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

VOL. 146 NO. 2 NOVEMBER 2024

CONTENTS

Annie Besant's Example **5**
Tim Boyd

J. Krishnamurti—His Mission and Message **9**
M. A. Raveendran

Spiritual Responsibility and Human Perfectibility **15**
James Tepfer

Theosophy's Role in Reviving the Indian Classical Dance, Bharatanatyam **22**
Angaleswari S.

The Twelve Keys **29**
Jouko Ikonen

Creating Sacred Spaces—The Transformational Power of Meditative Inquiry **32**
Michele Sender

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom (Radha Burnier) **37**

Theosophical Work Around the World (Kerala and Adyar, India) **38**

International Directory **42**

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Note: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to: **<editorialoffice@gmail.com>**

***Cover*:** Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904–1986) was an Indian Theosophist renowned as a dancer, educator, and the wife of G. S. Arundale, fourth President of the Theosophical Society based in Adyar, Chennai. She said her purpose was to encourage the living of beautiful lives: refined, artistic, gracious, compassionate, true, noble, wise, and understanding. She received many awards and honors thoughout her life. (See related article on p. 22.)

This journal is the official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky on 1 Oct. 1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this journal.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

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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.

Annie Besant's Example

TIM BOYD

ANNIE Besant was a great individual, not just in terms of her impact on the work of the Theosophical Society (TS) worldwide. She was one of those people who periodically come into the world and touch it in a way that changes things. The changes that came out of the mature portion of her life, when all of the skills, abilities, and experiences were in place, manifested here at the TS and in India. I would like to celebrate her life just a little bit through remembering some of them.

As with all truly great people it helps us to recall who Annie Besant was. What is more important, at least to me, is not just who she was, but *how* she became who she was, because she was a person not unlike any of us. She was born into this world and over the course of her life came to be the Annie Besant that we know — the Daughter of India, the Diamond Soul, Indian National Congress President, Founder of the Young Men's India Association, Women's India Association and Boy Scouts of India, and other titles used to describe her.

She was born, then became, and it is this process of becoming that is more meaningful to us. From her point of view there are two ways in which we can unfold, two avenues that lead to whatever lies ahead for us. One of them is described as natural impulse. Along this line of unfoldment, just like a leaf blown by the wind, we have experiences that are out of our control. We are carried from one situation to another, then another, and gradually we find ourselves learning something. We grow, we change, and we are educated through what they call in the US "the school of hard knocks". That is one way. But there is another way, which the life of Annie Besant illustrates so well, which is an unfoldment that occurs proactively, the unfoldment of powers that are asleep within us invoked through what is described as self-induced and self-devised efforts. We do play a role in that type of unfoldment.

Annie Besant lived for 85 years, and beginning from the time that she could think for herself things started to change all around her. She was born into an Anglo-Irish family in London. It was a religious family, especially her mother, who belonged to the Anglican Church. At the time of her birth the Anglican Church was a dominant force in England, both religiously and in shaping the laws of the land. She was devotionally religious in a Christian way, so much so that she wanted a life that served the Church. She married a minister, thinking that it would draw out more of her devotional capacity.

The problem that Annie Besant had

throughout her life was that her greatest strength was also what brought her the most suffering, problems, and pain. She was a woman of an uncanny and unquenchable intellect. She asked questions, and in the Anglican England of the late 1800s, for a woman to question the status quo was guaranteed to cause many problems. But she was uncompromising in standing up for the things that she believed. That, too, was a problem.

We can list the remarkable transitions that occurred during the course of her life. During my life I have known people who I think of as great. People who, when you hear about their lives, it is difficult to believe that one person could live so richly in so many different areas. She was one of those who did it at the *highest* level.

When she walked away from the Christian Church the next thing that she embraced was atheism. This is the woman who would become the President of the Theosophical Society! She was a full-fledged atheist, but she was not an atheist in the sense of denying the possibility of a supreme divinity. For her a comprehension of such a thing seemed beyond human capacity to grasp, much less create a doctrinal description. Her atheism was based on a complete rejection of the possibility of Divinity as described in church doctrine — an all mighty, angry, old man who routinely doled out punishment of eternal damnation for nonconformity, or personal mistakes, who systematically suppressed and shamed women, yet who demanded obedience and thanks. She could not see it; it did not make any sense, and she questioned it all the way to the highest levels.

She sought out the highest thinkers in the Church, but could not get answers satisfying to her intellect. Her atheism evolved into a deep involvement in the world, because in a world that is not ruled by some capricious divine being, then the ways to improve the human condition came down to personal effort and outreach and kindness to others. That is what she embraced — a secular approach that involved thinking freely. That was the next phase of her life. She worked with trade unions, she organized unions for young girls who were making matches, and suffering all the hazardous health problems of that profession.

She worked with people who were protesting for higher wages, Irish Home Rule, division of Church and state. At great risk to her name and freedom, she published an educational pamphlet about birth control, an utterly radical idea in England of the 19th and early 20th century. The idea that a woman should have some degree of choice over the direction of her life and body was unthinkable to the English Church-based community. This was the "last straw" that caused the legal and political system of England to take her daughter away from her. To profess such a thing was seen as so immoral that clearly she was not a fit mother. So again, the result of her inability to deny the things that were so clearly true to her was that she paid a painful price.

Socialism was the next calling that she fully embraced. It seemed clear to her that if there is going to be a change, then the ways in which people are fed

and supported, the means of production and distribution, should be in the hands of the people who are most affected. She worked with her usual dogged determination to promote this view. It was at this stage that she encountered one of her greatest internal crises. A realization took root in her that all of the different systems of thought she had embraced, inhabited, and promoted did nothing to change the nature of the human being; that socialism, radicalism, secularism, atheism, or any "ism", had limitations.

It was at this time in her life that she first encountered H. P. Blavatsky, who talked to her about the Ageless Wisdom tradition. It found Besant at a time in her life when she was ready to embrace such a thing. It was from that point that she became the Annie Besant that we celebrate here today. From that point she came to India. She had hardly touched the ground before she embraced this place and herself as a "Daughter of India", and committed the remainder of her life to work on its behalf.

Schools, universities for women, for men, the Young Men's India Association, the Women's India Association, the Boys Scouts, all of these were her initiatives. Then we have to talk about politics, because she involved herself deeply in the political climate of India, with the idea that it was unjust and unjustifiable, for this country to be under the boot of the British Raj. She advocated for India's independence. She was the first person who had the nerve to make a direct pronouncement that India needs Home Rule, not some cooperative arrangement that benefited the British. Home Rule is what she demanded and organized for. Out of that she rose to the heights in the Independence movement.

