

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

A Path to Beauty

TIM BOYD

BEFORE going into the subject, it would be well and honest for me to issue something of a disclaimer: due to the vastness of the subject, beauty, like truth, being inexhaustible and ever present, I can guarantee that this narrative necessarily will be inadequate — an inadequate narrative about an inexpressible subject. The best approach would be for us not to regard beauty as something to be defined, but rather to treat our time together this evening as if we were going to take a walk together, much like taking a walk here in Adyar, where we have forested areas, with temples situated within those forests. We will take a walk around this subject of beauty, and perhaps during its course we will be able to catch a glimpse of the beautiful. If so, we will have done what we can do.

In 1880, one year after the Theosophical Society (TS) had moved its operations to India, Col. H. S. Olcott made a visit to the Maharaja of Benares (now Varanasi). He was joined by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) shortly after his arrival there. During their stay they became acquainted with the family motto of the Maharaja: *satyānnāsti paro dharma*, or “There is no Dharma higher than Truth”, translated by us as, “There is no religion higher than Truth”.

Very shortly after that visit the Founders adopted this as the motto of the TS.

Since that time, we have been keenly focused on Truth and the search for Truth. In reality it is the search aspect that occupies the greatest part of what we do, because Truth itself has a habit of being illusive or veiled to us. In our approach to this search for Truth, necessarily we have had to place a great deal of our attention on small “t” truths, and there are many of those.

Within the range of the teachings of Theosophy as we know it, there are a few categories that we address. Some of those lesser truths concern the multidimensional nature of our universe and of ourselves. The sevenfold nature of the human being and this universe has been one of the truths that has been elucidated. We have also focused on the fact that this is a universe in which intelligence is omnipresent. There is no place where intelligence does not manifest itself. Whether we go from the mineral to the vegetable, animal, human, devic (angelic), to the higher unseen kingdoms of Nature, every aspect of it reveals a profound interconnected intelligence. That has been one of the truths we have tended to focus upon.

We have also given significant attention

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to our role within this universe in which we find ourselves. One of the things that we become aware of is that we have a certain responsibility. We are not merely a “fortuitous concurrence of atoms” idly passing through the world. In the immature phases of our unfoldment we are insufficiently aware to assume much direction. In the Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB describes what initially spurs our growth — as “natural impulse”. We are being pushed, impelled by Nature. Much like the wind blows fallen leaves, we are pushed by circumstance and environment.

But the time comes — and it is the most important time for anyone who finds the theosophical work meaningful — when the capacity to choose dawns upon us. Conscious choices have to be made. In that process of choosing, self-induced and self-devised efforts become the focus. So it is self-responsibility and the various ways in which we interact with the processes of unfoldment that become our focus. This is another one of these truths — the idea that every one of us is unfolding and are participating in that process, and that there is something magnificent that can, and ultimately *will*, be revealed. This is also one of those truths.

These small “t” truths that we have been given, and to which we continually expose ourselves are much like a ladder up which we climb, step by step. As we move through this process, we begin to become aware that these are not isolated facts or processes. The interconnection and interdependence of these many truths

start to reveal a pattern to our inner eye that is imprinted upon the universe at every level we encounter it. The pattern is the same in all its parts. The relationship we begin to witness is expressed in the Hermetic axiom: “As it is above, so it is below. As it is within, so it is without.” The more deeply we delve, the more elements of that pattern become apparent to us.

This pattern describes the nature of the universe, of our experience within it. To those who have seen more deeply into it, there is a way that they can describe it. The word they would use for this pattern would be “beautiful”. There is a profound beauty to the interconnection that exists, and it is everywhere. Confucius made the statement: “Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it.” This is the circumstance in which we find ourselves. Everything from the exalted expressions of the great masters and teachers, to the processes of decay, breakdown, even disease, has a beauty, an order, and a pattern that it operates within, and it is all part of this Oneness that has been continually emphasized.

In the TS we have spent much less energy in the appreciation or search for beauty than we have in the search for truth.

Several years ago, in what now seems like ancient times technologically, when I traveled my suitcase would always be loaded down with the books I was reading. Since the advent of e-books and iPads my traveling library consists of 300 to 400 books that fit in a device the size of a small pad of paper. One of those books I travel with is *The Secret Doctrine* [SD]. The

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other day, out of curiosity, I typed in the word “truth” to see how many times it appeared in *SD*; it appeared 519 times. Then I typed in the word “beauty”, and in the over 1,500 pages it appeared only 38 times. In *The Voice of the Silence*, a much smaller book, “truth” appeared 27 times, and “beauty” once. In *At the Feet of the Master*, basically a pamphlet, “truth” only appeared 4 times, and “beauty” 0 times.

This is just a small fact, but it indicates a predisposition within the TS. We are predisposed toward a focus on truth, with the primary means to approach Truth being through *lesser*, often intellect-bound, truths. So we tend to become fixated on our point of view about the lesser truths that we have encountered.

So what is beauty? Of course, this is a question that I cannot satisfactorily answer. What I *can* do is this. The Western world of Europe and America, and those places where the Western nations have left their footprint, are lands where the religious approach to the wisdom tradition draws on the Judeo-Christian tradition. So, the Bible is highly regarded. There is one particular Book within the Bible, the Book of Psalms which comprises of 150 psalms. Each one was initially written as a song. Some are songs of praise to the divine, some are petitions for help in times of need, others are songs of thanksgiving, and so on.

For anyone who was brought up in this Western environment, there is one particular psalm that every person was exposed to, probably even memorized — the 23rd Psalm. It is a psalm of trust in the Lord, trust in the protecting influence of

the Divine. The 23rd Psalm begins: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” The Lord is depicted as the one who leads and cares for the sheep (us). This psalm continues: “He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” The psalm then goes on to describe other aspects of the divine protection and trust: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Every child in the Christian tradition is exposed to this 23rd Psalm.

Many years ago I was at a function, and there was a well-known theatrical actor who was asked to recite the 23rd Psalm, which he did. It was remarkable, because his words were so perfectly formed: the way he projected the words could be heard throughout the room; his diction was flawless. It was quite an experience to hear this psalm pronounced so well. There was also a little old man there. He was a devout Christian and had experienced many trials in his life. He came and recited the same psalm and, in reciting it, his diction and pronunciation were not so good, his voice was soft and did not carry well, but the palpable sense of his union and complete trust in this divine shepherd was so profound, that the entire room fell silent.

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When he finished, some responded by crying, some by just shaking their heads, and the only word they could say was “beautiful”.

When we talk about beauty, I carry this as my best approximation of a definition. It does not define in terms of words, but in the sense that there is an ever-presence around us and accessible to us from moment to moment. Those moments occur when we stand in that presence, and it is not a matter of thought. When this man spoke everyone present found themselves, at least momentarily, free from their normal cycle of thought. We had been lifted to a doorway, and through it shown beauty itself. This is the nature of the experience of beauty. Definition is secondary. The experience is based on an omnipresence. It is not in any way separable from truth. With this recitation by the old man came a sense of *power*, of peace.

Often in our consideration of matters related to theosophical teachings, it is not just convenient, but necessary that we divide things into categories. So, for example, in *The Voice of the Silence* we have the sevenfold enumeration of the Buddhist *pāramitās*, or perfections (virtues): generosity (*dāna*), harmony (*śīla*), perseverance (*virya*), patience (*kshānti*), indifference to pleasure and pain (*virāga*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). We tend to focus on them as if somehow they could be isolated the one from the other, but is it possible to have generosity and not have wisdom, or to be patient and not have perseverance, or to separate any of these from each other?

For our purposes as limited, unfolding human beings, this kind of categorization is necessary. As highly as we think of ourselves, probably we are not so advanced as we imagine. Similarly, with beauty. In today's world beauty is considered in many different ways, but a good deal of what we regard as beautiful has been instilled in us through our culture, families, and society. From the moment a soul occupies a body, there is a process of imprinting cultural views on to that consciousness.

Anyone who is born into a family becomes imprinted with the family genetics, religion, nationality, values, and so forth. Along with these views comes the perception of those things which are beautiful. These do not necessarily transfer to other cultures. For example, in the United States, for the past couple of decades, the sense of feminine beauty has involved extreme bodily thinness. In other parts of the world, fuller sorts of bodies are considered beautiful. For males in Korea these days, perfect whitened, flawless skin is a sign of the beauty of the moment. In other places this idea of masculine beauty looks odd.

All around the world, for various reasons, wherever you find the brown peoples of the world, there is always a huge industry selling products to lighten the skin, trying to make themselves whiter. The world standard largely projected in this particular time, tends to say that whiter is more beautiful. People in the northern climates try to get a tan. The standards of beauty are very flexible, and really irrelevant to beauty and perhaps

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destructive of our capacity to actually access the truly beautiful.

Socrates said: "By beauty, all beautiful things become beautiful." Beauty itself, not the particulars of the form, is what gives the appearance of beauty to those things that we perceive. From the physical perspective beauty is something that is fragmented, where we are looking at people, places, and things, and determining according to cultural values what is beautiful.

In Western civilization we have something that has been called "the golden mean", or "the divine proportion", or "the golden ratio", which describes a mathematical proportion that defines beauty. Many feel that it is a universal and absolute standard. However, even this standard does not apply to all cultures. In Japan, drawing out of the Zen tradition, we have a philosophy of beauty called "*wabi-sabi*". Basically, what it identifies as the beautiful requires things that are necessarily impermanent, incomplete, and imperfect. The flower design that we have on our Convention program this year is drawn from that flower-arrangement tradition of *wabi-sabi*. So with items that are worn through use, their impermanence creates a certain beauty that might not be there otherwise. In this tradition the strict symmetry of the Western "golden mean" does not translate as beautiful.

