

## Freedom of Thought

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

## Freedom of the Society

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

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



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: A sculpture of the Buddha (the Enlightened One), having attained the highest degree of Wisdom, breaking through the bondage of personality and senses.

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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.

# Thoughts on the History and Influence of the TS

TIM BOYD

ON this occasion of the Theosophical Society's 142nd international Convention, it is good to look back and remember where we have come from. The Theosophical Society (TS) was founded in 1875 in New York City, although now we find its headquarters here in Adyar, Chennai, India. The TS flourished in New York for a time and it was in 1878 that the decision was made to move its fledgling operations to India.

At that time, this country was in a very different situation than it is now. It was when the British Raj and colonial powers were dominant. This was a very odd place for the TS — whose primary object is to form a brotherhood of humanity regardless of caste, race, religion, or any of those things which tend to divide us — to locate itself in a colonial situation.

Colonialism is a strange thing in that it requires superior and inferior people. The religions of India were viewed from the colonial perspective as not measuring up. So an education system was established to enforce a change in a basically more than 5,000-year-old religious structure. It is remarkable that it is in this setting that the Society flourished. In 1882 Adyar was determined to be the international

headquarters for this, at that time, young movement.

Most of you are aware of the three objects of the TS, which have formed the direction for our efforts during the lifetime of this organization. The first one being the focus on unity, oneness; in the language of the Objects: "To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity." It was in this setting that the deeply religious background of the Indian subcontinent was confirmed and continually affirmed by our founders. In the face of all opposition from the evangelical sorts of church influences, the beauty, purity, and profundity of those religions that have been rooted in this nation, were spoken to, defended, and explained in greater depths. This was the foundation.

It is fascinating that the Theosophical Society, founded in New York, in the United States, was only really able to spread into the world when it came to India; and spread it did. The global culture, as we know it today, has been profoundly influenced by this, always very small, body. The politics of India in particular, the growing contemporary movements of spirituality around the world, the educational systems, science,

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arts, have all found exemplary members of this organization, bringing forth these ideas and moving the global culture further and further ahead.

At the time of the TS's founding in 1875, one of the original founders, and also its first President, Col H. S. Olcott, gave an inaugural speech. One of the things that he said was: "In the future, when open-minded historians write about the history of the religious ideas of this time, the formation of this Theosophical Society will not be overlooked." Obviously that was something of a prediction, but one that, in our day and time, that future that he had spoken of, is actually the fact of the moment.

Not a day goes by today when there are not researchers looking to the archives of the TS, when there are not people getting in touch to speak about, to try to find and define that thread that runs from this initial effort towards a oneness through the changes that have occurred in the world around us.

Just to think in terms of a few of the prominent members whose names we are aware of, that have had this theosophical influence on the Society, in the world of Science we have one of the early members of the TS, Thomas Alva Edison, probably one of the most prolific inventors ever, who aligned himself with the thinking and breathing of this movement. Contemporarily there is Dr Rupert Sheldrake, who has done enormous things to move our thinking into the realm of the unseen, of consciousness as the primary force in all of the things that are influencing

human society and life as we know it.

In the arts there are countless people that we can point to; but the modern art movement in particular owes and recognizes a debt to this Theosophical movement, with such people as Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Paul Gauguin — all members of this organization. The early work on thought forms has come to be integrated into the very basis of the contemporary and modern art movement. These are things that we are very much aware of.

One of the profound, in a sense, by-products of the birth of this Theosophical movement and its taking root in India is nothing less than the movement that led to India's independence itself. It is a common fact of the history of this nation that the moving force in its bid for independence was the Indian National Congress. In 1884, immediately following the international Convention of the TS, seventeen members of this organization went on to meet and develop plans for Indian independence. They did it after the Convention because the TS is not a political body. The very next year, the Indian National Congress was founded, and one of its founders was none other than Mr A. O. Hume, a TS member.

The moving force behind the actual accomplishment of India's independence, of course, was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who as a lawyer-in-training in London was, in his own words, reconnected to the spirituality of his own country by being introduced to that seminal work of Indian spirituality, the *Bhagavad-*

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*gitā*. He was introduced to it by two members of the TS in London, and coincidentally, the version of the *Gitā* that he was exposed to was a poetic rendering of it, *The Song Celestial* by Edwin Arnold, who was also author of *The Light of Asia*, and a Theosophist. The small *Gitā* became his guidebook throughout the movement that led to the independence of India.

We would be remiss if mention was not made of Annie Besant in discussing the history of this now great nation and its independence. Annie Besant, who was to become the second president of the TS fourteen years later, moved from London to come to India in 1893. Her first speech at the Indian National Congress took place a year later, little knowing that in 1917 she would become the first woman president of that very same organization. She was not just someone who spoke about the value of and need for independence; she was a builder of institutions that would support an independent India far before independence took place.

There are educational institutions scattered across this land, founded by her: colleges, secondary schools, and specifically schools that were founded for women's education, as that was a focus for her. The Young Men's Indian Association was conceived as a gymnasium, a place where the future leaders of the independent Indian nation that she knew would arrive, would be trained, become capable, become versed in all the qualities, not just of intellect, but of character that would be required in this new coming future. The Home Rule Movement itself, the very first iteration within the Indian Independence Movement, that India should rule itself, was initiated, developed, and promoted by Annie Besant.

The Theosophical Society, in its beginning, had had these sorts of influences, and it is not a matter of pride, it is just a matter of fact. It is also expressive of the seminal quality of the TS, that the focus is, has been, and will continue to be on oneness, unity, and brotherhood. ✧

**The Real Theosophical Society is an indivisible unit, animated by an individual life! Its Soul is the love of truth, its vital principle is kindness, and it dwells in a world above the material, where no enemy can touch it. It depends for its manifestation on earth upon an appropriate vehicle, and the first condition necessary in that vehicle is that it shall be a *united whole*.**

*Applied Theosophy and other Essays*  
H. S. Olcott

# Tamil: The Glory of India — I

LOKESH CHANDRA

THE 19th century was moving away from traditional greatness and the New World of America was trying to seize life in a fresh mode and to build it beyond the old. Minds like R. W. Emerson (1803–82) were discovering “the famine of our churches”. He rallied together a group called “transcendentalists” to open up a unique American culture. Mind, not matter, was supreme, ideas were sovereign. Man was intimate with Nature, and his relation to the universe gave him a poetry and philosophy of insight and he was no longer a victim of “revelation”. Emerson spoke immediately to his generation that wanted to use the resources of Nature by starting afresh with a new philosophy of renewal, away from a world tired by the decay of centuries. The great writer, poet and philosopher H. D. Thoreau (1817–62) was enacting the transcendentalism of Emerson, and he upheld the right to a life shaped by inner principle, to make poems of our lives and living an art. He held the values of rootedness and contemplation. He became a culture hero and had a widespread influence. He became an example of a search for a spir-

itual America. He was deeply influenced by the Romantic movement of Germany based on the discovery of Sanskrit as the *Ursprache*. He undertook the exploration of “whole new continents and worlds within” in 39 volumes of his *Journal*. His most famous essay “Civil Disobedience”, which influenced Gandhi, was a defence of the private conscience against the majority expediency.

In 1875 Madame H. P. Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society (TS), alongwith Col. H. S. Olcott and others. She stated that Wisdom had been transmitted over the ages, by Mahatmas scattered throughout the world, as esoteric teaching. She was in communication with the Mahatmas in Tibet, and believed in reincarnation. The spirit advances to its goal in successive earthly lives in strict accordance with the Brahmanic and Buddhist doctrine of Karma. The laws of Karma were first introduced in the Upanishads as the law of moral causation. The consequences of action in the present life are reaped in a future incarnation on earth. Whatsoever a man sows he reaps, and likewise what he reaps he must have

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sown. She travelled over the world for many years. She came to India and Java, and spent some time in Tibet in 1856 and again in 1868. Russia had a long legacy of Indic perceptions and Madame Blavatsky was immersed in them. The fables and tales of India were a favourite theme in Russia from the 13th century. The legend about India preserved its popularity among the Russian masses till the 19th century. It had become the fabulous kingdom of Belovodye (“White Water”) and Russians went in search of it since the 17th century. In 1835 Count Uvarov established a chair for teaching Sanskrit at St Petersburg as it was cognate with Russian. The Russians were astonished by the solemnity of the ritual of the Buryats, the grandeur of their monasteries replete with icons and *thanka* scrolls, their mysterious shamans, enlightened siddhas and meditating yogis. All came from Tibet. Blavatsky inherited the concept of the Mahatmas and her attachment to Tibet from the Russian attachment to Lamaism. His Holiness the Dalai Lama sent Tibetan medicine to the ailing Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in July 1982 which had a beneficial effect, and the practice of Lamaist medicine was resuscitated in Buryatia.

In 1879 Blavatsky and Olcott came to India and founded the permanent headquarters of the TS in 1883. When they reached India in February 1879, Col. Olcott said: “The first thing I did on touching land was to stoop down and kiss the granite step, my instinctive act of pooja!”

I come here to pay homage to the great TS. It has been in the forefront of three

major movements of the foregoing century: (i) the founding of the Indian National Congress, (ii) conceptualisation of “cultural nationalism” culminating in the BJP, and (iii) national language for a free India (now termed “official language”). The Indian National Congress founded in 1885 spearheaded the national movement for independence, culminating in India’s freedom in 1947.