As the political ferment within India developed the various initiatives she had put in place, like the Young Men's India Association, which was designed to be a training ground for the future leaders of India, as these leaders started to grow into their own, there came a time when it was no longer appropriate for an Irish/English woman, who could speak no Indian language, with the white skin that had once been such an advantage for the movement, to be the spokesperson for a movement that represented India and its future. Quite sadly, but naturally, she was moved to the side.

All these things were part of her life. The invocation that was pronounced before this meeting, that began "Oh, Hidden Life", was penned by her. It states the view that she grew into: it is not about politics, it is about a life that resides in every one of us that can be awakened. Some of us have known people like that — people who, when we find ourselves in their presence, things that we may not have been able to see, become clear to us; where the possibility of not only a free and independent India, but of a free and independent soul are clearly seen and felt. Out of that perception this theosophical movement grew.

She was the kind of person who, in all she did, found a way to translate her vision into acts of kindness in the world. On occasions such as this, whether it is a celebration of the gods, of saviors who

have come to this world, of great people, or of heroes, the beauty of it is not so much about the list of accomplishments. Her list is long, but beyond mere accomplishments, there was a quality of character, of soul, that causes us to this day to feel something stirring within us.

Great people awaken us to hidden possibilities within ourselves. It is not enough to look at them and admire. That is necessary, because people such as Annie Besant are certainly admirable. The idea that speaks to us as we remember her life is not just of a great person, but of the great person that each one of us can be. In the presence of such a person, or even the memory of such a life, we come to recognize that every one of us is Annie Besant. There is no division, no separateness, when it comes to greatness. Her greatness is shared by all, if we would only acknowledge it *and act*.

I would like to close with some words that she said. During the course of her life she lost friends all along the way because she refused to compromise the integrity of her mind. She made some comment about that, which I think is good for all of us to hear, but especially for the young women present today. She described herself as follows:

> A woman who thought her way out of Christianity . . . into Freethought and Radicalism absolutely alone; who gave up every old friend, male and female, rather than resign the beliefs she had struggled to in solitude; who, again, in embracing active Socialism has run counter to the views of her nearest "male friends". Such a woman may very likely go wrong, but I think she may venture, without conceit, to at least claim independence of judgement.

All of us, Annie Besant included, will make and have made countless mistakes, but to make them because of the integrity of our consciousness and awareness is uplifting. I would like to share some things that she said about the all importance of *action*. Although she was the President of the Theosophical Society, which is a spiritual organization, she stressed that spirituality was not enough. She said: "Whenever a person comes within our circle of life, let us look to it that he leaves that circle a better man. . . . Let us judge our spirituality by our effect on the world." Our spirituality should be judged by its impact, not just by our elevated states and happy moments.

Another thing that she said was it is "better to remain silent, better not even to think, if we are not prepared to act". Forget about a spiritual life, if we are not prepared to take a step toward realizing it in our environment. Forget about the possibility for goodness to direct the world, if it is only something that we think of casually in quiet isolation. Unless we are prepared to act, little of this has value. She acted and made a difference in this world. Before she died she said there was only one thing she wanted to appear as her epitaph: "She tried to follow Truth." So it is an example that we celebrate today, next year, and every year thereafter, because, as people, as the future Annie Besants of the world, we do need to be reminded from time to time. ✧

J. Krishnamurti — His Mission and Message

M. A. RAVEENDRAN

FROM time immemorial, there have been some who have undertaken the task to investigate the reality underlying the manifestation of existence. They were prepared to renounce what ordinary people considered as giving meaning to life, that is, wealth, love, power, fame and whatever else was held dear. The task they proposed to undertake was full of psychological difficulties and dangers. To achieve their goal was to be an exception to the general rule and to deviate from the trodden path. The act of searching for truth was itself considered to be a worthy reward for the troubles taken.

Such was the case with J. Krishnamurti (JK) whose birth centenary was celebrated in 1995. We read in *The Mahatma Letters*, chron. edn, Letter No. 2 (ML-2) that "The adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers; and to become one, he must obey the inward impulse of his soul irrespective of the prudential considerations of worldly science or sagacity."

The Theosophical Society

JK's life was very closely related to the Theosophical Society (TS). It was founded in 1875 in New York by Col. H. S. Olcott, Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), Mr W. Q. Judge, and others. The Society stands for the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of caste, creed, race, colour, or sex. It encourages the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science. There were a few who developed the latent powers in humanity to investigate the hidden or occult powers in Nature.

Dr Annie Besant, the second international President of TS and Bishop C. W. Leadbeater were among those, who in 1895 (the year JK was born) undertook research into the ultimate nature of matter. The physical atoms were considered indivisible at that time. But 15 years before J. J. Thompson discovered the "nucleus" of the atom in 1910, the pioneers of the TS had described the "ultimate physical atom" which later in the 1960s proved to be quarks. The methodology

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was clairvoyant observation. This is not yet universally accepted as a tool of research by the scientific community. But Prof. Stephen Phillips with the help of Buddhist monks investigated the Besant-Leadbeater book, *Occult Chemistry*, and came out with his slim book, *The Remote Viewing of Elementary Particles*, where he comments on it. Subsequently, Prof. H. J. Arnikar of Pune, India, critically commented on Phillips's book and came out with an acceptable book of his own.

Bishop Leadbeater saw clairvoyantly into JK as carrying features to be the vehicle of the "world teacher" when the latter was 14 years old. Together with Mrs Besant, they declared to the world that this boy's body would be used by the world teacher known as Maithreya, who is the teacher of all religions of the world. This reaffirmed the implicit expectation that the coming world teacher would alleviate the suffering of the world by making them undergo a spiritual transformation.

The next fifteen years saw JK develop into a world citizen under the wings of the TS and Mrs Besant, amongst others. In 1927 JK asserted that he is merging into the consciousness of the one world teacher.

But when the teacher began to speak, people were not ready to listen and absorb the profound and radical messages given to them, as they were not accustomed to hearing anything beyond the traditional jargon. People had their own "idea" of the "world teacher" who they thought will define truth with all authority, and tell people what to believe, what not to believe, what to do, and what not to do. They were expecting a "method" or "procedure" to transform their lives, for liberation and freedom from suffering and sorrow.

But when the teaching came, the teacher was denying his own authority, repudiating followers, and refusing any interpretation of it. This deflated the egos of some of the would-be followers and dismayed others. People were not ready to accept the teaching as was the case of Buddha amongst the Hindus and Jesus amongst the Jews.