So how do we access the beautiful that appears in so many different ways? The most present and immediate access that is provided to us comes through our interaction with Nature. It is unfortunate that the natural world, for many people, is be-

coming more and more of a luxury. HPB wrote an article titled "Civilization, the Death of Beauty". The majority of people in today's world are living in urban settings that generally have been planned with little thought for the natural world. But there is something about the energetic patterns in Nature that are stabilizing. That is why we always find ourselves drawn to it.

If we were to look for a basic definition of Nature, it would be something like: "Everything except humanity and its creations." In the world of human creations the rhythms and patterns that are available in the natural world are subverted. They are irregular within the human-created world. We feel this, and it is becoming a growing influence in the world today. Additionally, from the theosophical point of view, we are aware that there are other levels of intelligence that associate themselves with Nature and natural settings. The *devic* kingdom lives and dwells in areas such as these, which make them suitable for the encounter with beauty.

Those who have had mystical experiences feel a union with the Divine. Most of those experiences have occurred in Nature in one way or another. In mystical traditions of the world, just as truth tends to be the focus for the Theosophical approach, love and beauty tend to be the mystical approach. The desire to become unified with the all-beautiful Divine is the goal of the mystic. In that process we have had many great people throughout history who have had that experience of union, who go on to become great healers and teachers for the rest of us.

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There is a lovely small book of Christian mysticism written in the late 14th century — a book called *The Cloud of Unknowing*. In it the anonymous monk who authored it as a guidebook to the approach to the mystical union with the Divine, talks about two different phases of this process. One is that through love one directs oneself toward the Divine. In his words: “By love, God may be gotten and held, but by thought, never.” So by love one can approach the Divine, but thought can rise no higher than the planes of mental activity.

In this process of approaching the Divine, what this anonymous monk describes is the “cloud of unknowing” that we enter into. It is a cloud, an obscuring quality, that hides from us the presence of the Divine that we seek, but from the directing influence of our love we are transported into its presence. In order to actually have the experience of the Divine, he says that there is a second cloud that we must generate for ourselves, the “cloud of forgetting”. This second cloud is that of withdrawing ourselves from our involvement in our various thoughts, desires, friendships, and deeds that we have to do. In the yoga tradition this cloud of forgetting is referred to as *pratyāhāra* — the withdrawing of the senses from the objects of sensation. It is in this in-between space where we encounter Beauty, or the Divine.

There have been great people who have worked along this line, both inside and outside of specific spiritual traditions. The method of approach can be made

more practical. *The Cloud of Unknowing* is a handbook for mystics. Perhaps not all of us are drawn in that direction, but still *everyone* desires beauty in their lives. A great inventor by the name of Buckminster Fuller was always thinking something on the cutting edge. He made the comment that: “When I am working on a problem, I never think about beauty.” But he adds: “When I have arrived at a solution, if it is not beautiful, it is wrong.” Beauty must be a part of anything that is true; the two are inseparable.

During World War II, in Vienna, Austria, there was a Jewish psychologist. He and his family were separated and taken away to the concentration camps. He never again saw his family. During the four years that he spent in different prison camps he wrote a book that has been described as one of the greatest books of the 20th century. It is titled *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Dr Victor Frankl. He was a psychiatrist and neurologist who developed an approach to psychology called logotherapy. It became the third wave in psychology after Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

The fundamental principle of his approach is that we human beings require a sense of meaning in our lives, and get that meaning in three ways, the first two of which are (1) from the work that we do, and (2) from our sense of place. To many people there are places that give meaning to their lives, such as their ancestral home or some sacred space.

However, in the situation in which Frankl found himself, these two sources

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of meaning were unavailable. Uprooted from his life and practice in Vienna, placed into the brutalizing and demeaning atmosphere of the concentration camps the normal range of choices was taken away — when to get up in the morning, what to eat, who he was going to see, or what profession he would pursue. In conditions such as these it is a third category, in addition to a sense of work and place, that gives meaning to life: (3) the freedom and will to choose, which never disappears. In whatever circumstance we find ourselves, we still have the inward capacity to choose.

He gives examples of how the will to choose carried him through his time in the concentration camps. One of the main things that enabled him to survive the horrific experience was his conscious choice to see beauty. He comments on how one day he was eating his daily ration of soup. It was far from nourishing and described by the prisoners as “dirty water”. Looking into the bowl he found a floating fish head. He contemplated that fish head, the beauty of the scales, the way the eyes reflected light, and the shimmering nature of the skin. Its beauty struck him as profound. He said that, as a prisoner in a concentration camp, the beauty of art and Nature struck him as never before. There are always choices we can make.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote an autobiography called *My Experiments with Truth*. I like that title very much because it speaks to the experimentation we are all engaged in. In my own experience, I came to the Theosophical Society in Chicago because I met a man who was

very much alive with Theosophy and able to speak to the younger generation (I was 19 years old). At that time a group of us young people from all around the country somehow found our way to this man in Chicago, and without being aware of it started a theosophical community.

Looking back at that experience that happened so many years ago, in many ways it was an experiment, not just with truth, but with beauty. This is because we found ourselves in a neighborhood in Chicago that at one time was grand, but which had greatly declined over the years. Many people in the area were from dysfunctional families, many buildings had been abandoned, and one-third of the land had vacant lots where homes used to be. We had come to that area to study Theosophy, but we also had the advantage of youth, and the boundless energy that comes with it.

Our group pooled the little money we had and bought the building next door, which was in bad condition. The very first thing we did was we started to beautify: where there had been no grass, we planted it; where no flower had bloomed in years, we planted flower gardens. Then we took over some of the vacant lots; we started to grow vegetables. The younger people in the neighborhood started to notice this activity and wanted to be a part of it. They would ask questions about this “Theosophy thing”. So we would work in the day, then at night we had classes on Theosophy with these younger people.

Any place we could find something that needed it, we took it upon ourselves

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to beautify it. In that process of beautification, many lives were affected. Many young people in the neighborhood were having addiction problems, many suffered from a sense of depression that comes with an inability to envision a positive future. Many of these people would come to talk about depression and ask about what they could do. Often we would put a shovel in their hands and say: “Come with us, we’re going to dig up this garden! Later we can talk about depression.” It is surprising how a hard day of physical work helps one forget about depression! Many young people were affected and went on to have dramatic changes in their lives. And, really, it was all a result of the emphasis on beauty.

Beauty is attractive, powerful. Just like food, shelter, and love, it is an essential need. When we think about what we can do in the theosophical work, sometimes we limit ourselves unnecessarily. Often we feel as if clothing these truths in words and passing those words onto someone else is the basis of our work. Clearly, this has value, but the number of ways that we can impact this world are as limited as the number of things that we are capable of doing.

I very much liked what Dr James Tepfer said at the end of his talk when he was discussing Gandhi and Theosophy. He said that all over the world today small “eco-communities” have formed —focused, magnetic groups which, consciously or unconsciously, are rooting a new consciousness on the planet by the example of their living. One of the features of any effort

made to establish this coming higher order of being is that in various ways every such effort receives support and guidance from higher sources. Without seeking it out, we were such a community in Chicago.

If in our theosophical centers we do not have some focus on beauty, then we also limit our focus on truth. It is very easy to reflect the view, to call people’s attention to something beautiful that points to the beauty that is behind it. In today’s world there is a growing awareness of the encroachment of the non-beautiful, the harmful, the non-life-affirming. Many of us feel ourselves powerless in the face of these things: “What can I do? I’m just one small person!” But there is not a person among us who cannot make a beginning, who cannot choose to see beauty, and reflect meaning in our surroundings, or in the thoughts that we allow to course through our minds. We have choices in those matters as well, whether through action or inaction we are solving, or contributing, to the problem.

Right before us there is a path to the beautiful. Right within us it is there, but it only becomes *real* as we exert the necessary effort to bring it forward, to make it known, to bring it into the world.

At the beginning I told you that this would be an inadequate narrative about an inexpressible subject. I think that was an honest assessment, but hopefully it has not been without some value. I want to encourage you to beautify your lives, to beautify this world. We have the capacity, and certainly there is a need. ✧

Giordano Bruno

ANNIE BESANT

COME with me to Rome, to the Field of Flowers, where now stands a statue of Bruno, and then come with me backwards through the centuries.

It is 17 February, AD 1600. A great crowd is seething in an open space in an ancient city. A confused murmur of voices arises, and some words may be caught: “A cursed heretic.” “Serves him right.” “Burning too good for him.” “Obstinate as a mule.” Monks slip about among the people, stirring them to fury. As they pass from group to group, fists are shaken in the air, clutching fingers are stretched out as though to seize and rend. In the midst of the crowd an open space is kept by armed men, and in the centre of it rises a high black pole. From the pole dangle fetters — a ring to clasp the neck, a larger one for the waist, others for the ankles; around it are heaped up faggots and brushwood, and from a brazier nearby leap up flames, pale in the sunlight. Necks are craned in expectation; faces are turned to the corner of the space where a road opens into it — a road from which a path is kept, leading direct to the centre through the crowd; expectation rises high. We are

in the Campo dei Fiori, the “Field of Flowers”, in Rome.

Hark! there is a roar, the roar of an angry mob — one of the most terrifying of sounds, human brutality set loose. The roar swells and swells, discordant yells and curses mingle with it. A procession has entered by the road, a procession of monks, and it advances through the crowd along the guarded path. There is a break in the procession, and in the midst there are guards; within their circle, in a space left vacant that all may see it, a figure walks alone. Tall and spare from long suffering is he, limping slightly, for he has known the torture of the rack; the face calm, but very pale from years of prison; the head held high with a touch of defiant scorn; tawny green-flecked eyes, steady but weary, looking outwards as though at some far vision, unseen by all save them; mouth set close and firm, curving into a grim smile and turned away as a monk pushes against it a crucifix of iron; clad in a hideous robe, with lurid flames and grinning devils, ill-painted, grotesque and abominable, but powerless to destroy the dignity of the form it clothes. It is

Dr Annie Besant was the second international President of the Theosophical Society from 1907 to 1933. Excerpts from her book, *Giordano Bruno — An Apostle of Theosophy*.