Annie Besant spoke about “cultural nationalism”, which became a profound inspiration for promoting cultural activities, such as the Bengal school of painting, various styles of classical dance, special courses on the history and culture of India in the universities, and so on. Because of Annie Besant’s fervent projection of India’s cultural heritage as well as political independence as President of the Indian National Congress, our leaders used to keep a close watch on the freedom struggle of Ireland and drew inspiration and confidence therefrom that one day imperialism will be gone. While framing the Constitution of India, constitutions of the world were consulted. A number of phrases of the Constitution of Ireland were adopted, such as “We the people of . . . do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution”. My father (Mr Raghu Vira) was a member of the Constituent Assembly of India and translated the constitution into Hindi. It was signed by all the “founding fathers” along with the English version, and both are authorised versions. He used to read the Irish text which had a depth of its own, a sensitivity which was lost in translation.

The third contribution of the TS is that a free country has to have a national language. The leaders of Irish freedom wanted the Irish language to be the prime medium of communication. Indian leaders used to read a book on how Irish could attain its natural role. Likewise, free India was to have a national language. The Constitution of India gave this honour to Hindi. Annie Besant lives in the silence of the cultural perceptions of India.

The Indian renaissance of the previous century entailed a study of the changing views of culture, and the significance and importance of tradition. Intellectuals in India turned to their tradition motivated by nationalist aims. Reviving national educational patterns like the *gurukuls*, developing classical art forms, and teaching science and technology along with inculcating spiritual values were all part of the spirit of the times. Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and others created a spiritual and literary ambience that was to evolve into a countrywide movement for independence. Annie Besant was forthright in enunciating cultural nationalism, being from Ireland where Irish was being replaced by English, besides political control of the British.

Madame Blavatsky was from the Russian nobility. The late Ambassador Kadakin used to say: “Scratch a Russian and you will find a Mongol inside.” The Golden Horde of the Mongols held sway over Russia and interethnic marriages were not rare. The artist Nicholas Roerich used to say that he had Mongol blood

from his mother’s side. Russian nobility had a tradition of visiting the Buryat and Kalmyk Mongols. B. I. Pankratov had been in Beijing during the Manchu era and knew the ways of the Manchus, Buryats and Kalmyks in their traditional style when westernisation had not yet touched them. He told me in 1957 that the Russians came in contact with the Buryats around 350 years ago. They were entranced by their exquisite prayer rooms with gorgeous *thankas*, golden icons of serene and frightening deities, statues of charming goddesses, their vibrant philosophical discussions with mudras, xylographed books wrapped in brocades, floors and walls covered with carpets of magnificent designs to keep the yurts or rooms warm when the temperature fell to –40 degrees. The Buryats told the Russians that their religious life derives from Tibet where great incarnate Lamas like the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama live. Blavatsky termed them Mahatmas of Tibet. The very first centre of the TS in New York was called “The Lamasery” and it had a rich collection of Tibetan objects.

Pankratov narrated that a Russian official was on duty in Buryatia to understand them. As Buryat life was predominantly associated with the monasteries, he asked them: “Where is your Bible?” The Buryat took him to the pavilion where recitation of the *Prajñāpāramitā* was in progress by a hundred Lamas. The manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitā* was written in golden ink on thick blue paper made of tree bark and old fabrics. The manuscript was placed on a carpet and was five feet in

height. The stunned Russian said: “This is your Bible? How many days will it take to recite it?” The answer was: “About a week. The text is about a myriad folios.”

Russians were exiled to Siberia where they came into contact with the Buryats. The Russian exiles had poor homes with no carpets in freezing cold in winter. The Buryats, on the contrary, were deeply religious, besides being well off financially by immense holdings of lands and animals in their sparsely populated land. The Russian officials as well as exiles held the Buryats in high esteem for their high standards of living and for their religious congregations where musical instruments and sonorous recitation made life a joy. As Lord Buddha said: *manoramam jīvitam* — life is beautiful.

As a young student in Europe, my first problem on alighting from the plane was to find out what was vegetarian. A Jewish co-student took me to the shops to show what meat was, which I was seeing for the first time in life. I asked him: “Is there anything that a vegetarian can eat?” That was a Friday. He said: “On a Friday we Jews eat pure vegetarian food cooked in utensils in which meat has never been cooked. Friday is our holy day.” Suddenly it occurred to him: “The idea of not eating meat may have come from India. The Old Testament says that sandalwood and gold for the construction of Jerusalem came from India.”

The long forty-year reign of King Solomon over Israel was prosperous and peaceful. He had extensive commerce with Ophir. His imports were on such a

lavish scale that he is said to have made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem. He maintained a fleet of ocean-going ships bringing “gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks” (1 Kings 10:22) from Ophir. The Hebrew word for peacock is *tukhin* which is *tokai* in Tamil. There were no peacocks in Jerusalem and Hebrew had no word for a peacock. This makes it clear that Tamil merchants were carrying on transoceanic trade with Jerusalem. The peacock is the mount of Kārttikeya, the general of the gods, and symbolised divine protection of the state. The identification of Ophir (var. Sophir) has been uncertain. Sophir is Śūrpāraka (modern Sopara) a famous seaport on the western coast of India, 37 miles north of Mumbai. It is four miles north-west of Bassein where an Aśokan edict was discovered. It is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, *Bhāgavata*, *Periplus* (2nd century AD), and so on.

An extensive gold-mining industry existed all over South India. Captain Leonard Munn writes in *Man in India*: “Over the vast area of ancient workings in Rhodesia the method of mining and reduction of the gold quartz is identical with that in South India . . . extensive areas of forest occur in the vicinity of the Rhodesian old gold workings consisting of trees and plants not indigenous to Africa, but having their home mostly in S. India . . . It is specially noted that the vast area over which these trees and plants have now spread is a clear indication of the very early date of their introduction into Rhodesia.” There is a Tamil saying:

Cross the oceans to earn money. The *Silappadikaram* says that there was a shrine devoted to the Moon in every capital of the Tamil land to guard the transoceanic merchants. The waxing of the Moon has fatal effects on the waves of the oceans which toss the ships in deadly turbulence. The Moon was invoked to ensure safety across the seas. Śiva as Somanātha or Lord of the Moon was worshipped for safety on the sea lanes. As early as the first millennium BC the Tamils were trading with Jerusalem and made it the resplendent capital of Solomon. To this day it is the sacred city of three major religions of the world.

The Tamils established the kingdom of Champa on the coastline of Vietnam. The Vo-chanh Rock Inscription of the second century AD speaks of a king of the Mara dynasty. The Pallava script of the inscription establishes its link with Tamilnadu. The whole coastline of Champa is dotted with temples to Śiva with Sanskrit inscriptions in the Pallava script. The temples remind us of the *Silappadikaram* that every capital in Tamil land had a temple to the Moon. Lord Śiva with the crescent moon in his matted locks is Somanātha. The ocean is calm during the dark fortnight when the full moon becomes the crescent.

*The Periplus* states that the chief trading centre of the Tamil country was Muziris (modern Kodungallur) which abounded in ships sent by the Greeks. *Silappadikaram*, “The Lay of the Anklet”, refers to large and beautiful Greek ships which brought gold to Muziris and

departed laden with pepper. It mentions Greek carpenters who helped to build a magnificent palace for a Tamil king and Greeks served as royal bodyguards. Pondicherry (Poudouke in Greek) is mentioned in *The Periplus and Ptolemy* as an extensive brick-built emporium. Pliny lamented the reckless extravagance of the upper class. The annual imports of the Roman empire from India was \$ 5,000,000. He wrote: “This is the sum which our luxuries and our women cost us.” Roman coins unearthed by archaeologists in the south cover a period of five and a half centuries. Indian envoys came to the Roman court of Augustus (27 BC–17 AD). Arikamedu, four kilometres south of Pondicherry was a flourishing trade centre frequented by Roman merchants to buy Indian textiles, spices and gems during the first two centuries AD. It was the biggest Roman trade site in South Asia and speaks of the flourishing international trade of Tamilnadu.

The very first inscription of Indonesia pertains to Pūrṇavarman, the King of Tārumā (*Tārumā-nagarendrasya*), in Sanskrit and Pallava-Grantha characters. The name Tārumā has evaded identification. When I started the study of Old Javanese texts, the classical art of Indonesia, and Indonesian inscriptions with Prof. Jan Gonda in 1950, the first inscription to be discussed was this one of Pūrṇavarman. The professor said that *tārumā* cannot be explained either from Sanskrit or from Old Javanese. I pointed out that *tārumā* is the Tamil orthography of Sanskrit *dharma*, as a natural corollary

to the Pallava script of the inscription. The Pallavas were kings of Kanchi, the glory of the Tamil land. The Shore Temple of Mamallapuram celebrates Mahāmalla. Bali has an interesting legend about King Mahābali who came from India to Bali. The relationship of Mahāmalla and Mahabali deserves a detailed study. When Roman gold ceased to flow to the Southern shores, the transoceanic merchants set out to find Suvarṇabhūmi.