Two years later, in 1929 JK dissolved the "Order of The Star of the East", an organisation that had been formed in the TS to prepare for the coming of the World Teacher. He lamented that after 18 years of preparation and 3 years of listening to him (1927–29) the members did not transform themselves in any way different from others. He pointed out that belonging to an organisation without undergoing the process of transformation is a silly thing. One should not depend on somebody for the attainment of so-called spirituality. No one holds the key to the Kingdom of Heaven and there is no authority to hold so. His only concern was to "set man absolutely and unconditionally free".

JK conveyed this message across all platforms, to whoever happened to listen to him. He talked with schoolboys, youth, intellectuals, scientists, representatives of various religious orders, politicians, and world leaders. To all he gave his immense compassion, peace, and understanding, even in meetings lasting a few moments.

He was deeply interested in the education of children with the purpose of freeing them from the conditioning of their generation and their peers. The Krishnamurti Foundations (International and in India) have made his talks and writings widely available.

JK continued his message all over the world till he passed away in 1986 at the age of 91. His words and writings from the 1940s across the decades till the 1980s had become increasingly sophisticated, considering how intellectualized the world was becoming. "Is the world taking a different path", he would often ask in his speeches, talks, and dialogues.

Message of JK

As the teacher was denying his own authority, repudiating all following, and refusing any interpretation of his teachings, people were wondering how far his words can be true. But that was not the crux of the matter. His original contribution was pointing out the different ways of how the "nature of mind" behaves in its workings in multiple dimensions of human existence.

The human mind with the centre "me" surrounds itself with ideas, concepts, and thoughts concerned with the preservation of its dearest "me". Its essential nature is to keep the separateness and to act in separateness. This mind deceives itself, in thinking that it has gone beyond the limitation of itself, in the so-called meditation.

The real regeneration of the human mind or spiritual transformation in man can happen only when all the cravings of personality* are located and eliminated. For him, the things on which the personality lays claim have nothing to do with the spiritual. He discarded the authorities, scriptures, the so-called gurus, and disciples as belonging to the realm of the personality. Meditation according to him, was a profound explosion from the limitation of this "centre" to a space without a centre, which he considered as the only sacred thing which results in a life of transformation.

Even for those who are confronted with the manifestation of a life of transformation, there is a great temptation to create a new world of ideas, and authority in order to explain that life. However inspiring it be, the descriptions are far from the described. The tendency to create a new authority, based on new ideas, new doctrines, by those teachers are the result of the activity of the "nature of mind" itself. Its activity continues subtly deceiving everybody. "Intelligence† comes into being when the mind knows its fallibility." No teacher, no doctrines, no method, can work it for anyone. One has to feel the urgency to do it for oneself.

Sage Dattathreya had expressed this paradox in *Avadhuta Gita* in a like manner.

> Thy all pervasiveness has been destroyed by me by my making pilgrimage to thee. Thy transcendence of the mind has been destroyed by me with my meditation. Thy transcendence of speech has been destroyed by me by my singing thy praise. Ever forgive me for these sins.

The Practice or Preparation

This does not mean that JK's message is far from the daily life of ordinary people. He refined the technique of *viparita bhāvana* ("thinking about the opposites") of Patanjali in conquering vices. For example, if we have anger towards somebody, to eliminate that we are asked to brood over the opposite of anger, which is love, towards the person. In due course it helps. But JK rejected this method as inefficient. His statement was that a small part of the brain dominates over other parts and in this process it does not really make the brain cells quiet. He asked us to see the nature of anger as such without condemning or rejecting it, but seeing it with "compassion". In this process itself the anger disappears and loses its power to affect us.

This process has been explained by traditional philosophers but not understood by the common people. In a broad sense, it is the elements of Earth, Water, Air, and Fire which contribute to our external and internal environments. Preservation of the external environment is accepted as a mandatory human duty. But conquering or harmonising the internal environment is essential for spiritual perception. Earth, water, air, and fire represent the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual nature of Man respectively. The elements evolve life according to the occult point of view. A compassionate approach rather than opposition is the best way to achieve harmony within oneself. There is a story where Sage Narada unknowingly gave evolutionary enhancement to a bird, that became a calf in the very next life and a prince immediately after, by the grace of his "compassionate" look and touch.

"Dialogue" — The Tool of Communication

The most effective method of interaction with people, much popularised by JK, was through what is now called as "dialogue", not necessarily only between two people, and yet not degenerating into a discussion of opinions. A person is allowed to participate in this process without any previous conditioning ideas and without any urge to solve a problem or to arrive at a consensus. One is helped in this process to understand the limitation of his thought process and to go beyond it. A group harmoniously united as the fingers of a hand will benefit all the individuals, whereas an individual in isolation is not able to see his own conditioning by which he is influenced consciously or unconsciously.

Possibility of Misrepresentation

Where are we? We cling to wealth, love, power, fame, and health in our ordinary life. We want to add "spirituality" as a label. People started investigating spiritualism (communication with the dead in séance rooms with the help of mediums) as opposed to spirituality. Some run after superficial siddhis and meddle with unseen forces. There are devotees who blindly prostrate at anybody's feet without understanding the hidden and deeper meanings of life. There are any number of gurus who are not capable of guiding

themselves to spirituality, but are very active in leading and destroying the lives of their blind devotees to achieve their vested interests.

JK's message is at times confusing to the people of the world. If not correctly understood, it can mislead. His statements such as no teacher, no doctrine, no disciple, no authority, no organisation, and so on, if placed out of context, have great negative consequences.

There is always a hierarchy in the organisation of Life. It has to function rightly. There is an authority that coordinates and a discipline which is self-imposed. But to those who are irresponsible, these teachings seem convenient to be isolationist and arrogant; they may provoke transient attraction for the sole purpose of contradicting the established norms. Degeneration is likely to occur if the "hierarchy" becomes something of a "status"; the authority is then used to dominate others, and discipline degenerates into rigid rules and mechanistic practices without life in it. It is these possibilities that JK cautioned people to guard against. Unless the student is serious, JK's teachings also fall into the category of transient interests.

The Theosophical Society — A Re-evaluation

It is not coincidental that JK came to the TS. The theosophical movement was a great reformation in the spiritual field. Esoteric Theosophy is nothing but the essence of transformation itself. It is not a set of doctrines or beliefs written down or heard. This is clearly mentioned in the documents/books related to the TS such as *The Mahatma Letters*, *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Voice of the Silence*, and so forth. Later researchers have pointed out the relationship of these works to Buddhist Tantras. HPB had mentioned that she was trained by her Buddhist teachers. The *Kālachakra Tantra* has a reputation of being the highest teaching. It is understood with the mystical key and the practitioner has to understand it *experientially*. It is said that the "teaching of the Shambhala", as it is called, was given out by Nagarjuna from whom had originated the lineage of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna. The essence is transformation itself — and nothing short of it. Whether ceremonies and rituals help is another issue.

