhood, have borne various names, it is also true that many have also been called theosophic, and with principles and aims as the present society bearing that name. With these societies, one and all, the essential teaching has been the same, and all else has been incidental, though this does not obviate the fact that many persons are attracted to the incidentals who overlook or ignore the essentials.

No better or more explicit answer — by a man who is one of our most esteemed and earnest Theosophists — could be given to your questions.

ENQUIRER. Which system do you prefer or follow, in that case, besides Buddhistic ethics?

THEOSOPHIST. None, and all. We hold to no religion, as to no philosophy in particular: we cull the good we find in each. But here, again, it must be stated that, like all other ancient systems, Theosophy is divided into exoteric and esoteric Sections.

ENQUIRER. What is the difference?

THEOSOPHIST. The members of the Theosophical Society at large are free to profess whatever religion or philosophy they like, or none if they so prefer, provided they are in sympathy with, and ready to carry out one or more of the three objects of the Association. The

Society is a philanthropic and scientific body for the propagation of the idea of brotherhood on *practical* instead of *theoretical* lines. The Fellows may be Christians or Muslims, Jews or Parsi, Buddhists or Brahmins, Spiritualists or Materialists, it does not matter; but every member must be either a philanthropist, or a scholar, a searcher into Aryan and other old literature, or a psychic student. In short, he has to help, if he can, in the carrying out of at least one of the objects of the programme. Otherwise he has no reason for becoming a “Fellow”. Such are the majority of the exoteric Society. . . . These may, or may not, become Theosophists de facto. Members they are, by virtue of their having joined the Society; but the latter cannot make a Theosophist of one who has no sense for the *divine* fitness of things, or of him who understands Theosophy in his own — if the expression may be used — sectarian and egotistic way. . . . Theosophist is, who Theosophy does.

ENQUIRER. This applies to lay members, as I understand. And what of those who pursue the esoteric study of Theosophy; are they the real Theosophists?

THEOSOPHIST. Not necessarily, until they have proven themselves to be such. They have entered the inner group and pledged themselves to carry out, as strictly as they can, the rules of the occult body. This is a difficult undertaking, as the foremost rule of all is the entire renunciation of one’s personality — that is, a pledged member has to become a thorough altruist, never to think of

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himself, and to forget his own vanity and pride in the thought of the good of his fellow-creatures, besides that of his fellow-brothers in the esoteric circle. He has to live, if the esoteric instructions shall profit him, a life of abstinence in everything, of self-denial and strict morality, doing his duty by all men. The few real Theosophists in the TS are among these members. This does not imply that outside of the TS and the inner circle, there are no Theosophists; for there are, and more than people know of; certainly far more than are found

among the ordinary members of the TS.

ENQUIRER. Then what is the good of joining the Society in that case? Where is the incentive?

THEOSOPHIST. None, except the advantage of getting esoteric instructions, the genuine teachings of the Esoteric Philosophy, and deriving much help from mutual aid and sympathy. Union is strength and harmony, and well-regulated simultaneous efforts produce wonders. This has been the secret of all associations and communities since humankind existed. ✧

HPB belonged to the race of prophets and seers far ahead of their time, who speak a language that is fully intelligible only to the ear of intuition. In writing about the future of the Society in *The Key to Theosophy* she spelt out what qualities members must possess to lead the Society in the right direction after the death of the Founders. Selflessness, earnestness, devotion, and knowledge, which she mentions, are familiar words, whose meaning is not hard to understand, although practice is far from easy. Wisdom, which is on the list, has a subtler and deeper connotation which must be discovered by a watchful and reflective way of life.

Radha Burnier
Living Truth

Service: The Inner and Outer Paths

ANANYA SRI RAM RAJAN

WHEN we are asked to speak or to write an article, there are times when we look for inspiration to help us along. While I had the basic ideas for this talk, I did not really have a way to put the whole thing into words. Ironically, inspiration came through rather sad news. As I was writing out a few ideas, a friend messaged me that he had been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer and was given six to ten months to live. We messaged back and forth sharing thoughts about his impending death, how our friendship was special to one another, and we agreed to talk the following week. I went back to working on this talk, but realized I felt uncomfortable and, in that discomfort, I wanted a distraction of some kind.

Often when we are faced with difficult or unpleasant news, we want to move away from the feeling it causes within us. But in the end, the only place we can be is in the present moment with whatever it is we are feeling. There is nowhere to go. We must practice what we have learned in our spiritual work, so we can serve the outer world in the best possible way.