Borobudur is again a Tamil word. Prof. de Casparis of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London derived *boro-budur* from *bhāra-bhūdhara* from his reconstruction of *daśa-bhūmi-sambhāra-bhūdhara*. The village to its south is Bumi-segoro. When I explained to him that *boro-budur* means the monastery of Budur which is a Tamil word, he responded: “Why do you want to explain it as a Tamil word?” Budur is Tamil *pudur* meaning “new settlement”. Several towns in South India begin with *pudur* (*putu/budu* means “new”). The village name Bumi-segoro means “the village of people from the seas (*sagara*)”. The Inscription of Śrī Kahulunnan dated 842 AD is correlated to the Borobudur by Prof. de Casparis. It begins with the date which is a Saturday: *chanaiśchara-vāra*, where *cha* stands for *śa*. In Tamil *śani* is written *chani*. In the 2–3 lines it is *sīmā nin kamūlān [i bhūmi] sambhara*. *Kamūlan* stands for Tamil *mūlat-tānam*, “sanctum sanctorum of a temple”. *Sambara* is used in Tamil for the Buddhist community. A fragmentary inscription from the ruins of Chandi Sewu bears the words *tiruraṇu*. *Tiru* is *śrī* and *raṇu* is Tamil

*rāṇuvam*, “army”. It may refer to King Samaratunga who ruled 812–32. He could have been from Tamilnadu and Tiru-rānuva could have been his pet family name.

The Śiva temple of Prambanan had 240 *parivāra* temples following the South Indian tradition. The Bṛhadīśvara has 24 *parivāra* temples.

The rock-bound coast of Middle Java is a wild rugged outline rising abruptly from the green-blue waters of the Indian Ocean. A perpetual battle is carried on between the restless waters and the rocks upon which they encroach. From these majestically beautiful surroundings arise the ceremonies of the mystic Queen Loro Kidul, “the Goddess of the South Seas”. She is the Dakṣiṇeśvarī, reminiscent of merchants of South India who landed safely on the shores of Java due to her grace. This “Bride of the Endless Waters” lives in the royal ceremonies of the Royal Court of Solo. The Sultan of Solo meets her on certain nights in an year in a tower dedicated to her in the palace. This ever-rejuvenating bride goes back to the mighty monarch Sañjaya who established his kingdom in Central Java in the 8th century.

For several weeks bullfighting or *jallikattu* of Tamilnadu was in the news, with its gory deaths of grapplers. It is customary law or *adat* in Indonesia. Young men of the Hindu-Buddhist community near Mount Bromo in Java celebrate the New Year by racing a hundred bulls. Mount Bromo is Brahmā. A living Indonesian rural practice continues a long historic tradition of Tamilnadu.

(To be continued)

# Theosophy and Apollonius of Tyana

ANTONIO GIRARDI

ALTHOUGH there are not many historically reliable sources regarding the life of Apollonius of Tyana (born in Cappadocia around 4 BC and died in Ephesus around 97 AD), there are many traces of evidence of him being a highly literate person, not separated from the concept of benefiting other beings.

His life was dedicated to what we can describe as a “purification” and as a revival of the pagan thought at its highest qualitative and philosophical level.

There are many elements in Apollonius, that make us think of the existence of considerable traces of that eternal wisdom about which H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) talked about: in this precise sense we can talk about a theosophy of Apollonius of Tyana, but bearing in mind the distinction between the “historical” Apollonius and the “mythical” Apollonius.

The main elements of the former were passed on by Philostratus, who lived between 165/170 AD and 244/249 AD, well after Apollonius. There are then a series of indirect evidences, among which one of the most significant examples was the exaltation of Apollonius by Philon, two centuries after his death, as a prophet of

a mystical cult founded on communion with God.

Apollonius’ works did not reach us in their original version; we are talking about *Initiations, Oracles, Hymn to the Memory*. It seems that one of his astrology treatises was translated into Arabic in the 9th century. Also *Life of Pythagoras* is attributed to him.

The framework of Philostratus’ work, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*<sup>1</sup> is based on the fact that, for most of his life, Apollonius was accompanied by a loyal disciple, Damis of Nineveh, who kept a very detailed diary of all the major events. When Damis died the manuscript remained unknown until one of his descendants handed it in to Roman empress Julia Domna, who in turn commissioned Philostratus to publish it, after giving it a proper literary form. Many critics are inclined to regard this story as a concoction of Philostratus and Julia Domna.

HPB in her *The Theosophical Glossary* chooses instead to believe in the thesis of the diary of Damis of Nineveh.<sup>2</sup> Her opinion on Apollonius of Tyana is very positive, she actually describes him as: “a wonderful philosopher . . . an ardent Pythagorean.”<sup>3</sup>

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Mr Antonio Girardi has been General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Italy for many years.

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It is not of secondary importance at this point to refer to Blavatsky's considerations. She soon emphasizes the dimension of sobriety and the deep ethical nature of Apollonius who, following the principles of the tradition of the Pythagorean School, remained vegetarian for his whole life, without drinking wine and wearing only fibre clothes. She then extols Apollonius' thaumaturgic qualities, which were the result of his initiations at the temple of Asclepius in the Aegean and of his journeys in the East.

According to the description in *The Theosophical Glossary* Apollonius was also a man of miracles, able to heal, also foretell events in detail as well as produce powerful talismans for the benefit of humanity.<sup>4</sup> Such were Apollonius' powers that Justin Martyr asks in dismay:

How is it that the talismans (telesmata) of Apollonius have power, for they prevent, as we see, the fury of the waves and the violence of the winds, and the attacks of the wild beasts; and whilst our Lord's miracles are preserved by tradition alone, those of Apollonius are most numerous and actually manifested in present facts?<sup>5</sup>

HPB also talks about the Apollonius talismans in *Isis Unveiled*, that in numerous and articulated passages includes in-depth studies on Apollonius's life, work, and thought.<sup>6</sup>

It is precisely in *Isis Unveiled* that we can fully understand the dimension of Apollonius of Tyana's theosophy, especially where Blavatsky states:

Like Buddha and Jesus, Apollonius was the uncompromising enemy of all out-

ward show of piety, all display of useless religious ceremonies and hypocrisy. . . . If we study the question with a dispassionate mind, we will soon perceive that the ethics of Gautama Buddha, Plato, Apollonius, Jesus, Ammonius Sakkas, and his disciples, were all based on the same mystic philosophy. That all worshipped one God, whether they considered him as the "Father" of Humanity who lives in man as man lives in him, or as the Incomprehensible Creative principle; all led God-like lives.<sup>7</sup>

She detects also what she calls "the mistake" of Apollonius; here are her words:

His great mistake was to confine [his truths] too closely to the higher classes of society. While to the poor and the humble Jesus preached "Peace on earth and good will to men", Apollonius was the friend of kings, and moved with the aristocracy. . . . If, like the Christian Saviour, the sage of Tyana had by preference sought the companionship of the poor and the humble; and if instead of dying comfortably, at over one hundred years of age, he had been a voluntary martyr, proclaiming divine Truth from a cross, his blood might have proved as efficacious for the subsequent dissemination of spiritual doctrines as that of the Christian Messiah.<sup>8</sup>

Within the theosophical tradition other authors also have taken an interest in Apollonius, but possibly with a different breadth as well as very different objectives from the ones revealed by HPB. First of all one must remember C. W. Leadbeater who expressed an original and in some

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respects stimulating thesis. He affirms:

An advanced disciple of the Lord Christ took birth in the year 105 BC . . . as a son of Joseph and Mary; and to him was given the name of Jesus. He remained in charge of that body until it was about thirty years of age and then handed it over to the Christ, who occupied it for the three years of his earthly ministry. The disciple Jesus was reborn as Apollonius of Tyana, just about the date usually assigned to the beginning of the Christian Era.<sup>9</sup>

The name of Apollonius is also connected to some other circumstances within the theosophical field around Wawel in Cracow. Dr George Arundale, who a year later became the President of the Theosophical Society after visiting Poland in 1932, actually wrote about it:

There exists in Cracow a Spiritual Centre, established 2000 years ago by Apollonius of Tyana. It is a kind of geyser from which incessantly flow streams of spiritual forces . . . This makes the city even today a Spiritual Centre which will become in the future the focus of these forces for the whole of Central Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Always within the theosophical field it was asserted that in order to fight the increasing atmosphere of deep and obscure negativity that was developing in Europe in 1935 after the coming of Nazism, it was necessary to proceed to the “reawakening” of the Wawel occult centre (the so-called “Lotus of Wawel”) and thus, the power connected to the talisman that was placed there by Apollonius of Tyana.<sup>11-12</sup>

This coincided temporally and symbolically with the death and the days of the funeral rites of the Polish hero, Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, beloved by his compatriots. Actually, from 12 to 18 May 1935 — and this is history — the entire Polish nation followed Pilsudski’s coffin in the journey from Warsaw to Wawel Cracow, where the great Marshal still rests, in the tomb placed in the Cathedral’s crypt.