Nagarjuna discarded every claim coming from the personality as a tool for spiritual pursuit. He even discarded the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha as superficial, which glorifies the personality only, and is not at all useful for serious students. The values and virtues which are culture-based and considered as high in a culture-specific context do not help in the spiritual pursuit. JK's presence in the TS reinforced the need to go beyond the unseen world of occultism, however high the possibilities were, in the investigation of the hidden side of Man. He especially cautioned against the great temptation of reconceptualising on the basis of perceptions by creating new values and interpretations and becoming its gatekeepers.

In the Mission Statement of the TS (published in 2018) it is clearly mentioned that spiritual self-transformation is one of the important goals.

JK is not to be accepted as the final authority. He is not a person to be followed, or interpreted. Truth evades every nature of personality. Only a constant search for truth and an ability to learn can give up the vastness or immensity of Truth. Freedom of thought and absence of authority is a must, to free and guide Man from the limits of personality to the vastness of One existence which is his birthright. ✧

Keywords:

* Personality: *persona* means mask; so *personality* is the vesture comprising of the physical body, emotions, and mind unlike the *individuality* which is the essence of man working through it.

† Intelligence: this faculty comes into being when the brain-mind with intellect matters no more. Also known as *buddhi* (an ancient technical term), or intuitional or non-intellectual understanding.

Although you may spend your life killing, you will not exhaust all your foes. But if you quell your own anger, your real enemy will be slain. So, to praise others for their virtues can but encourage one's own efforts. Things derive their being and nature by mutual dependence and are nothing in themselves.

Nagarjuna

Spiritual Responsibility and Human Perfectibility

JAMES TEPFER

1. Let us begin at the beginning — which is sacred. Let us also keep in mind the end — which is glorious.

2. "What is the beginning?" Theosophically speaking, the sacrificial lighting up of the human mind by the holy hosts of cosmic intelligences (*Dhyānis*) in ancient Lemuria constitutes the true "beginning" of the human quest for enlightenment. The alchemical process of emanating mental (*manasic*) self-awareness into receptive pilgrim souls was, in effect, a collective initiation. The illumination of the human mind brought with it self-consciousness, spiritual knowledge, and spontaneous acts of intelligent benevolence.

3. Clearly, the dawning of *manasic* self-awareness was an initial blessing to all human souls. They felt overwhelming gratitude to the illustrious hosts who lit them up and an unbounded reverence to those "Sons of the Fire" who instructed them on the ultimate end of spiritual evolution: the conscious realization of the glorious state of adeptship by all; a state of self-mastery, compassion, and spiritual wisdom beyond compare.

4. Seen from this overarching metaphysical perspective, "spiritual responsibility" is the *fohatic* hyphen between the awakening of monadic consciousness on this plane and the sacred resolve to enter progressively into the ocean of omniscience at the end of the seventh planetary round. Understandably, the mental posture of self-accountability for the inward purity of our motives, the beneficent use of our knowledge, and the unshakable courage to accept the consequences of our actions is crucial at every stage of the spiraling involutionary and evolutionary processes.

5. As students of *The Secret Doctrine,* we know that many souls misused the intuitive powers of the Third Eye in Atlantis and subsequently lost the power to perceive clearly the *Path* of wise and benevolent action. The loss of spiritual knowledge through pride and perversity precipitated the withdrawal of the Mystery Fires so vital to human regeneration. Because of the general absence of spiritual vision and the precipitous consolidation of egotistic consciousness, the sacrificial descent of

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Buddhas of Compassion and of Avatars became all the more vital to human regeneration. Sacrificial light-bringers had (and continue to have) the awesome duty of rekindling the flickering fire of mental (*manasic*) self-consciousness, creatively summoning latent altruistic feelings buried in the deepest chambers of the human heart and re-establishing the soul-saving ethics of spiritual responsibility.

6. Coming to our modern complex world in Kali Yuga, the concept of "responsibility" seems to have several meanings, but its predominant one is "moral responsibility". The latter holds that we are accountable for our intentions, actions, and their determinate consequences. This moral accountability is to conscience as well as to society. It embraces the cognate concepts of "obligation" and "duty". No individual or community can afford to dispense with these essential notions and avoid degenerating into anarchy. They are woven into the very fabric of our moral consciousness, our complex personal and social relationships, and our everyday language.

Yet many in our spiritually materialistic age believe that moral responsibility, obligation, and duty are "heavy" terms and rather stifling to our Jupiterian wish to expand the limits of personal freedom, extend the ladder of social mobility, and widen the circumference of political liberty. Moral responsibility, like duty and obligation, is felt to be a concept without joy and moral attraction — except to the moralist and the self-righteous who, ironically, help give it excessive *gravitas*.

7. But is this conventional view of moral psychology really true? Isn't there a deep feeling of satisfaction and well-being when one has done one's duty to others — most especially when it was painful to do so? By contrast we see how easily the modern mind inverts the moral psychology of human decency and simultaneously reduces the true dignity of what it means to "be human". In reality, contemporary man does not care much for anything that puts limits on the opportunity to fulfill personal desires. And it is hard for many to imagine how moral restraint and owning up to the costs of our commitments might make us much happier and more self-fulfilled than the satisfaction of our ever-multiplying wants.

8. To put this differently, few secularists or pleasure-seeking utilitarians would willingly accept Gandhi's belief — put in religious language — that the Devil frees us in order to bind us, while God binds us in order to free us. In truth, Gandhi is right on both counts.

9. However, before turning to a metaphysically richer concept of moral responsibility and its relationship to Christ's dictum, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven", it is important to grasp the fact that all concepts of human responsibility assume that we are free agents. Our intentions and actions are not predetermined by either genetics, culture, psychological afflictions, or our environment. We are self-aware, rational and moral agents. We can rationally think and reflect, deliberate and discuss, debate and decide what we ought to do. We can, in

principle, freely assign value and priority to all that we and others do. We can, in a word, choose among rationally conceived and morally appropriate alternatives.

What is more, we recognize that all moral choices have consequences — some intended and many not. Regardless of intentions, we are accountable for the effects of what we do as well as for the acts themselves. Theosophically speaking, there is an ineluctable connection between action and its consequences. The effects are in the cause as W. Q. Judge teaches us. But most modern secular thinkers do not accept this.