Giordano Bruno

Giordano Bruno. It is the Nolan, going to his death.

The guards chain him to the stake; he stands there, with back against the pole, and head upraised, gazing into the illimitable expanse of space. The flames flash up; a cloud of smoke upraises and hides the strong calm face. Within that pall of smoke the martyr dies, but the life has left the frame ere yet the flames have scorched it and *he* has gone home — home to the Master he adores, home for short respite, for brief rest, ere he takes again a body, and returns to the work he loves. The message he proclaimed in the sixteenth century is ringing through the world in the twentieth. For he taught the Ancient Wisdom; he brought to the western world the message of Theosophy, Messenger from the White Lodge.

Filippo Bruno, later called Giordano, was born in the ancient town of Nola, near Naples, a place which had kept alive the memories of Pythagoras, and was a cradle of Alexandrian Neoplatonic thought. From his infancy he had imbibed those ancient teachings, and he grew up in their atmosphere. At the age of fifteen he became a monk, and, on his taking the vows, he was given the name of Giordano, that of a famous Dominican, for the monks were captivated by his brilliant intelligence, and regarded him as a future pillar of their order. Poor monks! They augured ill.

For some years the lad studied within the library of the monastery, and that, said the admiring monks, was very well. But the lad also observed, and that, if they had

known it, they would have said was not so well. Presently he began to ask questions — unnecessary questions, troublesome questions, very soon dangerous questions — and that, said the monks, was very ill. And then — wickedness — he began to write, and his caustic wit, at which they had so often laughed under the trees in the still evening, was turned on them, and there were gibes, and mockeries, and taunting nicknames, and at last, horror of horrors, sheer blasphemies. Quick, send off word to the Inquisition to send some of its Familiars to crop the wings of this young eagle, beating against the bars of the monkish cage, where only was wanted the useful domestic fowl.

Giordano Bruno heard of the coming Inquisitors, and, having no mind to submit himself to their tender mercies, over the wall of the monastery he slipped, lithe and agile, and took the northward road. With him was another young monk, whom he loved as a brother, and who, in turn, was tenderly attached to him. Many a light-hearted joke cheered the fugitives as they took the way to Rome, for both were young, and both were joyous, and their hearts throbbed high with hope, as they faced the unknown future. From that day, until they captured him in Venice, the Inquisitors hunted him over Europe, but never succeeded in laying a hand upon him. Yet through all the many years of journeying in Europe, his road led straight to the Field of Flowers in Rome.

First the young travellers went to Rome itself — a foolish visit — and soon had to flee from the Sacred City. Then to Noli, a

Giordano Bruno

little northern town — not to be confused with Giordano's birthplace — and tried to gain their living by teaching. Here Giordano picked up a lad, one of his scholars, who conceived for him a most passionate attachment, and the boy, when his master turned northward, clung to him, declaring vehemently that he would follow him whithersoever he went, were it even unto death. And truly it was to death he went, the gallant boy. For the three travelled to Geneva, where the stern Calvin had established a religious despotism, cruel as that of Rome, so that, ere long, threatened by the city authorities, headed by the equally ruthless Beza, it was thought well that, once more, they should slip over a wall and flee away. To Lyons they went, and then to Toulouse, and in Toulouse the Noli lad found his fate. For the Inquisition captured him, when he chanced to be away from his friends, and its terrible tortures racked the boy, to force him to betray his master into their hands.

Giordano made desperate efforts to find out what had befallen him, but behind its heavy iron-sheeted doors the Inquisition crouched over its prey. And the lad died, smiling in his death-agony and loyal to the last, and thus won the right to work in a future life with him for whom he died.

Northward to Paris went Bruno, sad at heart, but soon he lost sadness by plunging into energetic work, capturing the hearts of the Paris students, delighted with the contrast between his caustic wit and passionate fervour and the dry-as-dust lucubrations of their ordinary teachers.

Henry III, the King at the time, also lost his changeable heart to the eloquent Italian, and some bright days of Court favour followed. But alas, when a professorship was offered to him it was coupled with the obligation to attend mass, an obligation which Giordano would have none of. Gloomy King Henry, a bigoted Catholic, frowned on his rebellious favourite, and the gathering storm warned the heretic to betake himself out of its range. To England, ruled by Protestant Queen Bess went he, and formed a warm and lasting friendship with noble Sir Philip Sidney, the pattern of knightly honour. But he went alone, for the friend who had fled with him from his Italian monastery remained in Paris, lured by the bribes of royal favour and safe protection, and the warm heart of Bruno received a deadly stab . . .

Presently, even England became too hot for the heretic, and in 1586 . . . once more was Bruno a wanderer. . . . [After many years, in] Frankfurt he betook himself to publish his last works. And there came to him the letter that lured him to his death . . . offering him protection and a home. The longing to return to Italy burned in the heart of the exile; . . . he turned his steps southward and . . . arrived in Venice. . . .

Seized by the dark Familiars of the Inquisition, thrown into the gloomy prison cell beneath the level of the waves, he is brought forth into the torture chamber, and bound upon the rack. . . . The slow turning of the wheels strains the muscles well-nigh to tearing; agony intolerable rends every joint. But no word of recantation soils the

Giordano Bruno

writhen lips, and at last, the tortured body, broken and torn, is cast, a senseless heap, on the damp floor of its dungeon.

Eight years of prison follow — the last two lightened by renewed debate, for Rome sought to dishonour even more than to destroy. How great her triumph, if Giordano would recant, and return to the bosom of Mother Church. He is worn to a shadow with long imprisonment; his hair is white, as the hair of an aged man. His limbs are twisted and bent. Surely his courage must be outworn, his high heart broken? Nay, his Master has been with him in the dungeon, has stood beside him in the torture chamber: “But a little longer, son of mine, and you shall come home to me again.” The eyes are bright with courage as he stands before his judges; at last, at last, the day of his freedom approaches, and the long fight nears its close. Undaunted his mien; fearless his ringing defiance. The morning of his triumph at last has dawned, and, in a chariot of fire, he goes home.

As we seek to place ourselves within the consciousness of such martyrs, we shall ever find them inspired by some vast vision of the future, which transports them out of the trivialities of the present, and makes all that the world calls precious but as the

dust on the wheels of an advancing chariot. Rapt in that vision, they see not the gauds of earth; its prizes are valueless, its praises and its blame are but as empty air. They may have their hours of depression, their agonies of loneliness, their nights of almost despair. But they have but to open their eyes to behold the Vision Glorious, and ever in the depths of their Spirit there is peace untroubled and an unchanging joy. For they abide in the Eternal, and their feet stand unshaken on that Rock.

In these modern days the young citizen need scarcely prepare himself for physical martyrdom, for the times have changed, racks are mouldering, fires are quenched. But if he would be a leader, nonetheless must he cultivate within himself the heroic qualities which make the martyr. Martyrdom is now on a higher plane, the plane of the emotions and the mind. He must live, not die, a martyr. There are still ideals which are worth martyrdom; there is still a service which demands the sacrifice of all the world holds dear. Fortune, fame, honour in the world's eyes, affection of family and friends, respect of those we love, good reputation — all that makes earthly life fair and sweet: these, these are the gifts they may pour out as libations in the service of the Masters to the progress of man. ✧

Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:44–47

Origin and Evolution of Species: Beyond Darwinism

P. C. KESAVAN

Introduction:

It was about 11 to 12 thousand years ago that our early ancestors (*Homo sapiens*) made a transition from food gathering and hunting to cultivation of crops and domestication of animals for milk, meat, and draught. It led to a settled lifestyle that provided leisure to indulge in a variety of creative activities such as music, fine arts, sculpture, astronomy, science, and philosophy. Thus a great evolution of spiritual and cultural ethos began and humans began to dominate all other species in the biosphere of the planet.

The question then is: What drove our ancestors to take to farming, and then to creative thinking, rather than be content with just satisfying basic physical needs? The answer is “curiosity”. The urge was to know everything about themselves, and about every animate and inanimate object around them. Besides observations and interpretations, a mystical power among a very few unearthed some of the great secrets of Nature. While Darwinism falls in the former category, occult chemistry falls in the latter. Strange but true is the

accuracy of the knowledge derived by occult power, instead of observations and interpretations such as with Darwinism.

In 1859, Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* states that small variations accumulating in organisms are acted upon by natural selection. The variations could either enhance or weaken the ability of organisms to adapt to a given ecological niche; and “natural selection” results in the survival and reproductive success of individuals or groups best adjusted to their environment, which leads to their perpetuation. The organisms which are not adapted to a given environment reproduce less and less, and finally become extinct. Darwin did not know how the “variations” in the heritable traits of organisms arose.

About the same time that Darwin had finished writing *On the Origin of Species*, Johann Gregor Mendel, in Brunn, then in Austria, had enunciated the Laws of Inheritance in 1865. An important contribution of Mendelism is that the contrasting pairs of characteristics, “alleles”, (say, a plant with red flowers and another with yellow flowers) do not blend in their hybrids but

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segregate in their progeny. Also if a tall plant with red flowers and a short plant with yellow flowers is crossed, the hybrid (the filial generation one or the F1) is largely a tall one with red flowers, showing the dominance of these two traits over the short stature and yellow colour.