For example, to be able to sit with a

friend who is dying and be fully present with that person, we must go within, we must go back to the Source to connect with That which “lives in us and breathes in us and walks through life with us however barren the journey may be”, as Sister Joan Chittister states. It is only when we connect with the divine intelligence that we are part of, that we can explore the issues we might be unwilling to face, such as the suffering a dying friend may be feeling which, in turn, leads us to think about our own mortality. Whether we like it or not, all of us are going to die at some time. Most of us do not like the idea, so we ignore it. Or we make light of the situation and try to brush over what is in front of us. But to truly serve another, we must face our own fears and discomfort, so we are not feeling a desire to be elsewhere, or have the desire to put distance between ourselves and the other we are serving. What we are feeling inside will reflect in our outer actions.

As the title of this talk relates, we can consider that there are two paths to service: that which lies within and that which lies, in the manifested world. And as

Mrs Ananya Sri Ram Rajan is the editor of the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) in America publications. Talk delivered at the International Convention, Adyar, on 3 January 2017.

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mentioned through the example given, we can see why the work within ourselves is important if we are going to serve others. However, there is also perhaps a more profound aspect to our need to connect to that living, breathing divinity that comes from the One and is found in all beings, including ourselves. We are the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), and it is Theosophy that makes the difference in how we serve.

Within the Theosophical Society (TS), our motto is “There is no religion higher than Truth.” It is that Truth, that Oneness, which we are all on a journey to discover in our own way. For some, their spiritual life is an everyday practice, while for others, it is a lukewarm event. We may feel discouraged in times of difficulty or struggle, and perhaps we may wonder if it makes any difference to the manifested world if we, in general, are kind and helpful to people.

In the TOS, if we are to be “a union of those who love, in the service of all that suffers”, we must serve the path within. We must serve the One. It is from the One that our ancient teachings have come. The teachings that have withstood the impermanence of humanity, the world that you and I and every individual on this planet have created. Despite our cruelty to one another, to the barbaric things the human mind can create, to the petty and inhuman actions we take against those who we feel are “lesser than” our own made-up individuality, the teachings remain. The One remains continuously pouring out its goodness to us, never asking for re-

cognition, never asking us to change our ways, never selecting only a few or a special population for its radiant vibrancy, but giving unconditionally to all beings, and never wavering in its outpouring — steady, calm, all giving, all knowing, all loving. The One continues. None of us would be here if that divine intelligence stopped. We, you and I, are proof that the One continues. The plants and animals that surround us are proof that the Truth exists. Even the cockroaches, snakes, and scorpions are proof that the One exists, for they too, hold the divine within them. One is all, all is one.

So the path within is to connect with the One and to understand that our service to the One, and its goodness, is imperative to our evolution as a humanity. When we are able to understand — at an experiential visceral depth — how the One, the Truth, is our greatest teacher, we begin to imbibe the qualities of that divine intelligence. We begin to serve that which speaks to us in the silence, brings light to us during a dark night of the soul, and gives us strength and uplifts us when we feel we cannot possibly go on. No longer do we take a lukewarm approach to our spiritual work. In reality, the One is not giving us anything, for we are part of the One, the Absolute and the Divine. In reality, we are just connecting with our true essence, to that which we have always been. We are letting the light of inner being outshine our ego, as it is our ego that separates us from the Real.

Deciphering the real from the unreal within ourselves has a strong impact on

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our actions in the outer world, the outer path. When we commit to serving the Truth, we commit to serving the highest good within ourselves and with every sentient being we come into contact. The evolution of every creature, no matter whether it is a microscopic organism or a blue whale, becomes our concern because we have no choice. The choice is no longer made by the human mind or ego, but by the impulse of the heart. There is a yearning in us that has only one desire: to stop the suffering of others by serving their greatest need.

Altruism is an interesting word. Auguste Comte coined the term as an antonym for the concept of egoism. The origin comes from the Latin word *alteri* which means “other people”. In other words, one no longer thinks about oneself, but about the benefit of others — sometimes to the cost of themselves. But in the context of this talk about our actions being derived from the Truth or the One, the word “altruism” takes on a more insightful meaning. It is All True. It is action that comes from the source of all goodness, all purity and all beneficence. To act in any other way is not altruistic, and altruism is key in the TOS.

In today’s world, serving the path within seems a lot easier than serving the path outside. As the saying goes, it is very easy to practice a spiritual life when sitting alone on a mountaintop. There is nothing to cause any discomfort other than the leg cramps we may get from sitting communing with God. But when we leave our meditation cushion or our mountaintop,

how do we respond to those who are starving, who are being tortured, who are marginalized by mainstream society because they live a different lifestyle, practice a different religion, or have four feet instead of two? Our compassion and altruism should not extend just to people, or just to animals, or just to plants. Can we see the One in All?

The suffering that exists around us must be looked at very carefully. We must learn to be present with it, despite the discomfort it causes us. The problems around us are many. It can be overwhelming and cause an uneasiness because we do not want to believe that we are responsible for the atrocities that take place in the world.