10. Nonetheless, many people recognize that there can be, at times, discernable connections between the character of an action and the character of its effects on man and Nature.

11. The moral color of an action and its complementary effects are recognized by many people who do not explicitly espouse a belief in karma and reincarnation. For example, when someone is told that a man known to be extremely jealous is being divorced by his spouse because of that moral illness, he is not surprised. Jealousy, when it is not tempered and controlled, is commonly believed to destroy relationships. This psychological truth is richly illustrated in literature from fairy tales to the plays of Shakespeare.

After all, in the play *Othello*, both Iago and Othello bring about their mutual ruin due to uncontrolled jealousy. A similar moral connection is made in the common mind between inordinate ambition and self-destructive outcomes; outcomes which affect the community as well as the individual. This is chillingly illustrated in another of Shakespeare's plays, *Macbeth*. In that tragedy, Lady Macbeth's obsessive political ambition for her husband ultimately leads to both their deaths.

12. Most of humanity understands that we are not only responsible for our own individual acts as such, but must, at various times, assume responsibility for the actions of others. Very conscientious parents must often assume responsibility for the misbehavior of their children. This is an unofficial code in most cultures, irrespective of established laws. It is, however, less common that a politician of integrity will resign from his official position because of the misdeeds or mistakes of those in his department. When this happens — as it sometimes has in Japan and Great Britian — we consider such morally responsible action exemplary, if not heroic.

13. While all of these examples are pointing in the right direction, as theosophists, we know that the overlapping circles of individual agency and moral responsibility are considerably more extensive than conventional wisdom accepts. Dharma is, in reality, universal and all-encompassing. We are taught that the karmic law of interdependence implies that all actions of all beings at all levels of reality influence, shape, and condition everything for good or for ill. We do not act in isolation. We are all, metaphysically speaking, citizens of a particular city or community (*polis*), of a culturally variegated globe, of our solar system,

and of the seven-fold cosmos. As a result, every student who is unconditionally committed to the Path of Wisdom is in the position to gestate and generate actions that accelerate human growth toward perfectibility — or its opposite.

14. We are capable of affecting society and Nature for good or for ill. We can be a blessing or a curse to ourselves and to others. We can use our insights, experiences, and knowledge in ways that are compatible with intellectual and moral growth or with intellectual and moral retardation. *The enemy of moral responsibility is not so much immorality as it is rationalization.* The latter is the act of justifying actions known to be wrong or detrimental to oneself or others. For example, President Lincoln, in a perceptive speech, pointed out that slave owners, while often rational and ethical in certain respects, eventually disfigure their personalities and warp their power of reason because they continually justify slavery by quoting the Bible and giving endless moral excuses for mistreating black Americans in general.

15. In addition to being rational and moral agents, human beings are uniquely self-surpassing due to *manasic* mobility. We are therefore capable of appropriate acts of self-correction and atonement without guilt. This means that while we are capable of "hitting the mark" in action, we are still mistake-prone and subject to falling short of our highest ideals. For this reason, to err is indeed human, but to cheerfully correct is truly divine.

16. As we might sense, spiritual responsibility rests upon the more demanding assumption that all human beings are immortal souls, creatively engaged in a divine pilgrimage for *Self-realization* over myriads of life-times; all under the Self-regulating Law of Universal Justice. This expansive concept of responsibility includes the whole person, the entirety of the seven-fold individual. Spiritual responsibility, then, is not just a matter of observing conventional virtues, adhering to exacting moral codes, deferring to inherited cultural mores, or conforming to statutory laws. It potentially includes all these — and more. It embraces the inner man: his most sublime thoughts, finest feelings, and most selfless desires, as well as his conforming personal and social conduct. The recognition that we are rational and moral agents of a higher ontological order is integral to the profound, enigmatic process of 'individuation' — of gaining spiritual insights and consciously cooperating with the altruistic dictates of the Inner Ruler in its Promethean quest to alleviate human ignorance and suffering.

17. In classical Hinduism, for example, the third and most pivotal of the four aims in life is dharma, or what we might call "moral responsibility" or "moral self-regulation". *Dharma* is bound up with ancient teachings on "right living" in its most comprehensive sense. Therefore, when fundamental moral rules are consistently observed in all relationships and every stage of life, then *dharma* is sustaining not only the individual and the community, but the cosmos as well.

It regulates and goes beyond pleasure and wealth (aims one and two respectively). It is vital to the life cycle because moral self-regulation is key to the possibility of realizing *nirvanic* bliss (the fourth aim), in this life. Thus, the deepest spiritual, or ineffable joy (*ananda*) and the greatest ontological wealth can only be gained through cultivating that most human of all qualities, moral responsibility, or our self-chosen duty to man and the cosmos.

18. The challenge for us as theosophists is that we cannot act responsibly in this richer, metaphysical sense unless we dare to see ourselves in larger terms. To feel ourselves responsible — and responsive — to all that lives and breathes, we must engage in perhaps the greatest duty (*svadharma*) of all. That is, we must be willing to plumb the depths of the metapsychological question: "Who am I?" We must patiently inch our way beyond mere intellectual formulations or conceptual clarity — as valuable as they are.

19. We might ask, what is involved in reconceptualizing ourselves so that we could periodically negate and even transcend our circumscribed personality for the sake of *loka sangraha*, or universal uplift? If we were truly able, like Shiva Natarajan, to put the demon of the separative animal self under our foot, we could quite possibly measure up to Gandhi's gold standard of morally responsible action; namely, learning to reduce our ego to a zero when and where it is most needed to enact the uncommon good. In Gandhian terms, the courage to reduce the ego to a cypher — at will — is crucial in a universe in which human beings are either sinking or soaring, spiraling upward or swirling downward.

20. Meditation, self-study, and responsible action may be the triadic, talismanic keys to radical self-transformation and its reciprocal correlate, social uplift. Meditation seems to be about *Self-gestation*. It is about awakening a latent Self that is untouched, unmodified, and untainted by the trials and tribulations of the embodied consciousness. It is a Self which is luminous and omnipotent. It cannot, however, directly descend into embodied consciousness. Nonetheless, its proximate presence does irradiate the mind and can purify the whole person. Through the agency of focused thought (*manas*) — free of the gravitational pull of desire (*kāma*) — compassionate meditation may gestate over lifetimes the higher virtues, and activate creative centers in the human brain-mind. Tellingly, sustained *manasic* meditation eventually reveals the path of intuitive right action when it fuses with discrimination (*buddhi*).