However, in the subsequent progeny derived by the self-breeding of the F1 hybrid, there are the tall plants with yellow flowers and short plants with red flowers. The switchover of the traits is called “recombination”. The Mendelian laws unfortunately remained obscure for about thirty-five years until their rediscovery in 1900. A few years later, in 1902, another evolutionary tool, mutation, was discovered. This is the sudden departure from the parent type in one or more heritable characteristics caused by a change in the genetic material. It could be a very small change (point mutation) or a major one involving structural or numerical change in the chromosome complement of the organisms. It is unfortunate that Darwin’s treatise preceded the discovery of the major mechanisms to create variation.

With the integration of the new knowledge (recombination and mutation), the original Darwinism became “Neo-Darwinism” or “Modern Synthesis”. The 20th century witnessed tremendous advancement of genetics and cytogenetics (study of chromosomes which carry the genetic material along with proteins). In particular, the roles of environmental influences and epigenetics in the control of the expression of genes were greatly elucidated. These findings somewhat reduced

the sole responsibility accorded to the genes in inheritance and expression of traits and elevated the Lamarckian thesis that acquired characters (because of environmental influence) are inherited. Hence, the present paradigm of original Darwinism is called “extended evolutionary synthesis”. More rapid and even directed mechanisms of evolution were also discovered.

Evolution of a living cell and its codes

The universe is said to have been a sudden “creation” sometime between 16 to 19 billion years ago. Our solar system with its planets, including Earth, is about 4.5 billion years old. Since it has taken about 11.5 to 14.5 billion years for the formation of the solar system, it is plausible that an evolutionary process followed. The earliest unicellular living organisms appeared about 3.0 billion years ago in the ocean that is best described as the “primeval soup”. Such a long time taken possibly denotes an evolutionary rather than an instantaneous, creative process.

The fact remains that theological interpretations of the origin of life by divine creation preceded the scientific reasoning which started in the 19th century by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829), Charles Darwin (1809–1882) and Johann Gregor Mendel (1822–1884). As against a postulate of God’s creation of all species within a remarkably short time, Darwin suggested a far slower, evolutionary process in which small variations accumulated over long periods of time and these variations could either enhance or diminish the organism’s adaptive capacity in a

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given environment and ecological niche.

It is at this point that “natural selection” acts upon this welter of new forms and favours the survival and multiplication by reproduction of those best-adapted (“fittest”) to the local ecological conditions. Those that are not adapted to the prevailing niche are disadvantaged with increasingly diminishing reproductive capacity and hence the population dies out. In the social context, the phrase “survival of the fittest” could imply that the rich and influential people are better adapted to survive in times of calamity (such as famine) than the poor and the deprived.

This in fact is true. Darwin did not explain how the small variations occurred in the organisms. In his time, the nature of the genetic material had not been known, and more particularly, he probably was not aware of the Laws of Inheritance enunciated in 1865 by his contemporary Johann Gregor Mendel. With the rediscovery of Mendelian Laws of inheritance in 1900, and the discovery of “mutations” in 1902, the mechanisms of the origin of variations were understood. The evolutionary biologists incorporated these findings into “Darwinism”, and the refined version was christened as “Neo-Darwinism”, or “Modern Synthesis”.

From the 1950s to 1990s, advancement in genetics and cytogenetics was truly remarkable, without a parallel. First, that deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is the genetic material was unequivocally established by 1945 using what are called the “transformation experiments” with bacteria which cause pneumonia. In these

studies, DNA from the bacteria caused the disease in mice; however, when the same DNA was first heat-inactivated and then injected into mice it did not cause the infection. So, the genetic material is surely DNA.

The next question was about the structure of DNA, which is so designed to fulfil its obligation of self-replication and “transcription” of information to initiate and control various biosynthetic activities in a cell (cells, in multicellular organisms). Advances in physics and chemistry, particularly in the realm of tools and techniques, helped to elucidate the structure of DNA.

DNA has a double-helical structure and its major feature is the four-lettered alphabet, each letter a nucleotide with one of the four different bases, such as adenine (A), cytosine (C), guanine (G) and thymine (T). These, in groups of threes called “codons” or “triplets”, carry the information in codes for selecting a specific amino acid. With four different letters 64 triplets could be formed; so the genetic vocabulary has 64 words having information to pick specifically one of 20 amino acids to biosynthesize various proteins. For example, a codon or triplet “GCC” delivers information to pick the amino acid glycine.

James Watson and Francis Crick won the Nobel Prize for elucidating the structure of DNA. It involves chemistry and physics. But, they had no clue as to how specific “information” is infused/coded in the triplets. At this point it should be noted that “information” is neither matter nor energy. It is an output of consciousness.

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As of now, science has nothing at all to explain the source and structure, if any, of consciousness. Thus, DNA codes remain a mystery.

No one knows “who” “created” the DNA codes and the four-lettered alphabets which contain two purine and two pyrimidine bases. This is where an “intelligent design” is clearly observed. In fact, a living cell itself is a product of evolution by design; the evolution here is not necessarily a product of random mutations acted upon by natural selection. For example, many organelles such as mitochondria and chloroplasts possibly did not “evolve” within a eukaryotic cell (with a clearly defined nucleus), but have been incorporated from other cells and unicellular organisms.

Evolutionary processes beyond random mutations and natural selection

At the outset, it is emphasized that the rich biodiversity of fauna and flora which form the “biosphere” are the products of neo-Darwinism plus various other cataclysmic rearrangements within the “genome” (entire genetic complement of a cell/organism) and symbiogenetic processes. One of these is the process known as “transposition”. It involves rearrangement of the sequences of the bases in a genome. For instance, if a certain original sequence of the genes, say “ABCDEFGHSYZ” is altered by inversion as “ABCDZYSHGFE”, it drastically changes many traits of the organism. The elements called “transposons” (originally referred to as “controlling elements” by the Nobel Laureate Barbara McClintock

who worked with corn/maize) are a part in the cell’s tool box for reengineering its own DNA for rapid adaptation. Roughly 20 percent of differences between humans and primates exhibit massive rearrangement of blocks of DNA via transposition. Bacteria develop antibiotic resistance not only by a slow and gradual process of random mutations and natural selection but also by horizontal gene transfer.

A class of living organisms called “lichens” are formed by the combination of algae and fungi in symbiotic relationship. The lichens represent “cooperation and survival”, instead of “competition and survival of the fittest” as in Darwinism. Many agri-horticultural crops also are the evolutionary products of crosses between two or more different species and doubling of the chromosomes in the hybrids. For example, the two forms of wheat (the “durum” for making porridge or South Indian “uppuma”, and the “aestivum” for making unleavened bread and “chapattis”) have originated through interspecific hybridisation and “polyploidization” of distinct goat grasses. This is a much faster evolutionary process than random mutations and natural selection. While the evolutionary processes in the origin of cultivated wheat have been elucidated based on known science, what is not known is “who” directed the goat grasses to become a major cereal crop and “why”.

Intelligent Design vs. Darwinism

Despite significant enhancement of convincing data on accelerated and possibly more directed mechanisms of evo-

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lution and origin of species, there are real gaps too; the existing tools and techniques in elucidating “evolutionary gaps” have their own inadequacies and limitations as well. Under these circumstances, the reliance on “creation” dominates. The other interpretation is “intelligent design”. A group of scientists of the “Discovery Institute” based in Seattle, USA <discovery.org>, believe that Nature provides compelling evidence of Intelligent Design that dismisses the claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. So far they have not proven Intelligent Design experimentally.

What the proponents have so far been doing is to look at complex and intricate systems in living organisms and examine the possibility of their origin by random, gradual changes induced by mutations and fixed by natural selection. Two things against Intelligent Design are: (i) Lack of experimental demonstration and/or convincing roadmap of intelligent design with reference to the cases/examples cited, and (ii) A general agreement in several religious faiths on “creation” by God Almighty, whether a Christian or a Hindu God. The problem with the proponents of Intelligent Design is that they do not consider Almighty God as the Intelligent Designer. These considerations raise a “credibility gap” and Intelligent Design is regarded as pseudoscience. Some of the arguments put forth in support of Intelligent Design by its proponents and counterarguments are briefly discussed below:

◆ In his book *Darwin's Black Box*

(1996), Michael Behe points out that “irreducible complexity” in biological systems suggests that Darwinism (random variations accumulating over long periods of time followed by natural selection) could not have put together all the necessary parts in a very short time. The example cited by him is the bacterial flagellum with a molecular motor rotating at 10,000 to 100,000 rpm, which enables the mobility of the bacteria. It is true that the flagellum is a highly organised complex structure with several essential components and these represent “irreducible complexity”.

Intelligent Design questions whether Darwinism could have led to the development of each of these components almost simultaneously and organised a functional flagellum in a very short time. The question is indeed valid. But the point is that Darwinism is not the only evolutionary mechanism in Nature and other biological phenomena such as transposons, epigenetics, and horizontal transfer of genes from one species to another cannot be ruled out. Further, there is the possibility that the highly refined flagellum of the present day could have gradually evolved over a long period of time from far simpler but less efficient structures for mobility.

Yet the basic question that scientific knowledge of today cannot answer is “who” has created these wonderful structures and put them together. There is surely a “divine” role, but why not ascribe it to Almighty God than to an Intelligent Designer who is treated as distinct from the God?

◆ Another argument in favour of Intelligent Design is Stephen Gould's

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“punctuated equilibrium”. It says that evolutionary progress hovers near zero for long periods of time, and then suddenly makes huge forward leaps. For example, life forms appeared on Earth about 3 billion years ago, then for 2 billion years, there were only simple forms of life, mostly in the ocean. Then, rather suddenly, about 540 million years ago, the fossil records reveal a leap of unprecedented proportions known as “Cambrian explosion”, in which a massive expansion of life forms occurred in quick succession. This is noted as a challenge to Darwin’s theory of gradualism. One view is that “Cambrian explosion” resulting in the sudden appearance of new forms of life supports the contention of Intelligent Design; there is no proof of it, though. On the other hand, evolutionary biologists suggest that the intermediary forms might have been extinct, or else, the evolutionary pathway was not Darwinian, but one that involved the rearrangement of the cell’s own DNA (transposon), gene, and genome duplication, as well as epigenetic control of gene expression.