The highly positive outlook of HPB on Apollonius of Tyana, coincides with that of the whole esoteric tradition. According to her the positivity and the importance of Apollonius’s work is also due to the fact that, during his journey in the East,

Apollonius had been directed by a king to the abode of the Sages, whose abode it may be to this day, by whom he was taught unsurpassed knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

And actually Apollonius affirms on this point:

They [the Sages at issue] lived on this earth and at the same time out of it. . . . I always remember my Masters and I travel around the world teaching what I’ve learned from them.<sup>14</sup>

It is really interesting to highlight the theosophical and Neoplatonic elements present in the life and the work of Apollonius of Tyana, as it is reported to us by Philostratus, within what we could describe as a solid Pythagorean structure. We have already mentioned the sobriety and the ethical nature in Apollonius. It is worth now considering his adherence to the Platonic outlook of the dialectic

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contrast between the One (the Good, the perfection, the harmony of the Universe, God) and the Dyad (the bad, the disorder, the matter). The religiousness of Apollonius was intense; it was founded on the passage from the purification to an original catharsis, from the mundane element to the union with God. All this with a clear outlook of the proceeding of the evolution according to the principles of karma. Apollonius precisely affirms:

It seems to me that he who appears at the house of God with a good conscience must say this prayer: "Oh gods, give me what I'm owed." Most people indeed, O priest, are owed the good, the wicked the opposite.<sup>15</sup>

And more: "Oh gods! Let me own very little and long for nothing."<sup>16</sup>

In Apollonius the soul becomes divine through ascesis; it gains prophetic powers and the virtue to direct the course of Nature with the magic. The authentic intimacy with God derives from the purity of the inner meditation, with no recourse to sacrifices or cult practices. These aspects fully show us the breadth of mind of Apollonius, an outlook that is not solipsistic, but that wishes instead to be always shared, we could possibly say "for the benefit of all the beings"; this also when the interlocutor does not appear of great sensibility. Apollonius affirms:

The soul is immortal and is no possession of your own, but of Providence, and after the body is wasted away, like a swift horse freed from its traces, it lightly leaps forward and mingles with the light air,

loathing the spell of harsh and painful servitude which it has endured. But for you, what use is there in this? Some day when you are no more you shall believe it.<sup>17</sup>

In Apollonius the content and the method tend to combine in order to generate a "direct" outlook of the search for spirituality and of the relationship with the sphere of the divine. On this point Philostratus reports to us an anecdote:

A man who ruled Cilicia sees Apollonius under the pretext of being ill and of needing the help of Asclepius. He so presented himself to Apollonius, who was taking a walk on his own and he told him: "Recommend me to the god". And he replied: "Why do you need someone to recommend you, if you are an honest man? The gods love virtuous people and welcome them without intermediaries."<sup>18</sup>

A further theosophical aspect in Apollonius is the fact that he was a real bridge between the East and the West thanks to his journeys. Apollonius of Tyana affirms:

I saw the Brahmans of India who live on the earth and don't live on it. They stay indoors with no walls and possess nothing but the belongings of all men.<sup>19</sup>

As to reincarnation, the Pythagorean outlook of Apollonius also tends to agree with the highest oriental outlooks.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, a dimension of real tolerance belonged to Apollonius of Tyana; he actually never expected from the others the adhesion to the rigid conduct rules that he imposed on himself. This

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can be deduced, for example, from the fact that he never tried to convert Damis to the vegetarian diet, by only asking him to respect his choices. The sense and the importance of the common work were also present in Apollonius.

Apollonius of Tyana, although some

sources are uncertain, deserves thus to be remembered not only for his miraculous powers and his talismans, but rather for his highly ethical, philosophical outlook entirely leaning towards a universal outlook of life with a theosophical attitude. ✧

### Endnotes

1. Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (Italian Ed.: Filostrato, *Vita di Apollonio di Tiana*, Adelphi Edizioni, Collana Biblioteca Adelphi, Milano, 1978).
2. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary* (Italian Ed.: H. P. Blavatsky, *Glossario Teosofico* seconda edizione, Editrice Libreria Sirio, Trieste, 1985, pp. 21, 22, 23).
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7. *Idem*, p. 478 e 481 del 1° volume.
8. *Idem*, p. 479 del 1° volume.
9. C. W. Leadbeater, *The Hidden Side of Christian Festivals*, The St Alban Press, Los Angeles, London, Sydney, 1920, p. 29.
10. G. Arundale in *Przegląd Teozoficzny* (The Theosophical Review), Warsaw, 1932.
11. K. Chodkiewicz, *The Cracow Occult Centre* (Italian Ed.: Cfr K. Chodkiewicz, *Il Centro occulto di Cracovia*, Edizioni Età dell'Acquario — Bresci Editore, Torino 1975).
12. See the testimony of Wanda Dynowska in *The Theosophist*, Adyar, India, August 1942, pp. 361–371.
13. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary* (Italian Ed.: H. P. Blavatsky, *Glossario Teosofico* seconda edizione, Editrice Libreria Sirio, Trieste 1985, p. 22).
14. Giancarlo Tarozzi, *Apollonius of Tyana* in *The Cracow Occult Centre* (Italian Ed.: Giancarlo Tarozzi, *Apollonius di Tyana* in *Il Centro Occulto di Cracovia*, Seconda Edizione italiana a cura di Giuditta Dembech, Edizioni L'Ariete, Torino, 1991, p. 51).
15. 16. 17. 18. 19. All the quotations to which these notes refer are drawn from the volume listed at note 1).
20. See volume at note 1 (Cfr volume di cui alla nota 1, Libro III;19; pp. 154–155).

**You need not wonder at my knowing all human languages; for,  
to tell you the truth, I also understand all the secrets of human silence.**

Apollonius of Tyana

# Theosophy: A Unifying Platform in the Modern World

SVITLANA GAVRYLENKO

TODAY, many people acknowledge the dimensions, depth and timeliness of the impact produced on human vision of the world by the heritage left by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), whose 187th birth anniversary we celebrate this year. Her major works, her brainchild — the Theosophical Society (TS) — the effect which they drew in human society, in science, in people's consciousness in different countries and on different continents clearly indicates a keynote, the basic trend intrinsic to her impact. Beyond any doubts, this is a powerful unifying principle which manifested itself in various spheres of human life. Let us discuss some of them in more detail.

1. Theosophical ideas produced a significant impact on the development of various sciences. Theosophical ideas, which are based on *integrated fundamental principles of the life system in the universe*, on a multifaceted structure and *common laws of Nature*, can bring together different scientific concepts for the sake of unbiased search for the Truth and the development of new scientific paradigms and methods of scientific

search. *Science received an impetus fostering its development* and was enriched by discovering new research areas and methods.

The current developmental stage of human society is characterized by an extremely high level of mastery of the material plane. Until recently, this stage used to be defined as the era of scientific and technical revolution. The confrontation between two social systems (capitalism and communism) was its powerful driving force. Suffice it to say that in the 20th century alone, scientific and technical discoveries made up 10% of all such recorded discoveries.

The main focus for scientific activities was the material substance and external, visible, tangible manifestations of the world detected by human *organa sensoria* or invented instruments. It is exactly science, its achievements and discoveries, its penetration into the depth of the Universe and to the veiled properties of a cell and atomic nucleus, that serve as a basis for drawing a picture of the world of modern man and for building his vision of the world. At the same time, it is exactly the

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world vision of individuals that serves as the foundation for their behaviour, and is the core of their personality, as well as the basis for the functioning of society as a whole. Due to such a dominating effect on the mind and consciousness of individuals science in essence began playing the role of religion which is to establish basic ethical principles and explain the mysteries of life and laws of existence itself. The academician V. I. Vernadsky wrote about it in his works.

However, today distinct changes have begun to show that can hardly be left unnoticed or disregarded by even the most conservative and orthodox supporters of the former scientific paradigms. And what is more, the basis for such changes was laid down as far back as the 19th century. The search for the integrated field theory, the hypothesis of creation of the universe through the big bang, the proven fundamental relationship between physiological and psychic processes in humanity — all of these serve as evidence of the scientific realization of the principle of unity, interconnectedness and interrelationship of everything that exists in the world.

1. Science has itself advanced and inevitably reached finer planes of the universe. By the middle of the 19th century the cognition of the material world reached the invisible ether planes, and scientific vocabulary acquired such terms as energy, energy levels, information interaction, multidimensional spaces, biological magnetism, field and field structures. The transfer of thoughts using the radio, the

phone, and later the television has become common practice.

In addition, it is worth mentioning a new holistic approach in physical sciences which is currently taking shape and trying to explore an integrated nature of physical phenomena. Holism is a certain quality of the investigator's mind, his fundamental approach to exploring the universe, both physical and mental.

2. Theosophy describes a generalized picture of the evolutionary process, including the detailed description of the human kingdom and its stages of evolution. This knowledge makes it possible to discover *the universal fate of mankind as a whole*, and to become aware of *a universal goal for each individual human being*. This knowledge carries with it a strong ideological impact capable of expanding people's consciousness, helping them to overlook the differences which make them feel separated.

When the TS, which was established and ideologically guided by Blavatsky, declared its goal to create a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood, many people considered the idea utopian and unachievable. After years of existence of the TS, *the ideal of the Brotherhood of Humanity* has already become real and is no longer a theoretical abstraction. Today, the Society is a worldwide organization with branches in more than 60 countries, and with the main goal stipulated by the great Teachers of humanity as the creation of a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.

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Our goal as members of the TS, who should become the vanguard in promoting the idea of brotherhood, is to make this ideal better understood by different people. However, every person comprehends this idea in their own personal way, life experience, and world view, under the impact of certain life circumstances. Thus, we realize that until now we have already accumulated a vast amount of theoretical and practical knowledge which should allow us to implement the idea of brotherhood. In fact, the whole theosophical teaching aims at explaining the fundamental unity of all things, including the fundamental unity of all humankind. The idea of brotherhood is not a kind of remote goal which we should all try to achieve, but a real natural fact which we should embrace with our mind.

Let us think about such a problem statement. The idea of brotherhood is not limited to the human kingdom only, but is also relevant in the context of our perception of the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. Brotherly relations can exist in the context of the whole universe, expressed towards beings living in other worlds as well. Thus, this idea can be perceived in both narrower and wider contexts, and can be extended to the universal theosophical principle of *the unity of all things*.