21. Meditation without recurring self-scrutiny is, however, liable to be impotent in its influence on moral character and the development of skillful action in society. Our spiritual insights and philosophical breakthroughs are easily deflected and refracted within the labyrinth of our passion-filled brain-mind. The Pythagorean mode of nightly self-study, however, is the analytic nexus point between meditative states and right action in daily life. It helps us to plant seed ideas, pull up noxious vices, and cultivate desirable

virtues or moral excellences so that the waters of wisdom may flow into the fertile mind. Looked at another way, self-examination helps us visualize the dialectical relationship between thinking and doing (or *theoria* and *praxis in Greek*). It is crucial to the dynamics of integrating knowledge with the ever-shifting needs of communal relationships. To review our daily actions three times each night in light of sacred principles, eventually leads to sophrosyne, or rational self-control of thought, speech, and conduct in society. It makes it possible to become one's own spiritual biographer — without excuse or exaggerated expectations.

22. Meditation and self-study are incomplete unless they lead to right action or the skillful performance of duty. When the mind, purified by devotional meditation, puts its whole attention on its daily dharma, it builds moral consistency. In time the thread of moral consistency activates higher meditative states which build the permanent astral, the vehicle of progressive spiritual perfection. The permanent astral bridges lifetimes and permits one to experience the "I am I" consciousness even while in a body with an assumed personality. There is, in effect, noetic agency without *kama-manasic* identity. One has successfully "unselfed" the mind.

23. While the above is one of many ways of speaking about cultivating spiritual responsibility, it is woefully incomplete. It is impossible to find — much less walk — the path of wisdom-sacrifice without a spiritual teacher or guide. The latter provides us with wisdom-teachings or spiritual cartographies of the mind. But what is more, a *guru* prepares us for the "trials passing speech", referred to in *The Voice of the Silence*. He necessarily aids us in ways invisible but merited. He does so on planes of consciousness beyond our immediate awareness, including deep sleep.

24. The guru-*chela* (teacher-pupil) relationship is said to be the paradigm of all human relationships and the sublimest form of mutual spiritual responsibility. It holds forth the possibility of a mental "second birth" that supersedes ordinary birth into a physical vesture. A second mental-spiritual birth means that, regardless of one's actual stage of life, one is now inwardly a *sanyasi*; a homeless wanderer who has transcended name and form. Such a being resides in the state of *Soham*, "I am He". His consciousness is fused with the guru's, which is said to be attuned to the Logos. His consciousness has become radiant, impersonal, compassionate, and drenched in the elixir of mental devotion to one's preferred *Ishta-guru* (preferred teacher) who assumed the awesome obligation of being one's guide and adjustor on the steep path to enlightened service. And, like Shantideva, the grateful and responsible *chela* may become, in time, an active member of the Buddha family who engages in Bodhisattva training in the sovereign dialectic of divine wisdom and compassionate service; the magic of *buddhi* yoga.

25. In conclusion, we might say that we all live in a cosmos of interlaced

intelligences of different orders of consciousness, mind, and matter. We are never really alone. We affect man and Nature with every breath that we take. Conversely, we are all influenced by the actions of the multitudinous denizens of the swirling worlds within and without us. Under the Law of Harmony, all our actions and reactions emanate influences that impress themselves on man and the cosmos. Thus, as we learn the Law of Harmony through meditation, self-study, and loving deeds, we increasingly assume responsibility for the acts and condition of others. We consciously refuse to separate ourselves from them.

26. We spontaneously identify with the suffering and deprivations of others —especially those members of the human family who are without ". . . a Teacher, hope, or consolation." In this more comprehensive view of responsibility, we are required to restrain our excuse-making, cowardly, pushy self, and become heroic agents of the Inner Man —which, itself, is inseparable from the Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas who live on the exalted plane of *logoic* ideation. In a word, we are obliged to increasingly forget ourselves as we quietly enter into the spacious domain of selfless, responsible service. ✧

Self-doomed to live through future Kalpas, [cycles of ages] unthanked and unperceived by men; wedged as a stone with countless other stones which form the "Guardian Wall", such is thy future if the seventh gate thou passest [Prajñā , the key to which makes of a man a god, creating him a *Bodhisattva*, son of the *Dhyānis* [spiritual Buddhas]. Built by the hands of many Masters of Compassion, raised by their tortures, by their blood cemented, it shields mankind, since man is man, protecting it from further and far greater misery and sorrow.

Translated and annotated by H. P. Blavatsky
The Voice of the Silence

Theosophy's Role in Reviving the Indian Classical Dance, Bharatanatyam

ANGALESWARI S.

Introduction

By the early 20th century, Bharatanatyam, traditionally known as Sadir, had fallen into disrepute due to the temple dedication (*devadasi*) system, which was increasingly seen as immoral under colonial rule. Temple dancers were viewed as disgraceful, and the art form itself was in decline. However, the cultural renaissance that accompanied India's nationalist movement also brought a renewed interest in Indian traditions, arts, and spirituality. Central to this revival was the Theosophical Society, an organization dedicated to exploring spiritual truths and promoting Eastern wisdom, with a particular focus on India's ancient heritage.

Annie Besant and Rukmini Devi, both prominent Theosophists, played a crucial role in restoring Bharatanatyam's dignity and spiritual essence. Through their efforts, Bharatanatyam was transformed from a relegated art form into one that symbolized the spiritual and cultural rebirth of India. This transformation was guided by theosophical ideals that emphasized the spiritual unity of all religions, the inherent divinity in all human endeavors, and the interconnectedness of art and spirituality.

Theosophy, Indian Culture, and Art: Annie Besant's Vision

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott with the aim of discovering hidden spiritual truths and promoting the unity of all religions. By the time Annie Besant joined the Society and became one of its leading figures, Theosophy had established a strong presence in India, where it actively encouraged the revival of ancient Indian wisdom and culture. Besant believed that art, especially traditional Indian art forms, was an expression of the nation's soul. For her, the preservation and promotion of Indian cultural practices were integral to reviving India's spiritual identity.

Besant famously stated: "The soul of India speaks through her arts, music, dance, and her philosophies. These are not merely entertainments; they are expressions of the divine within." This belief that Indian art forms, including dance, were spiritual

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rather than merely aesthetic shaped the approach of Theosophists to cultural revival. Besant believed that traditional arts like Bharatanatyam had the power to connect individuals with the divine and elevate the consciousness of both performer and audience.