The Discovery Institute has a gold mine in the “Cambrian explosion” and it should explore all possible scientific avenues which might elucidate the “punctuated equilibrium” (Eldredge, N. and Gould, S. J., 1972, Harvard University, *Models in Paleobiology* (pp. 82–115), San Francisco, Freeman Cooper). The observed “discontinuous variation” in speciation certainly questions Darwinism, but it is not scientific evidence either for sudden “creation” or an “Intelligent Design”. It is no doubt one of Nature’s many secrets. The origin

of the Universe, the galaxies, the solar systems with planets and satellites are a complete mystery. The origin of Earth’s biosphere is also a mystery.

Reason and faith in science

Scientific reasoning does not necessarily challenge faith in God. In fact Charles Darwin acknowledged “creation” by God (see S. Dilly, 2012, “Charles Darwin’s Use of Theology in the Origin of Species”, *British J. for the History of Science* 45, 29–56). Dilly wrote: “Several theological assertions are central to Darwin’s case. Darwin believed life was originally created by a deistic God who created the Universe, then abandoned it to the outworking of fixed natural laws ever after.”

Spirituality in scientific endeavours

Today, science can be divided into one for developing technologies for economic gains, and the other for understanding the universe, including life on Earth. In the latter — the quest for truth — spirituality and faith are integral to science. That is why several great scientists were also believers in God. As early as 1543 Copernicus stated: “Endeavour to seek Truth in all things to the extent permitted to human reason by God.” Max Planck (Nobel Laureate in 1918 for quantum theory) observed in 1931: “Both religion and science require a belief in God. For believers, God is in the beginning, and for physicists, He is at the end of all considerations.” Werner Heisenberg (Nobel Laureate in 1932 for the creation of quantum mechanics) stated: “The first gulp

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from the glass of natural sciences will turn you into an atheist, but at the bottom of the glass God is waiting for you.” More recently, Stephen Hawking (2007) observed that God created the integers.

Conclusion

Charles Darwin laid the foundation stone of the science of the origin and evolution of

species. He did assign the role of Creation to Almighty God. Later evolutionary biologists elucidated many evolutionary pathways that are much simpler, faster, and directed. As to be expected, there are still gaps in our understanding of the origin and evolution of not only species but also of the universe itself. These are in God’s domain and He is indeed the Intelligent Designer.

Our consciousness has two capacities. One is the capacity to accumulate, that is, to accumulate wealth, knowledge, virtues — whatever that may mean. It is a mind that is calculating, planning, trying to hoard. The other is the capacity to observe, to be aware, to learn, to explore — which is not cumulative. That is the outlook of one who says: “I am part of Nature, I am part of all this manifestation of life and I am a student, I have a consciousness that studies all this, that wants to learn about all this. I am not the master, the owner of all this, but I am like a student who is exploring and wanting to find out because I do not really know. I do not know what God is, I do not know what virtue is, I do not know what right action is. I hope to find out.”

P. Krishna
Education, Science and Spirituality

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

Meditation

I am going step by step into what is meditation. Please don't wait till the end, hoping to have a complete description of how to meditate. What we are doing now is part of meditation.

Now, what one has to do is to be aware of the thinker, and not try to resolve the contradiction and bring about an integration between thought and the thinker. The thinker is the psychological entity who has accumulated experience as knowledge; he is the time-bound center that is the result of ever-changing environmental influence, and from this center he looks, he listens, he experiences. As long as one does not understand the structure and the anatomy of this center, there must always be conflict, and a mind in conflict cannot possibly understand the depth and the beauty of meditation.

In meditation there can be no thinker, which means that thought must come to an end — the thought which is urged forward by the desire to achieve a result. Meditation has nothing to do with achieving a result. It is not a matter of breathing in a particular way, or looking at your nose, or awakening the power to perform certain tricks, or any of the rest of that immature nonsense. . . . Meditation is not something apart from life. When you are driving a car or sitting in a bus, when you are chatting aimlessly, when you are walking by yourself in a wood or watching a butterfly being carried along by the wind — to be choicelessly aware of all that, is part of meditation.

Jiddu Krishnamurti
The Book of Life

Consciousness, Compassion, and Contemplation

DEEPA PADHI

IN the most comprehensive sense, consciousness is one, the plurality of which is inconceivable. It is unmanifested, eternal, infinite, and unqualified. In the words of Annie Besant:

Consciousness is the one reality . . . it follows from this that any reality found anywhere is drawn from consciousness. Hence, everything which is thought, *Is*. That consciousness in which everything is, *everything* literally, “possible” as well as “actual” . . . we call Absolute Consciousness. It is the All, the Eternal, the Infinite, the Changeless. (*A Study in Consciousness*, p. 29)

Dr Besant uses the word “consciousness” as synonymous with “life”.

The One Absolute Consciousness creates the universe out of its own Will and when the Consciousness becomes the manifested universe, it becomes subject to time and change. This manifested consciousness is the universal consciousness, known as God or *saguna brahman* (the Eternal with attributes).

At the creative phase, the Primordial

Consciousness polarizes itself into a subjective component as Cosmic Intelligence (*purusha*) and an objective part as Cosmic Energy (*prakṛti*), and unfolds itself as the universe with myriads of entities, living and non-living, animate and inanimate, mobile and immobile. This universal consciousness is only a portion of the Unbounded Absolute Consciousness.

In the Hindu metaphysics as evident in the three canonical texts (*prasthānatrayī*), namely, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-gītā* (*BG*) and the *Brahma-sutras*, cosmocentric unity is strongly held as the basic Truth. “*Sarvam khalu idam brahma*”, meaning “Everything in this Universe is Brahman (Consciousness)”, says the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*. The *Gītā* says: “Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both its origin and dissolution.” (*BG*, VII.6).

The universal consciousness, which appears as reason and self-consciousness in us, lies dormant in the form of potentiality in matter. H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) observes: “Occultism does not accept

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anything inorganic in the Kosmos ALL IS LIFE, and every atom of even mineral dust is a LIFE, though beyond our comprehension and perception” (*The Secret Doctrine*, vol, 1, part 1, stanza VII, sloka 5 (c), p. 248)

This one absolute principle is the eternal source of all life, matter, and consciousness in the universe. This implies an absolute unity that underlies the manifested world and expresses itself in each and every life form. Science now recognizes the unity and relatedness of all life forms. To quote David Bohm, a renowned physicist: “Ultimately, the entire universe . . . has to be understood as a single undivided whole, in which analysis into separately and independently existing parts has no fundamental status.”

Quantum theory forces us to see the universe not as a collection of physical objects, but rather as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole. This fundamental unity underlying the manifest world is called by Bohm “the implicate order”. This implicate order corresponds to Universal Consciousness, which is the divine ground of all names and forms.

The essential nature of consciousness lies in merely being conscious or aware of whatever exists or takes place in relation to it. Animals and plants are conscious but their consciousness is different from that of humans. Even the inanimate objects contain rudimentary forms of consciousness. But consciousness in us has evolved to an extent where it is capable of understanding our limited

consciousness as well as the universal consciousness.

Creation in the theosophical sense has two phases — involutory and evolutionary. The former is one of progressive materialization of the Cosmic Consciousness and hence of monads, from the highest spiritual to the grossest physical field of energy. The latter, that is, the evolutionary phase, is one of progressive spiritualization of the monads from the grossest material to the subtlest spiritual state. The latter process of unfoldment of the monads is known as evolution. During materialization, consciousness is reduced to six lower levels in which the monads get deeply entangled, while during the phase of spiritualization, it is the monadic consciousness that guides evolution. It is the theory of involution which explains the potency and the promise of the evolutionary direction leading to self-transformation and realization of Oneness of Life or Consciousness.

Wisdom consists in the understanding and feeling of Oneness with all beings and things; it is an ideal to be achieved in one’s lifetime. In the words of Radha Burnier:

Wisdom is not found merely through words, concepts or much reading. Speaking about brotherhood and discussing it in intellectual terms is quite different from living it; only the latter leads to Wisdom. . . . Wisdom enables one to practise brotherhood which springs from the realization of the indivisibility of life; while the serious effort to live brotherhood leads to Wisdom. The two are complementary aspects of theosophical work. (*The*

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World Around Us, section I, chapter 2, article 2, p. 47)

This is the ultimate in human development and only human beings have the potentiality to achieve this end.

For the realization of Oneness of Life two attributes are essential — wisdom that is the understanding of the universal consciousness or the Oneness as the transcendental ground of all existence, and compassion for all. In fact, both wisdom and compassion go together. The Buddha underlines that the cultivation of true knowledge (wisdom) and compassion are the twin prerequisites of enlightenment. The Dalai Lama says:

According to Buddhism, genuine compassion must have both wisdom and loving kindness. That is to say, one must understand the nature of the suffering from which we wish to free others (this is wisdom), and one must experience deep intimacy and empathy with other sentient beings (this is loving kindness).

Wisdom (true knowledge) is something intellectual relating to the left brain and compassion is a highly developed emotion that relates to the right brain. These two are generally considered as incompatible. But in reality, they are complementary and are necessary for self-transformation and realization of the oneness of Being. In *The Voice of the Silence*, Madame Blavatsky says:

Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of Laws — eternal Harmony . . . a shore-

less universal essence, the light of everlasting right, and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal. The more thou dost become at one with it, thy being melted in its Being, the more thy soul unites with that which Is, the more thou wilt become Compassionate Absolute.