How does mankind show its readiness to accept and implement the idea of brotherhood? It is demonstrated by mastering the right human relations, the interaction between people, between natural kingdoms, between nations, between

countries and states — in politics, in economy and even in the process of addressing drastic and vital issues faced by mankind. So, on what principles should these relations be built?

Some people assert that there are purely scientific methods for building human relations and that by mastering such methods it is possible to establish harmonious relations between individuals and also to build harmonious social relations in the community. Yes, indeed, science has been successful in the field of communicative psychology. Moreover, the natural trend in the development of science may bring in or has already brought in man-made instruments based on the latest technologies which allow building a model of human behavioural reaction according to the installed program. Today, we have a large arsenal of manipulation technologies being implemented in politics, management, and advertising developed based on the most recent scientific achievements in the field of psychology, sociology and political science. That is why we can state with full confidence that a great deal of success of these technologies has resulted from the development of a new science on energy and information exchange in Nature which is called eniology. This confirms that as before, man tries to use all new sciences primarily for satisfying his egoistic personal or corporate interests. Our current experience proves that when we act, when we start building our relations with the surrounding world and are focused on our personalities, we are

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usually pursuing our personal egoistic goals which brings in disharmony and confrontation, conflicts and distrust, suppression and protest. This is a danger produced by the lower mind, the mind of wishes which is not enlightened by the spiritual influence. Yes, this is a needed stage, but now there is a possibility to move further forward, to foster the awakening of our highest spiritual nature.

3. In the context of the practical, real-life area in our day-to-day life, the ideas which were professed by HPB herself and which she used as the foundation for her famous works produce a significant *uniting effect* by their ability *to mobilize the energy of Good Will*. The new world view pushes a person to take over new and advanced responsibilities and awakens the need for personal participation in rebuilding life based on newer, more noble and perfect principles. In her *The Key to Theosophy*, HPB called altruism “an integral part of self-development”. She also wrote the following: “The power to know does not come from book study nor from mere philosophy, but mostly from the actual practice of altruism in deed, word, and thought; for that practice purifies the covers of the soul and permits that light to shine down into the brain-mind. As the brain-mind is the receiver in the waking state, it has to be purified from sense-perception, and the truest way to do this is by combining philosophy with the highest outward and inward virtue.” (*Conversations on Occultism*) According to HPB, “It is altruism . . . that can lead the unit to merge its little Self in the

Universal Selves.” (“Occultism Versus The Occult Arts”, *Collected Writings*, vol. 9)

The *need to serve* is a natural result of a person’s spiritual development, so *co-operation* which develops on the basis of common goals and intentions is strongly manifesting itself as numerous civic initiatives, voluntary movements, charitable activities, and sponsorships. It is a progress in the civil society in many world regions which demonstrates the fact of acceptance of the responsibility and mobilization of Goodwill Energy. Today, millions of people all over the world respond to the call of such initiatives and are ready to implement them.

4. There is one more important area where theosophical ideas are capable of bringing in a new impulse for joining forces for the development of mutual understanding. *This is the field of religions*. Today, this is a very painful area for mankind since two-thirds of all military conflicts in the world are caused by religious reasons. In *Isis Unveiled* and other works, HPB touches upon issues related to the common sources of all religions, the identical nature of ethical commandments in all religious teachings, the explanation of the natural consistency of specific features or the ways for transferring the knowledge of Timeless Wisdom by every particular religion, and so on. The very term “brotherhood of religions”, which was adopted as a basis for apprehending the idea of common grounds of these social institutions, is the best way for reflecting Theosophy’s position on this issue; but at the same time, it provokes

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protest and rejection by certain confessions and religious organizations.

Today, world religions do not cope with their task in meeting people's spiritual needs. It is sad, but religions themselves often become a source of aggression and conflicts all over the world encouraging fanaticism in their followers. The dogmatized knowledge of the Church is closed to new ideas, it does not satisfy the inquisitive mind of a modern, educated man, and it is unable to assimilate modern scientific concepts. At the same time, the idea of Brotherhood of Religions attracts ever better new supporters all over the world.

There are also other fields of human activity where the uniting power of theosophical ideas has begun manifesting itself; and this is a very promising future trend since we as a mankind are passing

on to an ascending turn of our evolutionary spiral.

All together, these processes are the messengers of a New Era and form the basis for the establishment of future culture and civilization. Let us not be in despair because of the fact that the unification trends and synthesis are not as fast as we would like them to be. Nature is not in a hurry. Moreover, the human mind is the greatest treasure for the Creator. That is why we are grateful to HPB for granted potentials, and we will rejoice at every small step that each of us and all of us together can make in the process of developing our own perception of the universe and humankind, and we will look to the future with hope.

Because our future is bright and beautiful! ✧

**This should never be forgotten, nor should the following fact be overlooked. On the day when Theosophy will have accomplished its most holy and most important mission — namely, to unite firmly a body of men of all nations in brotherly love and bent on a pure altruistic work, not on a labor with selfish motives — on that day only will Theosophy become higher than any nominal brotherhood of man. This will be a wonder and a miracle truly, for the realization of which Humanity is vainly waiting for the last 18 centuries, and which every association has hitherto failed to accomplish.**

Letter I from H. P. Blavatsky — 1888  
To Second Annual Convention, TS in America

# Three Truths and One Dharma — I

FERNANDO A. DE TORRIJOS

“There is no higher Dharma than Truth.”

Hear me, my brother: . . . There are *three truths* which are absolute, and which cannot be lost, but yet may remain silent for lack of speech.

The *soul* of man is *immortal*, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour have no limit.

The principle which gives life dwells in us and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the *man who desires perception*.

Each man is his own absolute lawgiver, *the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself*; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

These truths, which are as great as life itself, *are as simple* as the simplest mind of man. Feed the hungry with them.

[emphases added]

It was exactly 40 years ago that I discovered the Theosophical Society in Madrid. For several years I was searching for the meaning of life, and the reason why among so much natural beauty there was also present so much suffering. This

thought was generating a deep source of suffering in me, taking me to episodes of depression and anxiety.

In 1977, at age 30, I was working in a ski resort in the Pyrenees mountains, Baqueira-Beret. This place became my escape, at least in appearance, from the emotional conflicts that I was carrying since my adolescent years. The landmark of becoming 30 and the curiosity aroused in me from a pamphlet from the Rosicrucians opened a need to find an answer to the mysteries of life and existence.

Without giving it much thought, and disregarding the opposition of my employer I decided to take a three-month vacation in the USA, without knowing English but with plenty of enthusiasm. I went from New York to California, and after visiting the Rosicrucian Center in San Jose I concluded that practising some of the rituals that they were suggesting was not a way for me to get answers to my questions. Back in Madrid, I decided to take a retreat in the mountains of Avila, and constructed a simple hut with wood and stones.

Because of my lack of experience with

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meditation, other than the information that I got from a few books available at that time in Spain, I was forced to design my own *sādhana*, a bunch of practices about self-inquiry and concentration to help my mind become quiet. I got lucky because to complement these, a little book, *At the Feet of the Master* from someone called J. Krishnamurti, suddenly fell into my hands. This book became my close companion during my 45-day silent and solitary retreat, giving me the chance to know the book by heart. TO THOSE WHO KNOCK, were the initial words. Yes, I did knock at that door and everything was changing. “From the unreal lead me to the Real, from darkness lead me to Light, from death lead me to Immortality”, this mantra from the Upanishads, was initiating my conversion to a new life.

My retreat ended and I returned to Madrid, perhaps more mentally confused than before and with some physical exhaustion, but full of encouragement. I went to a small bookstore with an Esoteric Books section — the “esoteric” having more to do with the location in a hidden interior room and the pages having a strong smell of incense. After inquiry I was told that if I wanted to know more about Krishnamurti the best thing to do was to approach Lodge Hesperia of the Theosophical Society.

Great discovery! As I knocked at the door of the theosophical lodge and the door opened, a whiff of incense like from those old books inundated me. An old gentleman asked me: “What do you want, young fellow? What brings you here?”

I told him of my interest. He immediately recited to me the First Object of the Theosophical Society (TS), and on my agreement, invited me in.

An intense sensation invaded my being, something from within was telling me, “Welcome home again.” I was among a bunch of strangers, but it was not really so; they were kind of familiar to me. Something was telling me that this was not the first time I was in their company, . . . but how?

Now I knew what I had to do next: to listen, study, assimilate and eventually teach, whatever little by little, I could learn and understand. A new world was opening in front of me: Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Neoplatonism, Hermetism, Mysticism, and so on. And *The Secret Doctrine*, the best collection of teachings, the best teachers, everything that I was seeking.

The rest of the story is good for a book; the only other thing that I want to mention is that I participated in courses and long retreats sometimes up to two or three months with only one purpose, to learn and to understand. A few years later, I fell in love with a beautiful American lady who I met through Joy Mills in Krotona, California. We were married in Madrid, then went to India to help with the Centenary Convention at Adyar and were introduced to J. Krishnamurti by Radha Burnier. From there we went to Worcester, Massachusetts to establish our new residence and fulfil important family obligations without knowing what was coming in the future.

### **In America**

The first and most important task for me at this stage was to master the English language, first for making a living and then to be able to continue learning from the theosophical and sacred traditions. I started listening, studying, assimilating and teaching, first in Spanish and later in English.