We like being part of the One when things are beautiful and loving, but distance ourselves from the darker parts of humanity. Many of us will defend our lifestyle and say that we buy cruelty-free products, live in a minimalistic fashion, have only one television or car, and so on. But defense also becomes a cushion, a mountaintop, which we use to protect ourselves from doing anything more. The minute we defend ourselves, we have stopped being present with the world around us. A small example of this is when someone says something to us that causes offense. Instead of listening to what the person is saying, we are caught up in our reaction to what they are saying and how rude and wrong they are. On a greater scale, we may find ourselves caught up in our reactions to the sufferings in the world, unable to bear

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witness to that which lies in front of us.

As theosophists, we cannot afford to do this. Without seeming to proselytize, we have chosen this life. It is no coincidence that Theosophy has become part of our lives. It does not matter whether one is part of the Adyar group, the ULT, Point Loma, or some theosophical group that is not affiliated with anyone. The core is Theosophy; the core is Truth. Whether we want to believe it or not, we chose this path long before any of us were given our names in this incarnation. There is no mistake that we are gathered here together for a reason. We have been given a gift to discover who we are at the heart of our being through the ancient wisdom teachings. And we must use those teachings as our tools so we may help lift humanity's heavy burden of karma.

The path within, if taken as an opportunity to decipher the real from the unreal within ourselves and eventually the world around us, can be trying but also rewarding. It is trying because it takes discipline. It is a matter of watching our thoughts, words, and actions constantly, of having a "constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the secret science depicts". It also takes patience because the change that happens within is slow and gradual. Nothing in Nature happens overnight, including our own spiritual growth. And despite our belief otherwise, we are not separate from Nature, but a part of her, a very small part.

One tenet required of every member of the TOS, no different than the TS, is

an open mind. Universality can only be achieved when we recognize our unity in diversity. We cannot say we are doing theosophical work only for a select population of people, species, or cause. No different than the One that lives in every being, we must have no reservation to the suffering. Interestingly, Nature can be our greatest teacher with this lesson if we allow it to speak to us. When we do, we will find that there is an underlying harmony to the diversity in Nature. Different trees, birds, animals, flowers, all exist and carry on despite their differences. And if watched closely, creatures do help one another. But as humans we seem to have a huge problem with this. We are the only species that is supposedly self-conscious — or conscious of an identity. If someone says something we do not agree with, dresses in a particular way, or lives a particular lifestyle, we have this impulse to state our view because we do not agree with it.

Two exercises we can practice in self-awareness are non-attachment and non-reaction. Too often we become fixed on our thoughts and opinions. We feel others should listen to us and do what we say because we think we know better. But if we understand the teachings of reincarnation and karma, we will discover that there are so many facets to an individual that play out in one life that to impose our will on another does not allow the potential of that person to unfold. It is better that we focus on our own reactions and ask why we feel we know better than to force our viewpoints on another. We must ask

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ourselves “what is it within me that is making me react this way?” The more we ask this question, the more we will discover how little we know of ourselves. Given this, how can we say we know what is better for another?

When we are able to let go of our attachments to events and things around us, the mind calms down. This is why non-attachment, or a letting go, and not reacting to things is important. When we stop feeling a need to control a person or situation, we make space for ourselves to connect with something deeper. It is as though the mind relaxes and the heart opens. Instead of feeling reactionary when someone says or does something contrary to ourselves, we may find an openness happening which allows us to see the person in a different light. Suddenly there is curiosity and a caring for what the other has to say. This is because we have stopped holding so tightly to what we believe. Instead of being rigid, we soften. When we soften, we are able to really communicate with another, plant, animal or person, and see them as they are, not as we want them to be. Communication is not just about what we verbally say. It is about *how* we say something, our body language, the tone of our voice, the tension or relaxation in our stance, and the energy we exude.

This is one of the reasons why meditation is stressed in spiritual practice.

Putting aside time for quiet reflection allows the mind to calm itself. This does not happen right away because the nature of the individual mind is to flit about. The more noise and commotion we surround ourselves with, the more difficult it is for the mind to settle. And when the mind is unsettled, our actions in the outside world are incomplete. There is a lack of wholeness to what we are doing because the energy from the connection to that something deeper is not there.

This makes a great difference when we take our service from within to the outside world. When the mind is calm, open, and receptive, we can directly serve the need of another without hesitation or reservation. The action comes directly from the heart, from love. And those we help know when we are present with them, and when we are not. When the action comes from deep love, the being we help is changed forever. Being completely present with another means we are not thinking about our own needs. Our whole being is with the other or the task that needs doing to help. Sometimes service is not just about the physical action of helping another. It may be that way for other organizations, but for those who serve from a theosophical background, it must be of a much deeper nature. There must be that impulse to help, because as N. Sri Ram says, “You cannot do other than help.” ✧

Regard every contact as an opportunity to help, yet know also that it is a means for self-purification.

N. Sri Ram
Thoughts for Aspirants, First Series

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