Compassion is the manifestation of love. Like consciousness, love is universal and divine. It is a natural binding force of the Universe. This is the reason why the ancient seers had conceived of the Reality as *sacchidānanda* — *sat* meaning Existence, *chit* meaning Consciousness and *ānanda* meaning Bliss which is nothing but pure unifying love. It is not conceptual but experiential.

“Compassion” is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it”. It is not a single quality. It includes in itself many other virtues like kindness, love, tolerance, empathy, non-violence, giving, selflessness, and peace. Peace begins with a loving smile, says Mother Teresa. It can spread from the individual to the neighbourhood, to the country and to the world at large. Peace will prevail everywhere for just a smile. Love, peace, and compassion are words that signify unity.

J. Krishnamurti often said: “You are the world; the world is you.” From this unity or wholeness comes compassion which he explained as “Compassion is compassion. It is not your compassion or my compassion. Sodium is sodium, not my sodium or your sodium. The moment

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you say you are compassionate, you are no more so, for a sense of separateness comes in, and compassion which flowers in a state of wholeness disappears.” The Buddha taught compassion for all. Nirvana is not to be sought by a Buddhist for himself alone, for that would be selfishness, but for all humanity.

A well-known Sufi saint said: “If men wish to draw near to God, they must seek him in the hearts of men. To bring joy to a single heart is better than to build many shrines for worship, and to enslave one soul with kindness is worth more than setting free a thousand slaves.” The teachings of all major religions agree with the fact that compassionate service to all life forms is essential for the realization of the One Absolute Principle. The Masters, saints, and mystics who live on the planet are extremely compassionate, as they see the self as abiding in all beings, and all beings as abiding in the self.

In the late nineteenth and early 20th century, there lived a great saint, Sai, in Shirdi, India who felt the lashes on his own back when he saw a horse being whipped. On another occasion, he asked a lady to get some food for him as he was feeling famished. When the lady came with the food, he gave it to a dog that was barking at that time, and felt his hunger being satisfied when he saw the dog eating the food. His deep harmony with all creatures sprang from his union with the very source of all beings.

To those who have realized the Whole, the Oneness, everything is holy, and they treat every form of life with compassion,

loving care, and respect. They can never see the world with the utilitarian eyes of materialists, who view others (humans and non-humans) as objects to be used, abused, or enjoyed. They are incapable of harming others or exploiting the weak, or killing animals or ravaging a forest. For they feel all creatures as parts of themselves.

To be identified with all, one has to live in and through it. One needs to live with other sentient and insentient beings in order to cultivate the feelings of love, care, and compassion. Life in the world is not incompatible with the spiritual life. What is incompatible with it is a worldly life — “in the senses and of the senses alone”. Individual human beings, therefore, need to rise in consciousness above the physicality, that is the body and the separative mind, which create their false independent identity for worldly pleasures.

Today humanity is caught in an existential paradox. On the one hand people across states, nations, continents have been brought together by the wonders of science and technology. One can physically reach another part of the world within a short span of time. One can watch things happening at distant places. Though we live huddled together in a small space called the “globe”, artificial barriers have been built to divide humanity in the name of nationality, religion, language, race, gender, status, and so on. Though we have been forced to live together, we are yet to learn and practise how to live together with love, compas-

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sion, peace, genuine concern, and respect for each other.

From the spiritual standpoint, man is expected to rise above to realize the unity underlying the diversity. The ancient seers spelled out the necessity of extending fellowship to flora and fauna, even to the so-called inanimate objects, because every created thing and being partake of the same essence and are interrelated. The Upanishadic concept of cosmic family (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*) is both a social and spiritual ideal to be lived.

But unless we are global in our mindset, global living shall remain as a mere utopia. The need is to bring about transformation in the core, shedding the rust and dross accumulated over it across so many years or lives. A change in the perception, in the mindset of the individual is urgently needed. This change is possible through contemplation and contemplative practices. Contemplation is awareness. It is constant watchfulness. Commitment is involved in contemplation. Once the goal is fixed, one is committed to achieve it and generate a continuous process of thought in that direction. Contemplation is a means to self-transformation and broadening of the frontiers of compassion.

“The mind is the great slayer of the Real,” says HPB. Our understanding and perception of the world or reality around us becomes possible through the instrumentality of mind. All knowledge involves a mode of perception and a mode of interpretation. As is the mind, so is the

perception of the reality. Needless to say, the mind and the mental constructs are individual-specific because every individual follows their mind of evolution and occupies a particular rung in the evolution ladder. So when we perceive the world through our mind, it is our own world. Thus, the mind which is supposed to give us the true picture of reality becomes a hindrance in the process of perceiving reality in its virgin state of Unity.

Mind is not the ultimate agent of knowledge; rather, it is made instrumental by consciousness, which is the ultimate agent; the ultimate subject of all perceptions and agent of all actions. But on account of blind beliefs, superstitions, mindsets, negative emotions such as jealousy, selfishness, hatred, and so on, the mind gives us a fragmented, distorted picture of reality, of beings and things all around. Therefore, before one starts contemplation, the mind needs to be disengaged from its material alignment and made to move inward. This is known as *pratyāhāra* in Patanjali Yoga.

In the next step, the mind needs to be focused on one thought or ideation of the supreme consciousness or the Oneness of Being. The process of contemplation consists in the uninterrupted flow of mind with that single ideation. These two steps are known as *dhāraṇa* and *dhyāna*. With continuous practice, this one thought remains and other contents of the mind fade away — get annihilated. As the sense of duality dissolves, what remains is only the Consciousness or the Oneness. Contemplation, which starts as a conceptual

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practice, becomes experiential. The self becomes aware of the Self. Sincere and committed contemplative practices result in experiencing connectedness with all beings and things that culminate in the union with all — the greater Self, or universal consciousness. When one is awake at a deeper level of consciousness, life is lived in a different dimension, whether it is in the family, workplace, or social congregation. A perception of such unity naturally leads to a sense of harmony, sharing, serving, and loving. It is a dimensional shift in the way one perceives and experiences life. Today, the world is in a transitional phase. The old order is changing,

yielding place to the new. Human society needs a new meaning, a new dimension to life and a new system. Practical Theosophy fulfills this need.

Practical Theosophy lays emphasis on contemplative practices with resolute will and steadfast commitment, which enables one to find the underlying connection and deeper affinity with other beings and things. As a result, domination, intolerance, and hostility shall make rooms for equality, understanding, and compassion. The fragmented consciousness shall find itself as integrated with the universal consciousness, immanent in everything, microcosmic and macrocosmic. ✧

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Consciousness is “life becoming aware of its surroundings”. From the primary unit of “feeling”, Consciousness is differentiated into its three aspects — will, wisdom and activity — repeating in miniature the cosmic process in which the triple Divinity ever arises from the One Existence.

Annie Besant
A Study in Consciousness

Grow as the Flower Grows — II

NANCY SECREST

THE second pillar of Theosophy, meditation, can also help us to develop the qualities we need to enter the Path. Through meditation we can gain the sense of calmness and serenity we need to deal with the adverse situations that life brings to us. We can learn how to deal with and maybe even understand difficult people. It has been my experience that if I enter meditation holding a person with whom I am having difficulties in my mind, while wishing for them their highest good, remarkable things can happen.

The first time I tried this a beneficial thing happened for the person with whom I was having difficulties that also took them out of my life. I was delighted for myself and happy for them as well. That had worked so well that I tried it again when another difficult situation presented itself, and the thought of how to resolve the situation came to mind. The third time I tried this method I saw that it was my own behaviour that had caused the problem, and I changed it.

There are many methods of meditation. Through some we concentrate on gaining insight into ourselves. Through

others such as loving-kindness, or Metta meditation, we attempt to open our hearts and develop compassion for ourselves and others. Silent meditation on the breath, some object, or a teacher or other who inspires us leads us toward “no thought”, or emptiness or universal consciousness.

A. H. Almaas, in *Diamond Heart*, Book Two, p. 19, says:

To see consciousness in its purity is to experience what is called universal consciousness, to experience the mind as pure consciousness. When you experience the mind as consciousness, it is also *knowingness*, the very element of knowing. . . . It is difficult to describe what universal consciousness or what the mind as consciousness means, because there are no thoughts in it. The moment there are thoughts, the content separates you from the consciousness.

Because of this we must *experience* universal consciousness to know what it is. In universal consciousness, Almaas goes on to say (p. 20):

There is no experience, no experiencer, *no self*. . . the elimination of separateness,

Ms Nancy Secrest is international Treasurer of the TS, Adyar, and international Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service. Based on a lecture given at the European Congress in August 2017.

Grow as the Flower Grows — II

the elimination of *discrimination*. There is complete non-differentiation. There is no separation, no two, and no thought that there is one.

Is this the Soul-Wisdom of which *The Voice of the Silence* by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) speaks? It is quite likely its source. Where do we find it? How do we develop it? We have already said that we must go beyond the intellect. That we must have the courage to consciously change ourselves on the emotional and mental levels of our being, and that meditation can help us to reach the buddhic level, the next level of our human constitution. Once one aspires to attain Soul-wisdom he or she realizes that, as it says in Annie Besant's Compilation, *The Doctrine of the Heart*:

The interest that we have in all the affairs of this elusive sphere belongs only to the emotions and the intellect, and cannot touch the Soul. So long as we identify ourselves with the body and the mind, the vicissitudes which overcome the Theosophical Society, the dangers which threaten its life or solidarity, must have a depressing, nay, sometimes almost a frenzied influence upon our spirits. But as soon as we come to live in the Spirit, to *realize* the illusory nature of all external existence, the changeful character of every human organization, and the immutability of the Life within, we must, whether the brain consciousness reflects the knowledge or not, feel an inward calm, and unconcernedness, as it were, with this world of shadows, and remain unaffected by the revolutions and

eruptions of the world. Once the Higher Ego is reached, the knowledge that the Laws and Powers which govern the universe are infinitely wise becomes instinctive, and peace in the midst of outward throes is inevitable. (pp. 58–59)

So it is the feeling of an inward calm, a lack of concern that lets us know we are moving toward Soul-wisdom, that we have touched upon universal consciousness. We feel a peace that outward events seem not to touch. As with the unconsciousness of activity inherent on the physical level of our being, the spiritual level moves and grows unconsciously as well.