For years I dedicated a lot of time to study, possibly with the best teachers available at the time face-to-face, or from books. I reflected about everything in my meditation and self-inquiring practices, and started to present my findings through classes and lectures. But, something was missing. Everything that I was reading or listening to was saying that the main cause of suffering came from the mind. All the methodologies for calming the mind were clear in the written text but very difficult to accomplish in practice. But this did not discourage me. I continued exploring different approaches, and always arrived at the same conclusion, that to me the more convincing teachings were the ones from Krishnamurti. But K. was not easy to read, he was too radical in his approach, unable to touch most of the people. It was necessary to talk and teach in the language people understood, but how?

On a morning in March 1989 I started a process of inner exploration with a question in mind: What do I need to do to generate efficiency in the process of alleviating human suffering? I was serious, this was a real commitment based on a kind of Bodhichitta: to make whatever effort necessary to clarify the mind, to become more authentic, useful, and

gentle for the benefit of all. Quoting from Goethe, “when a sincere commitment is made to do good, things start to happen”. And yes, things started to happen, it was as if someone was waiting for me to make this move. Energies, internal and external became unified, generating a sense of clarity and direction, pointing to a natural goal, without rigidities or dogmatic rules.

Five more years of preparation were needed until a new door was ready to open which happened in one of those “casual” encounters in life.

### **Finding Each Other**

In November 1994, I attended a weekend symposium in Boston entitled “Body and Soul”. Prominent professionals pioneering the new integrative medicine approach, also known as mind-body medicine came together to present their work. The keynote speaker was Robert Bly, an American poet who has translated the work of many Spanish poets into English; among them, Antonio Machado, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Federico García Lorca, and so forth.

Bly’s magnificent talk lasted 90 minutes. He highlighted the importance of reconnecting with Nature to heal our soul and described the human being as a conglomerate of three bodies. A *fragrance body* that enables us to become a child again but with the maturity of an adult, to regain spontaneity and natural response to things; an *ancestral body* that recognizes that each one of us represents the whole of humanity and that to be able to

heal humanity we need to learn how to heal ourselves; and a *heavenly river body*, that signifies our capacity to connect with the highest in us, and through this centre reconnect with everything, not only other human beings, but also with the essence of existence that is present in everything that breathes.

After his talk, I had a chat with Bly and I promised to give him a copy of Spanish musician Joan Manuel Serrat's cassette in which he sings poems of Machado. The next morning, after finishing the meditation that he was leading, he decided to dedicate and recite a poem of Machado to me:

The wind, one brilliant day, called  
to my soul with an odor of jasmine,

“In return for the odor of my jasmine,  
I'd like all the odor of your roses.”

“I have no roses; all the flowers  
in my garden are dead.”

“Well then, I'll take the withered petals  
and the yellow leaves and the waters  
of the fountain.”

The wind left. And I wept. And I said  
to myself;

“What have you done with the garden  
that was entrusted to you?”

Seated not far from me was Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, in Worcester. After the recitation of the poem, Jon came to me and asked if my first language was Spanish, if my residence was in Worcester, and if I was

interested in Mind/Body medicine. I assented to all those questions and he invited me to have lunch with him the following week at the hospital. During the lunch, I told him about my past, and my voluntary work with the TS. After lunch, he took me to his office to introduce me to his team and then offered to train me in MBSR to be able to teach his program. A few months later I was appointed director of one of his clinics. This was the beginning of a friendship and collaboration that has lasted 23 years, and possibly will continue the rest of our lives.

This encounter was the answer to what I was looking for, the last piece of the puzzle finally found its place. I learned very quickly about the efficiency of the *Satipatthāna Sutta* of the Buddha, in which he found the formula to alleviate human suffering. The advice the Buddha gave to those interested in teaching the dharma was as follows: Keep it simple, talk in the language of the people in such a way that people will understand the message from within in order to help themselves to initiate their process of healing and self-transformation.

This is the methodology created by Kabat-Zinn. I bow to him in recognition of his capacity to put in simple words a profound wisdom. During the initial 15 years of his program, he avoided the use of words such as: spirituality, dharma, emptiness, mindfulness, and so on, to avoid creating barriers or mental labels for the participants. The message was simple: let us get together to explore

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the meaning of being alive, of being human, and the responsibility that these imply. We should place our attention in that jewel that we have within since the moment of birth, which is present in the heart of every being; also in that garden, that was entrusted to us at birth to care for. Approaching all these through the cultivation of mindfulness, that natural human skill present in us, perhaps unknown or rarely used, that has been called “the life jacket of emotional intelligence”.

The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will. No one is *compos sui* if he have it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical instruction for bringing it about.

William James,  
Principles of Psychology, 1890.  
(To be continued)

***Dharma* (Religious Life) has mind as forerunner, becomes noble through mind, is mind itself. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind, thereby suffering follows him as the wheel of a cart, the foot of the horse drawing it.**

***Dharma* (Religious Life) has mind as forerunner, becomes noble through mind, is mind itself. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, thereby happiness follows him as a shadow that never deserts.**

*Dhammapada*  
Dr C. Kunhan Raja

# The Miracle of “Water”

PRADEEP TALWALKER

THE second “declared Object” of the Theosophical Society is “to encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science”. Three very different lines for enquiry, each of which in fact leads us to the same Reality.

Let us look at the science behind water, for instance. We all know that hydrogen and oxygen combine to form water ( $H_2O$ ). But do we ever wonder how the two *gases* produce a substance that is *liquid*? (It stays liquid even on being heated up to  $100^\circ$  Celsius!) The paradox stands out sharply against other elements of the same group as oxygen: sulphur, selenium and tellurium. All are solid with much higher atomic masses; but with hydrogen they produce gases (hydrogen sulphide, hydrogen selenide and hydrogen telluride)!

Water *is* special. It is so unique among all that is around us that we would be hard put to find proper adjectives, if we were to describe it. It is so incredibly fine-tuned in all respects that only a higher sagacity could have conceived of it. Everything is just right about water. A look at its fascinating aspects shows how ingeniously the substance is positioned in the Grand Design.

We all know that hydrogen is the

lightest of all gases, but there is more. It has a unique feature: the “hydrogen bond”. When hydrogen reacts with a highly “electronegative” element (like oxygen) it produces *polar* molecules: they pull each other like magnets. This pull is the hydrogen bond. (Electronegativity is the degree to which an element tends to gain electrons and form negative ions.) The result is that  $H_2O$  molecules cluster together *to make it a liquid*. In the absence of this special phenomenon water would have been just one more gas, *far lighter than air*. It would have risen high and escaped to the outer space. Earth would have been a *dry* planet devoid of visible life, and a desert all over. No plants, animals or humans — only an expanse of sand and rocks.

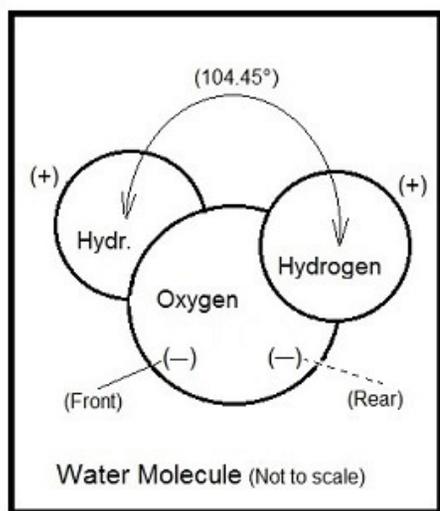
A closer look at a water molecule reveals more. We know that it has one oxygen and two hydrogen atoms. Oxygen has six electrons in its outer orbit; of these, two form covalent bonds with the sole electron in each hydrogen atom. The molecule thus gets four pairs of outer-orbit electrons. As all are negatively charged, they repel each other. Reacting to this repulsion, the four pairs arrange them-

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selves nearly as vertices of a tetrahedron. In this position they are furthest from each other and repulsion is minimized. Due to the tetrahedral arrangement the hydrogen atoms subtend between themselves an angle of  $104.45^\circ$  (not  $180^\circ$ ), making water a “bent molecule”. Oxygen, being more electronegative, attracts the electrons in both hydrogen atoms. This creates a *slight* positive charge on each hydrogen atom and a negative charge on each of the two free electron pairs (at tetrahedral points) in the oxygen atom (see figure). This makes the molecule polar. A hydrogen atom from one molecule, bearing a positive charge, bonds with the oxygen atom of an adjacent molecule where there is a negative charge. With two positive and two negative charges, each molecule attracts *four* other molecules. This way, the whole body of water gets interlaced. Result: we have a highly versatile liquid with fantastic credentials at our service.



All these positive and negative charges are weak; and the resultant bonds are weak and short-lived (average duration: 10 picoseconds); but as they break, others form. This gives water the right consistency. Had the bonds been strong and lasting, water would be too viscous, even solid like glass; it would be of no use to any living being. The strength of the bonds is just right to give a unique substance that is liquid over a wide temperature range. The freezing point and the boiling point are also just as needed (they respectively define the  $0^\circ\text{C}$  and  $100^\circ\text{C}$  of the Celsius temperature scale). Water is the only common substance that is present on earth in all three states of matter: solid, liquid, and gas.

But merely the physical and chemical properties are not crucial; easy and plentiful availability of water is a very major factor. It makes water *the base* of life on earth. (Otherwise it would have just been a laboratory wonder — with no one around to start a lab!) All in all, a world full of kaleidoscopic possibilities and realities has come into existence. Let us consider some of these.