Annie Besant's promotion of Indian culture through Theosophy paved the way for the cultural and spiritual revival that Rukmini Devi later championed. Besant's belief that Indian art was sacred, and her efforts to promote and protect Indian traditions, created an environment in which Bharatanatyam could be rescued from its social stigma and reimagined as a vehicle for spiritual expression.

Theosophical Teachings on Art and Culture

Theosophy teaches that all forms of art are manifestations of universal truth, and that they serve as bridges between the material and spiritual realms. This concept was especially influential in theosophical circles in India, where leaders like Besant emphasized that Indian arts rooted in ancient culture and spiritual traditions were channels for divine expression. Besant viewed Indian culture as embodying the eternal spiritual truths that Theosophy sought to uncover. In her speeches and writings, Besant often referred to India as the spiritual mother of the world, whose ancient culture held the key to humanity's future enlightenment.

Besant stressed that art and spirituality were inseparable in India's traditions, reiterating theosophical teachings that all human endeavors, when properly directed, could lead to self-realization. In this context, traditional Indian dance, music, and crafts were seen not merely as arts but as vehicles for spiritual awakening. In one of her key statements, Besant noted: "Art is the soul of religion made visible. Through music, dance, and the visual arts, the soul of a people speaks in forms of beauty, lifting humanity to higher realms of consciousness."

Theosophists, under Besant's leadership, believed that Indian culture, particularly its arts, had the power to heal the spiritual illness brought on by colonialism and modern materialism. To Besant, restoring the purity and dignity of Indian art forms was part of a larger mission to revive India's cultural and spiritual heritage. She also emphasized that this revival of art and culture was not merely about reclaiming the past, but also about stimulating the present and building a spiritual future for India.

Annie Besant and the Revival of Indian Arts

Theosophists viewed India's ancient cultural practices as containing deep spiritual wisdom, and they actively sought to preserve and promote these traditions. Besant, in particular, encouraged the establishment of institutions that would preserve India's traditional arts and foster their growth. She saw Indian arts as a means to reawaken national pride and restore India's spiritual leadership on the world stage. Besant was instrumental in organizing events, exhibitions, and cultural programs that showcased Indian arts and crafts. She encouraged Indians to

take pride in their heritage and urged the Indian elite to support traditional art forms, including Bharatanatyam, which was in decline due to its association with the *devadasi* system. Besant believed that the social stigma attached to Indian dance was a product of colonial and Victorian feelings, which failed to recognize the spiritual essence of these traditions.

In her speeches, Besant often highlighted the importance of reviving Indian music and dance as a way to restore India's spiritual vitality. She remarked:

> The arts of India are the very breath of her soul. To neglect them is to neglect the divine spirit within her. Through these arts, the people of India will once again find their way to the light.

This deep belief in the spiritual significance of art led Besant to champion the cause of Bharatanatyam, which had been pushed to the fringes of society due to colonial disapproval and social stigma. Her views created an intellectual framework within which Bharatanatyam could be re-envisioned as a classical art form with deep spiritual roots, thus paving the way for the work of Rukmini Devi Arundale.

Rukmini Devi Arundale and a Legacy of Revival

While Annie Besant laid the philosophical groundwork for the revival of Bharatanatyam, it was Rukmini Devi Arundale who took decisive action to restore and elevate the art form. Born in 1904, she was profoundly influenced by the theosophical movement, especially by the teachings of Besant and George Arundale, whom she later married. Theosophical ideas regarding art, spirituality, and the pursuit of higher truths greatly shaped Rukmini Devi's vision for Bharatanatyam. Upon encountering Sadir, she looked beyond its social stigmatization as a dance performed by *devadasis* and recognized its deep spiritual essence.

The transformation of Sadir into Bharatanatyam is primarily credited to Rukmini Devi. She redefined the dance, stripping away the negative associations tied to the *devadasi* system and recasting it as a sacred art form. Drawing on theosophical teachings that emphasized the purity of the soul and the spiritual potential of art, Rukmini Devi framed Bharatanatyam as a path to spiritual enlightenment. She famously stated: "Bharatanatyam is not just a dance, it is a means of achieving spiritual realization. Every movement, every gesture is sacred." This perspective aligned perfectly with theosophical ideals that art should serve as a vehicle for spiritual transformation.

The impact of Annie Besant's theosophical ideas on Indian culture is most profoundly reflected in the work of Rukmini Devi Arundale. Deeply influenced by theosophical teachings, she embraced the view that dance was not merely a form of entertainment but a spiritual practice. She shared Besant's belief that Indian dance, particularly Bharatanatyam, held the potential to connect with the divine. Drawing from Besant's vision of Indian arts as sacred expressions of the divine, Rukmini Devi redefined Bharatanatyam, elevating it

from its marginalized status to a respected classical art form.

Rukmini Devi's transformation of Sadir to Bharatanatyam was an extension of Besant's philosophical ideals, particularly the notion that art could serve as a medium for spiritual realization. She removed the sensual elements associated with Sadir, the traditional form of Bharatanatyam performed by *devadasis*, and restored its original purpose as a sacred offering to the gods. Rukmini Devi once stated: "Dance, in its purest form, is a spiritual discipline, a means of communion with the divine. In every movement, in every gesture, there is the possibility of reaching a higher state of being." This transformation of Bharatanatyam was deeply rooted in theosophical ideals of purity, spirituality, and the power of art to facilitate inner enlightenment.

In 1936, Rukmini Devi took a monumental step by founding Kalakshetra, an institution dedicated to teaching and promoting Bharatanatyam and other Indian arts. Kalakshetra quickly became a cornerstone of the revival of Indian classical dance and music, with its emphasis on spirituality in the arts deeply rooted in theosophical principles. At Kalakshetra, she codified the techniques of Bharatanatyam, preserving its traditional form while establishing a structured curriculum. This institutionalization allowed Bharatanatyam to gain respect as a serious, spiritual art form that could be studied and performed internationally.

She also made significant contributions to the aesthetics of Bharatanatyam. She distanced the dance from the sensual aspects associated with the *devadasis*, emphasizing its spiritual and classical dimensions. This shift was reflected in her changes to costume design that replaced the traditional attire of temple dancers with simpler, more graceful costumes inspired by ancient temple sculptures. These modifications were consistent with her vision of Bharatanatyam as a medium for spiritual expression, rather than entertainment. Through her efforts, she not only revived Bharatanatyam but also redefined it. Kalakshetra became a inspiration for Indian classical arts, embodying theosophical values of spiritual growth through artistic practice, and her legacy continues to influence today's global perception and practice of Bharatanatyam.