It is our job to work ceaselessly toward Soul-wisdom by consciously addressing our inward nature, thereby altering and improving what we think, say, and do in our lives. But the spiritual growth itself happens whether we are aware of it or not, usually not. Whole-hearted devotion to this process is required of those on the Path as well as trust that our efforts will bear fruit, that we will gain, to which HPB herself aspired, “the exalted goal of Self-realization, that freedom of the Self which is the crown of human existence.”

How can the Self be freed? One of my teachers once said that “Love is the realization of Unity”. The terms Unity, Universal Consciousness, and Oneness seem, to me, to be interchangeable. So we might say, as the Beatles said: “Love is all there is.”

Universal Consciousness, as Universal Love, is an expression of the harmony of all that is. There is no conflict because

Grow as the Flower Grows — II

it contains no parts, no divisions, no separateness. It is pure consciousness devoid of any thought or anything to rub up against. There is nothing to judge, nothing to weigh or measure, nothing to be prejudiced against nor biased toward, nothing to fear. It is pure love, a love that accepts and encompasses everything and everyone impartially as a totality. If we are fortunate enough to touch this consciousness, even for a brief moment, we know that nothing else exists. There is no I, no ego, no personality, only pure consciousness, only pure love.

We have spoken about the benefits of using the first two pillars of Theosophy, study and meditation, to help us develop the Soul-wisdom that carries us along the path to universal consciousness. We have said that meditation can take us to the buddhic level of our being where we go beyond thought. Through our buddhic nature we also experience the generation of universal compassion, which helps us to identify with those who suffer and instills in us a desire to help.

According to Buddhist teaching compassion is the very essence of a spiritual life, and the main practice of those who have devoted their lives to attaining enlightenment. We have talked about watching our thoughts, words, and actions in relation to others and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. We must be ever vigilant if we are to tread the path to universal consciousness. We must not limit our self-improvement to those people or circumstances that are pleasing to us. In the words of N. Sri Ram:

When we think of helping the world, of being brothers to all, we should remember that the world means also the unwanted who knock at our door at an inopportune moment, the people whom we may dislike for some reason, physical or mental, those whose appearance or ways may be disagreeable to our tastes, and those whom we might be ashamed of, if we were of that company.

Service, the third pillar of Theosophy, can be seen as the point of balance between study and meditation through which we can give energy to HPB's concepts of self-responsibility, ethics and altruism. Service is that part of the triad which allows us to demonstrate the divine in the world. Through selfless service we help to heal suffering humanity. We draw attention to the woes of the world, and lead by example in the effort to ease suffering and right wrongs. In the process, we help ourselves. We grow spiritually as we become more and more open to seeing the unity of life wherever we look. Service can manifest itself as simple acts of kindness performed by an individual or a group, or as larger and more organized efforts. It can be aimed at family members, a neighborhood, a community, a country, a gender or other class of people, or at animals, and even the planet.

I recently attended a talk given by a TS member. She spoke of living a spiritual life. She talked about self-responsibility, ethics, and altruism, themes that ran through HPB's works. In fact, she said that these qualities are necessary for spiritual unfoldment, which she said is our

goal, and that “Theosophy is altruism”. In fact Blavatsky said:

He who does not practise altruism; he who is not prepared to share his last morsel with a weaker or poorer [man] than himself; he who neglects to help his brother man, of whatever race, nation, or creed, whenever and wherever he meets suffering, and who turns a deaf ear to the cry of human misery; he who hears an innocent person slandered, whether a brother theosophist or not, and does not undertake his defence as he would undertake his own — is no theosophist. (*Lucifer*, vol. I, p. 169)

Later these words, from Annie Besant, tied together Blavatsky’s altruism, already a high ideal, with the sense of Oneness alluded to in the Society’s First Object by saying:

The spiritual man must lead a higher life than the life of altruism. He must lead the life of self-identification with all that lives and moves. There is no “other” in this world; we are all one. Each is a separate form, but one Spirit moves and lives in all.

Acts of altruism and compassion ran through Blavatsky’s and Besant’s lives. The story of HPB feeling compassion for a young woman with children who could not afford a ticket to board the ship HPB was sailing on, is well known. She exchanged her first-class ticket for steerage class tickets for herself, the woman, and her children so that they might travel too.

Besant was a social activist long before she was even a member of the TS. She worked for many social causes, such as better working conditions and wages for

laborers, and against child labor. She was even jailed for doing so.

The First Object of the TS speaks of universal brotherhood, and in February 1908 Annie Besant founded the Theosophical Order of Service in response to members who wanted to put this concept into action in their daily lives. The TOS fosters a practical living application of theosophical principles, and is a way to demonstrate and practice the oneness of all life. The giving of our time, talents, energy, money, advocacy and moral support to those in need is based on compassion and on the acceptance of our responsibility toward those with whom we are One. Our TOS motto, “A union of those who love in the service of all that suffers”, reminds us of our commitment to the Oneness of All Life.

Even before the TOS was formed, the TS was no stranger to altruistic action, working for the benefit of others, leading the way toward improvements in people’s lives. In a talk given in 2014 Diana Dunningham Chapotin reminded us:

What is interesting, though, is that in those days the collective action of the members and their leaders actually caused the public to associate the TS *primarily* with social reform. Early *Theosophist* magazines contain scathing commentaries on all kinds of social, educational, political and religious abuses of the time. . . . When Col Olcott appeared on theosophical platforms around the world, he did not lecture principally on metaphysics; he dealt mostly with such subjects as religious freedom,

Grow as the Flower Grows — II

education for girls, cremation, and agricultural reform, which may seem innocuous to us but at the time they were controversial.

For Mrs Besant and her fellow pioneers, such as Col. Olcott, William Quan Judge, Isabel Cooper-Oakley and Countess Wachtmeister, TS life and social responsibility were part of an indivisible whole.

Some say that when Mrs Besant created the TOS in 1908 it was to give an independent organizational focus for community involvement, but, if this was the case, in practice little distinction was made between the work of the TS and the TOS. Not much has changed today in that regard. Many of our members, whether individually, through the TS, or as members of the TOS give selfless, compassionate service to those in need. Within the TOS such service is given not just from a humanitarian perspective, as it is in many other service organizations, but from the conscious perspective of the theosophical world view, knowing that those we aid are part of the Universal Brotherhood of humanity, the Unity, the Oneness, Universal Consciousness. As Besant said, the spiritual person “must lead the life of self-identification with all that lives and moves. There is no ‘other’ in this world; we are all one.”

Clearly Blavatsky, Besant, and others understood universal consciousness, universal love. Their lives prove it as they were shining examples of selflessness, generosity, and knowledge gained through such experience. They trod the “steep

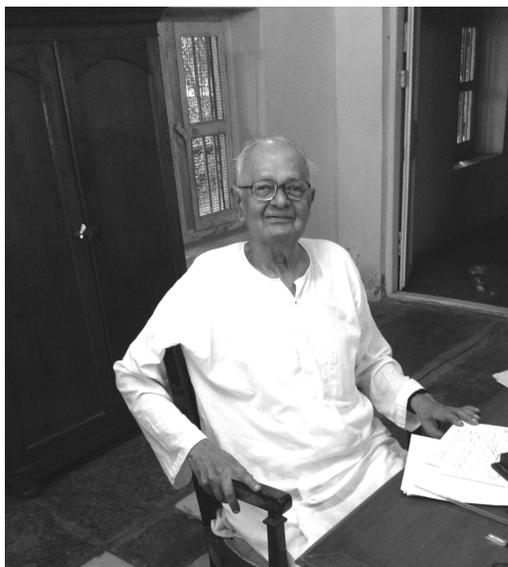
and thorny” road, telling us over and over again what to do and how to do it, verbally, in their writings, and by the way they lived their lives. It is up to us to listen, to pick up on the nuances, to emulate their examples. It is up to us to see and understand that Theosophy is not just head-learning, not solely study for the sake of learning facts and concepts. Can we really *learn* concepts, know and understand them, without putting them to use? We must live what we have learned. We must meditate on difficult concepts and ideas until we understand them, not just with our heads but with our hearts and souls too. We must put into action that which we have learned. We must develop Soul-wisdom if we are truly to tread the Path that leads to Universal Consciousness.

For us as theosophists the Path to Universal Consciousness is a blend of conscious study, meditation, and service that requires courage, a purity of life, constant effort and devotion to the “work”, to gain unconscious spiritual growth. We must grow as the flower grows. As it says in *The Doctrine of the Heart*:

Keeping serene and passionless, there is no doubt that, as the days pass by, one is coming more and more within that influence which is the essence of life, and some day the disciple will be surprised to find he has grown wonderfully without knowing and perceiving the process of growth. For truly, the soul in its true blooming “grows like the flower, unconsciously”, but gaining in sweetness and beauty by imbibing the sunshine of Spirit. (pp. 73–74) ✧

Dr A. Kannan

PEDRO OLIVEIRA



On 3 January 2019, on the fourth day of the 143rd International Convention of the Theosophical Society (TS), the international President, Mr Tim Boyd, announced that Dr A. Kannan had just passed peacefully at his home in Adyar. A ripple of surprise and shock went through the assembled delegates. His latest book, *A Students' Guide to the Masters' Teachings*, in two volumes, published by TPH Adyar, had been released by Mr Boyd at the opening of

the Convention, on 31 December, with Dr Kannan present.