**1. Heat properties:** Owing to bonding, water’s boiling point ( $100^\circ\text{C}$ ), specific heat (1 calorie/gram/ $^\circ\text{C}$ ), and latent heat of vaporization (533 calories/gram) are all high. This helps us not only to cook food, but also to execute gigantic tasks like running steam engines, generating electricity to feed statewide power grids, and so on. The high specific heat makes water a good coolant and fire-retardant. The high capacity for heat absorption

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renders harsh climates temperate. Water is a bad conductor of heat, but it gets heated by convection.

**2. Evaporation:** Even at lower temperatures water changes to gas by evaporation. On vast ocean surfaces, this is essential for formation of clouds that are carried all over by winds to bring *fresh water* as rains. Or else, lands would have been dry: no visible land life — only aquatic life would exist. Yet, evaporation is not too fast: fresh water can be stored for later use in open reservoirs for months.

In evaporation, molecules of surface water escape to air, drawing energy from the entire body of water. It leaves less heat in the water body. That is how exposed water is cooler than air around it.

**3. Aquatic life:** Oceans occupy 70 per cent of the surface of earth. While the rains they send bring a profusion of life on land, oceans themselves support a riot of life. From microscopic plankton and seaweed to huge whales, species that form an inconceivable range and variety populate the seas.

While each species is special in its own way, the phytoplankton (plankton of the vegetable kingdom) is of singular interest. It is estimated that up to 85 per cent of earth’s supply of oxygen comes from photosynthesis by phytoplankton. Oxygen from seaweed is additional. Land plants contribute only the remaining part. So, even if land forests somehow get severely damaged, the world’s need for oxygen will still be taken care of. This does not justify cutting down forests, of course, but it shows how abundant pre-

caution is built into Nature. Phytoplankton also forms the foundation of the food chain of the aquatic life.

**4. Density:** Our experience with most substances is that they expand on heating and contract on cooling. While water also contracts on cooling, it does so only till it reaches a temperature of 3.98°C. At this temperature water weighs one gram per cubic centimetre, which is its density. (Till recently it defined the “gram” of the metric “CGS” system.) On further cooling, however, it starts to *expand*. While freezing, it expands even faster. So, ice floats on water. The benefit of this is that when water bodies in colder climes start freezing in winter, all that ice rises to the surface. It forms an insulating heat barrier and keeps the underlying water unfrozen — in which the aquatic animals stay alive. Otherwise the whole body of water would freeze from bottom up; the animals, unable to breathe or move about, would suffocate or freeze to death.

The density of water also makes for its buoyancy. The buoyancy of sea water is even higher due to the dissolved salts. Our bodies become virtually weightless in water, enabling us to swim. This buoyancy is even more important for aquatic life. They do not have to spend extra energy to stay afloat. Buoyancy also permits the use of rafts and boats. Water transport is possible because of this. Even today 90 per cent of all cargo is carried by maritime transport. It is a good deal cheaper, and needs no roads to be built and maintained.

**5. Water as a solvent:** With polar

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molecules, water can dissolve a vast range of substances. Dissolved salts and carbon dioxide sustain aquatic plants; mollusc shells and corals get built from the dissolved lime; oxygen dissolved in water is the life-breath for many aquatic animals. These are just a few examples.

As a solvent that dissolves almost everything, water is a major agent of weathering and erosion of rocks. Water has physical as well as chemical action on rocks. Water and ice have sculpted earth’s surface into an infinite variety of landscapes: valleys, caves, canyons, cliffs of all descriptions. Water wears down mountains and high grounds to plains. Rocks and organic matter are reduced to soil. Without this agriculture would be unthinkable.

Many valuable minerals are separated from parent rocks and redeposited as ore bodies by the grading action of water. Nodules of many rare metals are found on the ocean floors near geothermal vents. If we can obtain these, we will get many valuable metals we need. Even the salinity of sea water is due to the salt that water leaches from rocks.

Most important of all: water, as a solvent, is pivotal to all life. Water is crucial in many ways. It softens food in the mouth; facilitates the experience of taste; moves food through the alimentary canal; aids digestion; eases release of waste matter; keeps skin supple; regulates body temperature; forms the base for blood, lymph, electrolytes — all body fluids; and performs more such functions. Water is the basic medium for all the chemical

and physical wizardry that goes on in the body. *Every* being, whether human, animal or vegetable, needs a frequent refill of water; and Nature has made it very refreshing on a parched gullet.

**6. Cohesion:** Hydrogen bonding holds water molecules together. Water vapour is condensed first into clouds, and later into rain or snowfall — *all by cohesion*. Water molecules cohere so firmly that the surface of water acts like a stretched sheet of rubber — we know this property as “surface tension”.

**7. Capillary action and plant life:** Polar molecules of water adhere to and wet almost everything. Water wets soil, dissolving nutrients. This is vital for plants. Surface tension and adhesion together produce “capillary action”. When a thin tube is inserted in water, water rises in the tube to a level higher than the general water surface, *against the force of gravity*. This is capillary action. Owing to it, water and nutrients are able to rise through the xylem up the stems of plants. Even giant sequoias (as tall as a 30-storey building) receive water and nutrients right up to their tops. Water is also a principal ingredient of photosynthesis. Water reacts with carbon dioxide in the air (using sunlight) to make carbohydrates. As a part of the reaction, oxygen is released; it is restored to air. Photosynthesis is the mainstay of plant life, and plants are the ultimate sustenance of humans and animals. Truly, water is the backbone of life in countless ways: it even helps maintain the oxygen level in the ecosystem!

**8. Total quantity:** The earth has a stag-

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gering 1,338,000,000 *cubic kilometres* of water, and the earth’s surface provides an ideal setting for it. The contours of the earth (specifically: the depressions forming the oceans, and the elevations that form land) are just right to contain all that water and leave ample dry land for a teeming land life. The ocean basins prove to be just the right receptacles for 96.5 per cent of the total water on earth. Having just the *right* depth, the oceans cover a surface area large enough to generate abundant water vapour, and send clouds to wet the dry lands with needful rains and snow. This plenitude and ubiquity of water are key factors for life to proliferate on earth.

The share of the total earth surface between lands and oceans is also very neatly balanced. With more land the oceans would be squeezed up, causing too much water on land; with lesser land, land-dwellers would be crowded for space *and* rains would be too heavy, causing: too much water on land! An error on *either* side would lead to the same hazard. It is hard to imagine this precise balance as just a chance circumstance.

Fears are expressed that this balance will topple due to climate change. Some are afraid that with “global warming” polar ice caps will melt, drowning coastal cities. But actual observations show that the fears are misplaced. It was prophesied that the Maldives would sink by 1980, but they did not. Admittedly, the earth *is* getting warmer; but this is no cause for alarm. Earth has so far seen *five* ice ages with warm periods in between. We are going

through one such warm period. Further warming *is to be expected*. But, in any change on a global scale numerous factors come into play, and changes do not proceed in a straight line. It is never easy to predict the final outcome. For example, while polar ice melts by warming, *evaporation goes up on the oceans too*; this brings more rain and snow — maximum at the Poles. Indeed, quite contrary to fears of a meltdown, the Antarctic ice cap (holding over 70 per cent of the world’s fresh water) *actually has grown larger* over the last three decades (vide: the findings of the National Snow and Ice Data Center, USA). We have no cause to fear. The System takes good care of us. On *our* part, we would do well to curb pollution and guard the environment. We help ourselves, really, *and we owe it* to posterity.

The foregoing discussion is only impressionistic, describing in short just some main aspects of water; there are many (such as its conductivity for sound and electricity; its transparency, refractive index; and many more, each of great *practical* significance), but even a brief account of all would make it too long a discussion. The limited aim was to put this life-giver in a proper perspective; to remind ourselves to feel appreciation, respect and gratitude for it. Familiarity should not lead us to take for granted this precious commodity.

Scientists tell us that life on earth originated in an aqueous solution. The prime importance of water for life is undisputed. It is by far the most researched

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substance on earth by any discipline. Tomes have been written on it, and yet no one can say that we now know all there is to be known about water. Obviously, even from a rigidly “scientific” point of view, water is special.

Water is indeed only *one* striking example of the many clever aspects of the Creation. Earth too is one such wonder: its size, shape, weight, composition, distance from the sun, the periodicity of its rotation round the sun, spin round itself, the precise tilt of the axis of spin, gravity, magnetism, and so on, make earth an eminently livable place, and a perfect laboratory for God’s experiments with

Life. Even its envelope of air is as if made to order. There clearly seems to be a very definite plan behind the whole scheme of things. For *all* this to have occurred just fortuitously would need a huge chain of lucky coincidences, which would be outside the pale of likelihood.

Every detail reflects his infinite Wisdom and Love. Water represents this Love. Let every drop of water we drink instil unconditional love in us; let every drop of water wake gratitude in us. Let us enjoy our drink of water *with* these thoughts, and *feel* the miracle anew every time. (It may take us a step or two ahead on the Path.) ✧

**I believe that humans can get by without religion, but not without inner values, not without ethics. The difference between ethics and religion is like the difference between water and tea. Religion-based ethics and inner values are more like tea. The tea that we drink is made mostly of water, but it contains other ingredients as well — tea leaves, spices, perhaps a little sugar, and, at least in Tibet, a pinch of salt — and that makes it more substantial, more lasting, something we want to drink every day. Yet no matter how tea is prepared, its main ingredient is always water. We can live without tea, but not without water. Likewise, we are born without religion, but not without the basic need for compassion — and not without the fundamental need for water.**

Excerpt From: “Ethics Are More Important Than Religion”  
*An Appeal to the World* by Dalai Lama and Franz Alt, iBooks

# The Pursuit of Wisdom

N. SRI RAM

THE character of any organization does not depend entirely upon its aims, however wonderful and noble they may be, because those who constitute the organization will interpret those aims in their own way. Therefore, the actual character of such an organization as the Theosophical Society (TS) depends upon the individual members, what they think, how they feel and act. There can be no objects nobler than those of the Society. The very word “Theosophy” suggests something transcendental, supreme, out of this earth. The name of the organization and its objects as formulated are as wide and lofty.

Yet, with such aims, is the Society actually fulfilling its mission of promoting the progress of humanity, making an impact upon the human mind and affairs? When one looks at it in that manner and thinks of how wonderful an organization the TS can be, in fact as well as in theory, one realizes that a radical change must come about in the mentality, in the outlook and way of life pursued by the members themselves. Then anyone who looks at the Society will feel immediately that it is something outside the ordinary, that the

truth which we call Theosophy is perhaps much more important than the truth which people seek in other fields, such as modern science.

It is not a change in organization that is needed. There are many people who make suggestions and proposals for tinkering with the organization and methods of propaganda. There are suggestions such as: let us not have Lodges at all, but depend only upon study classes; or, we need to use television and radio instead of having lectures; we must employ experts in public relations; and then the TS will come to be known and will become a world force; and so on.

But what is important is a change in the quality of the life that flows through the organization; that seems so much more important than procedures and outer forms. Is the life flowing in every part of the organization? Or does it just stand still, like water in a stagnant pool? Are we merely cutting stencils of thought in smaller or larger quantities and selling them, to use an American expression?

The very nature of the mind is to fragment the expression of life which is an

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energy that always flows and expresses itself in various forms, but everywhere life expresses itself in a certain inner unity. But the mind, looking at the form and not at the energy that flows from it or its nature, fragments that expression and sees only the parts. It then puts the parts together to make a whole; it is good at assembling! That is the nature of the present mechanical civilization. The parts are assembled cunningly, a very elaborate organization is created for a particular purpose and no other. So our present civilization is essentially technological, but soulless.

In the pursuit of what is called knowledge the analytical mind breaks everything into different parts, studies their formal aspect but allows the life within to disappear. Where Theosophy becomes a mere matter of intellectualism it will fail to reach the hearts of people. They may be stimulated for a time by one subject of discussion or another but that will not really make a change in their lives or make Theosophy attractive.

Some say that science has gone far beyond Theosophy as presented in our books, and, as other pursuits are more pleasing to the modern mind, we cannot make any impression with such an old-fashioned and sticky thing as Theosophy. People who say this perhaps do not understand the nature of this Wisdom which we call Theosophy, and merely look at it superficially.

In one of the letters from the Mahatmas the Master says, "few of us would care to play the part in life of a desiccated pansy

between the leaves of a volume of solemn poetry". The Mahatmas are not bloodless, dried-up, prosaic, just repeating certain words. The knowledge of the Mahatmas does not pertain merely to the superficial aspect of things, but of that which lies within, of life as well as of form. It is not just head-learning consisting of mere intellectual concepts but does not touch the nature of the person or affect the quality of his life. The learning occupies the brain and the brain occupies itself with the learning.

The Adepts have knowledge gained by a process of knowing through living their lives completely, and this knowing is not isolated from life, but is an expression of it. When knowledge is gained in that manner then it is not just mental knowledge. So, what we should seek is not merely to occupy the mind with themes which we consider important, but to act in a different way, which will bring about a change in our very being.

When we use the words "science" and "religion" they really refer to these two different modes of action. Science, in the modern sense, can be pursued on the intellectual plane, the heart has nothing to do with it. But when we speak of religion, it refers to a different kind of action that takes place in the individual. Perhaps one might use the words "mind" and "heart" instead of "science" and "religion". But unfortunately, the heart can be as narrow as the mind, as rigid and stilted, and also the word "heart" conveys different meanings to different people. One may have all kinds of personal and petty emotions and reactions which might

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be termed the heart of the individual. But there is no other English word which can convey that quality or aspect of consciousness which is capable of functioning as a totality.

What really characterizes the religious attitude or spirit is not the beliefs or the practices or the allegiances; these vary from one religion to another. We are not speaking of any particular religion but of Religion itself, of what characterizes the religious attitude. It is wholeheartedness, complete dedication. In a religious man you will find the total response, devotion in the real sense is total, complete; there is no reservation whatever, nothing is held back. And that is really the action of the totality of one's being. The attitude of the religious man is really one which is completely unified, totally undivided. The Sanskrit word *advaita* refers to this unity which exists within oneself. When people say that there is the One and no other and therefore there is no duality at all, that is only an idea. But it is possible, as a matter of living, of one's own experiencing, to be completely undivided in oneself.

Our true nature, which is ever unconditioned, is that of peace, goodness and undividedness. In the Upanishadic stanzas used for meditation, there are the words, *śāntam, śivam, advaitam* — peace, goodness, undividedness. And that nature can be experienced within ourselves. We can know for ourselves that it is possible to live with a nature which is unified, completely undivided, which is at peace in itself, in which there is not a dual conflicting personality. Such a nature can act

with the whole of itself, without any reservation, and such action is very different from the action of the mind, which is only an instrument of the whole being of man.

Without being religious in any conventional sense, it is possible to be wholehearted and completely selfless, in a state of love. If a person is in that condition, if he is really selfless, if it is not the so-called love which is an expression of the self for its own purposes, then he is wholehearted. In fact, that is the only state in which one really experiences the wholeness of one's being. Love, in the real sense, is wholly voluntary, it is pure goodwill. It is only at such times that one experiences the truth of what might be described as the totality of action. *One's whole nature acts.*

Therefore, no one is truly religious except when he acts with a nature of love, a nature which is without a self. We speak of a man as religious when he shows devotion. The word "devotion" which conveys the idea of wholeheartedness, self-abnegation, a certain force which is capable of action, really denotes love without any element of self. We may have a sense of awe when we are in the presence of a great Being, but that sense of awe is not fear. There is the biblical phrase, "Perfect love casteth out fear". Fear arises because you are afraid that another person may hurt you. But when you completely trust another person, then there can be no fear. You do not think of what might happen to you, because there is no "I" or "you" in this love. It is possible to be in that state of love only when there

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is no element of fear. Fear inhibits. You approach someone for a reason, but are inhibited by your fear that he may not think well of you, that he may find out your weaknesses, and think you are petty. That means you are afraid of losing your own self-esteem, you fear that you will fall in this great person's estimation. But only if you do not seek anyone's estimation, or feel the need to be thought good or important, and have no fear at all, can you give absolute love.

Our so-called devotion is mostly a kind of service, or loyalty with expectations. They may not be verbally expressed, but do exist. We expect, at least, approval, goodwill, blessing or some kind of a benefit. If I say that I am loyal to my God, in that very expression there is a feeling of possession; I am loyal to him because I desire his grace, his goodwill, his protection; I want to be able to call upon him whenever I am in trouble.

When we understand the true meaning of the word "heart" which is not one's petty personal emotions, we can realize that it is to be associated with all that is most beautiful in life. It is a wonderful feeling, devoid of fear and expectation; a state of being undivided, in which there is only the giving of itself. And that really points to certain depths which the mind cannot fathom, however clever one may be, however good the intellect may be. One cannot talk much of soul-wisdom, which *The Voice of the Silence* distinguishes from head-learning, because it does not lend itself to the language of the mind. It has to be experienced person-

ally. Nothing more can be said about it.

The principal quest of the Society is not just knowledge of various aspects of Nature which are beyond our present ken. You may know about various Rounds, Chains and so on, but you still do not become a different being because of that knowledge. The true value of knowledge is perceived only in the light of whatever wisdom one may possess.

The word "Theosophy" means this Wisdom, which the *Bhagavadgītā* describes as lifegiving, and not just information because that does not make much of a difference to our lives. If, in each of its parts, the Society pursues this Wisdom, as distinguished from mere knowledge, it will have a different character. Then the Society will be really able to be a factor in bringing about the change that is needed by the whole world. One's entire life has to be dedicated to the pursuit of Wisdom, and not just in the study classes. Really speaking, the Wisdom is a certain approach which has to manifest itself all the time and in relation to all incidents, circumstances and people. It would be a wonderful Society if even a good number of its members are really dedicated to the pursuit of that extraordinary thing which is called Theosophy. The ordinary is what the mind can grasp, but the extraordinary is something which is to be experienced only in the depths of ourselves, and we can experience it only when our whole nature is rid of all impediment, when it has been cleansed of all its wrong ideas, its wrong beliefs and wrong thinking. ✧

## *Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom*

I DIED a mineral and became a plant.  
I died a plant and rose an animal.  
I died an animal and I was man.  
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?  
Yet once more I shall die as man, to soar  
With the blessed angels; but even from angelhood  
I must pass on. All except God perishes.  
When I have sacrificed my angel soul,  
I shall become that which no mind ever conceived.  
O, let me not exist! for Non-Existence proclaims,  
“To Him we shall return.”

Jalaluddin Rumi

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