He was born on 19 February 1924. He obtained a doctorate in Chemistry from Bombay University and specialized in the chemistry of foods, drugs, and water. He did his postdoctoral research at the University of Minnesota at St Paul in Dairy Chemistry. Later on he worked as a Public Analyst at the National Dairy Institute, Bangalore, and at the Delhi Municipal Corporation.

Dr Kannan's background as a scientist led him into a distinguished career of service to the TS. At the invitation of N. Sri Ram, the fifth international President of the Society, he moved with his family to Adyar, the TS International Headquarters, in December 1964. There he started the Theosophy-Science study group, for which he was also the convener. He was the editor of *Theosophy, Science, and Yoga* and the *Bulletin of Theosophy and Science*, as well as the journal *Holistic Science and Human Values*, which sought to "bring about a holistic awareness and commitment to spiritual values". He was the author of

Mr Pedro Oliveira is Education Coordinator for the TS in Australia, former international Secretary, and later Head of the Editorial Office at Adyar.

Dr A. Kannan

books such as *The Impact of Theosophy and Science* and *The One Life and Functional Forms*.

Dr Kannan's work as a National Lecturer for over 50 years caused him to travel throughout India, conducting study classes and giving talks and lectures. He was greatly respected and admired among TS members not only for his commitment to Theosophy, but also for his gentleness and capacity to listen. After *Human Re-generation* came out in 1990, by former international President Dr Radha Burnier, on the essential work of the TS, he utilized the central ideas in it for his several study classes in India.

As mentioned in his *A Students' Guide to the Masters' Teachings*, Dr Kannan supervised the work of the Esoteric School of Theosophy and Co-Freemasonry Office. Whenever one visited him in the Theosophy-Science Centre at Adyar or at his home, one could not help feeling that he was inwardly alive, interested in

what one had to say, and always nourishing a sense of humour. His earnest dedication created a field of inspiration around him, almost visible to the naked eye.

The Indian Section of the TS and the Theosophical Society as a whole lost a truly great "Theosophist". If we would apply H. P. Blavatsky's definition of this word in the little book *Practical Occultism*, Dr Kannan would pass with flying colours:

It is easy to become a Theosophist. Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness, and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer — is a Theosophist. ✧

"Life, after all, the greatest problem within the ken of human conception, is a mystery that the greatest of your men of Science will never solve. In order to be correctly comprehended, it has to be studied in the entire series of its manifestations; otherwise it can never be, not only fathomed, but even comprehended in its easiest form — life, as a state of being on this earth. It can never be grasped so long as it is studied separately and apart from universal life."

KH

The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett, Master Letter No. 23B

Theosophical Work around the World

Adyar

The **International Youth Convention** was held at Adyar just before the start of the International Convention from 27 to 29 December 2018. A group of young members of the Theosophical Society (TS) gathered in Adyar to explore the “Yogic Life through Bhakti Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, Rāja Yoga and Karma Yoga”. Each day began with a yoga session conducted by a yoga teacher, Mr Arul Perumal. This was followed by sessions on the four paths of yoga with interlaced, theoretical and practical elements, and also discussions which provided ample opportunity for the exchange of views among the twenty-five participants.

Study walks were organized post lunch to visit some of the important sites and departments within the Adyar campus, such as Garden of Remembrance, various shrines, Adyar Library, President’s office, Museum, and others. The days ended with cultural evenings, and a campfire on the last night. Participants from Argentina, Brazil, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, England, Italy and all over India, were served typical Indian food prepared by volunteers from the Bangalore City Lodge, India, which was appreciated by all. The programme was conducted by members of the Karnataka Federation of the Indian Section, who have been associated with the Society from a young age and have studied the subject in depth.

The **143rd International Convention** took place from 31 December 2018 to 5 January 2019 with several new features. The courtyard of the newly renovated Blavatsky Bungalow was the venue for the customary reception hosted by the International President, Mr Tim Boyd, held on 31 December 2018 at 3.30 p.m. Delegates and guests gathered under the shady canopy of the trees in front of the historic building to catch up with old friends and make new ones from all over the world. The following **parallel sessions** were held on two days, and elicited a good attendance: “Meditation Workshop” by Ven. Olande Ananda, “Sacred Spiritual Songs in Hebrew with English translation” by Mrs Dapha and Mr Shmuel Koren, and “Chanting Workshop” in Sanskrit by Mr Harihara Raghavan.

The **Adyar Theosophical Academy** (ATA), a proposed centre for transformative education, held a two-day workshop during the Convention to explain to and update those interested in helping in the work of theosophical education for the young that is to be started. Some of the salient points are as follows. ATA will be located in the Adyar campus in Besant Gardens. The objective is to bring about individual as well as social transformation. ATA aims to prepare students for life in all its dimensions, imparting wholesome education in the true sense, with a vision to educate and raise children to become

Theosophical Work around the World



Opening of International Convention of the TS at Adyar Headquarters, 31 December 2018, with Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School students singing a prayer



International President Tim Boyd and Mrs Lily Boyd greeting Convention delegates in front of the Bhojanasala (Indian kitchen)

Theosophical Work around the World



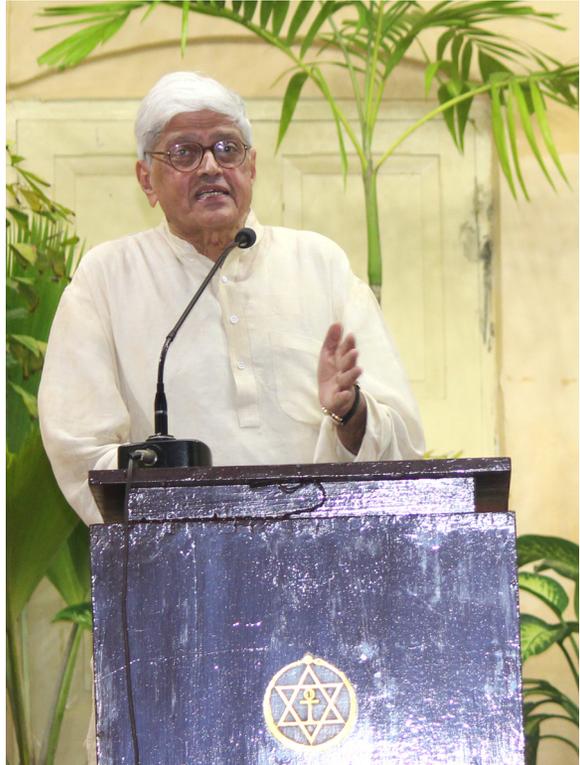
President Boyd releasing the two volumes of *A Students' Guide to the Masters' Teachings* by Dr A. Kannan, while congratulating the author during the International Convention. On each side of the President stand the author's son and daughter, K. Jaikumar and K. Jaishree



Inauguration of the beautifully renovated Blavatsky Bungalow on 1 January 2019, with President Boyd greeting Convention delegates

Theosophical Work around the World

Mr Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Former Governor of West Bengal, giving the Besant Lecture, "Is Conscience Dead?", on 3 January 2019



Bharatanrityam dancer during an evening dance recital program on 2 January 2019

Theosophical Work around the World



Panel Discussion on “Our Work: A Field Beyond Thoughts”, with (*fr. l. to r.*):
Mr Pedro Oliveira (Australia) as the moderator, Prof. C. A. Shinde (Adyar), Mrs Clemice
Petter (Adyar), Mr Minor Lile (USA), and Ms Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu (France) on 3 January 2019



Question-and-Answer session with (*fr. l. to r.*): Mrs Linda Oliveira,
General Secretary of TS in Australia; Mr Tim Boyd, *International President*;
and Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, *former General Secretary of the TS in the Philippines*

Theosophical Work around the World

competent, well-balanced, emotionally mature, socially responsible, morally upright, and spiritually sensitive individuals.

The Academy will prepare students for the Indian Certificate of Secondary Examination (ICSE), with English as the language of instruction. The starting date is planned for June 2019, with classes in lower and upper kindergarten, and Grades 1 and 2. It will have 20 students per class and a high teacher-student ratio to impart quality education. Fear or competition will not have any place in the learning process and will not be used as a method of control or motivation in overt or subtle ways.

ATA is looking for highly committed individuals with a diverse range of experience. Students will have opportunities to widen their perspective by interacting throughout the year with theosophists and resource people from various countries. The Academy invites passionate, committed persons, with a deep interest in education, who like being with children and are in a learning mode themselves. Direct donations can be made to the TS Treasury Office, marking it for "The Academy project".

The Archives organized a **Mahatma Letters Exhibition** during the Convention with the display of a number of original letters that have been published in *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*,

Series I and II, compiled by C. Jinarajadasa. They included an original transcript of the Mahachohan's well-known letter, letters of advice from Masters M. and KH to a number of individuals associated with the Theosophical Society in the 1880s, as well as letters to H. S. Olcott from the Masters Serapis, Tuitit Bey, and Hilarion. Also included in the display was the famous 1900 letter from Master KH to Annie Besant. It was not a handwritten letter but text that was precipitated on a letter in transit, which an Indian member, B. W. Mantri, had sent to Mrs Besant who was then in London. The letters contain both profound wisdom as well as practical advice. They not only express how concerned the Masters were with the work of the TS, but also how readily they could identify motivations that went against the lofty purpose of the Society. The Masters communicated their concerns in direct and uncompromising language.

"Prominent People Associated with the Theosophical Movement" was the topic of a display in the Adyar Museum, featuring important information on renowned people who had a major influence on world history. The list included Thomas A. Edison, Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, Maria Montessori, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, William Butler Yeats and others. ✧

He that performeth action as is duty, independently of the fruit of action, he is an ascetic, he is a Yogin.

The Bhagavadgita

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