Theosophical Ideas and the Transformation from Sadir to Bharatanatyam

Theosophical ideals played a pivotal role in the transformation of Bharatanatyam from its earlier form, Sadir, into the classical dance we know today. Central to Theosophical thought is the belief in the unity of all religions, the universality of truth, and the interconnection between art, spirituality, and religion. For Theosophists like Rukmini Devi Arundale, Bharatanatyam was far more than just a dance; it was a medium to express universal spiritual truths. Theosophy held that art served as a bridge between the material and the spiritual, allowing individuals to transcend the mundane and access higher states of consciousness.

In her mission to revive Bharatanatyam, Rukmini Devi was deeply influ-

enced by these theosophical principles. She viewed her work not merely as an artistic or cultural effort but as a spiritual endeavor. Rukmini Devi famously stated: "In dance, we seek the highest form of truth and beauty, not merely movement. It is a form of yoga, a union with the divine." This perspective aligns with Theosophy's belief that art, when rooted in spiritual practice, could lead to self-realization and enlightenment.

Rukmini Devi's reforms also resonated Theosophy's reverence for India's ancient traditions, which were seen as repositories of profound spiritual wisdom. Her emphasis on removing the sensual elements from Sadir and restoring its spiritual core was a direct reflection of theosophical ideals. She believed that Bharatanatyam, when performed in its purest form, could reveal the divine to both the dancer and the audience, transforming it into a sacred art form. Rukmini Devi's re-envisioning of Bharatanatyam as a spiritual practice was also characterized by her efforts to systematize the dance. She created a structured framework that aligned with theosophical goals of spiritual upliftment, ensuring Bharatanatyam's survival and growth. By codifying the art form and establishing rigorous standards of training, she helped elevate Bharatanatyam from its marginalized status, securing its place as a respected classical dance both in India and abroad. Through her efforts, Rukmini Devi's vision of Bharatanatyam as a spiritual, artistic, and cultural expression flourished, transforming it into a global phenomenon and a revered component of India's cultural heritage.

Kalakshetra: A Theosophical Institution and Its Role in Bharatanatyam's Revival

Kalakshetra played a crucial role in the revival of Indian classical dance by emphasizing the spiritual dimension of art, a concept deeply rooted in theosophical thought. Rukmini Devi envisioned Kalakshetra not merely as a school for dance, but as a centre for both spiritual and artistic exploration, where art would serve as a path to self-realization and moral growth. Kalakshetra was built on the foundational theosophical principles of *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and *śraddha* (faith). These values shaped the institution's philosophy, encouraging not only artistic excellence but also the cultivation of moral and spiritual character.

Rukmini Devi's theosophical beliefs were deeply woven into the fabric of Kalakshetra, with the institution embodying the ideal of art as a spiritual practice. Students at Kalakshetra were not only taught the technical aspects of Bharatanatyam but also its philosophical and spiritual significance, reflecting the theosophical view that art holds the potential to elevate the soul.

Under Rukmini Devi's leadership, Kalakshetra helped codify Bharatanatyam's techniques and traditions, establishing a structured curriculum that preserved the dance's classical roots while giving it contemporary relevance. Through this framework, she ensured the dance form's survival and growth, transforming

it into a globally recognized classical art. Kalakshetra's influence spread internationally as she and her students performed around the world, presenting Bharatanatyam as a sophisticated and spiritually profound art form, in line with Theosophical ideals.

Kalakshetra's impact on the revival of Bharatanatyam cannot be overstated. As a theosophical institution, it became a model for integrating spiritual values into artistic practice, offering a platform where dancers and artists could explore and express the deeper meanings of Bharatanatyam. Through Kalakshetra, she ensured that Bharatanatyam would not only be preserved as a traditional art but also continue to evolve as a spiritual discipline, resonating with audiences both in India and abroad.

Rukmini Devi's revival of Bharatanatyam not only transformed the dance form within India but also helped elevate its status on the international stage. By presenting Bharatanatyam as a classical art form deeply rooted in spiritual traditions, she facilitated global recognition and appreciation of Indian culture. Kalakshetra, under her leadership, became a centre for international students, fostering cultural exchange and helping to spread Bharatanatyam as a revered art form worldwide. As Leela Samson observed, Rukmini Devi's dedication and vision "enabled Bharatanatyam to emerge as a globally recognized classical dance, anchored in tradition while embodying contemporary spiritual experiences". (Samson, *The Dance of the Gods: Bharatanatyam in the 21st Century*, 2008).

Conclusion

The revival of Bharatanatyam owes much to the theosophical movement and the visionary efforts of Annie Besant and Rukmini Devi Arundale. Their belief in the spiritual power of art and dedication to preserving India's cultural heritage played a crucial role in transforming Bharatanatyam from a discredited temple dance into a classical art form. Theosophical ideas about the unity of religions, the divinity of art, and the spiritual potential of human creativity were central to this transformation.

Kalakshetra, founded by Rukmini Devi, became the cornerstone of Bharatanatyam's revival, promoting its spiritual and artistic renaissance. The institution embodied theosophical values, ensuring that Bharatanatyam remained a vital expression of India's cultural and spiritual identity. Annie Besant's promotion of Indian arts as expressions of the divine laid the groundwork for this cultural renaissance, inspiring future generations to reclaim and respect traditional Indian dance, music, and crafts.

Rukmini Devi's revival of Bharatanatyam, deeply rooted in theosophical thought, restored the dance's sacred nature. Her efforts to emphasize its spiritual dimensions transformed Bharatanatyam into a celebrated classical art form. By founding Kalakshetra, she preserved the traditions of Bharatanatyam while ensuring its relevance in contemporary society. Her work ensured that Bharatanatyam continues to thrive, symbolizing India's spiritual heritage and bridging the past with the present.

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I have not found in Western music, however, strong and ennobling as it is, that peculiar and elusive power which in Hindu music predisposes to the higher forms of meditation, by which, as its own sounds sink into silence for the entranced mind and heart, the consciousness slips away from the body, leaving it cradled in the melody, and passes into the higher regions. There are delicate notes given out by the instruments which thrill softly out and cause the subtlest vibrations in the higher bodies, till all sounds are left behind and spirit is set free. Those single delicate notes seem to have a power greater than any chord; the chord raises passion or emotion; these single notes thrill to spiritual ecstasy; the one predisposes to activity, the other to quiescence, contemplation, and peace. This seems to me to be the greatest service that music can do to religion.

Annie Besant

Based on a lecture given in 1908 in Madras (now Chennai).
See the Sep. 2023 issue of *The Theosophist*, p.10

The Twelve Keys

JOUKO IKONEN

Introduction

I was reading *The Mahatma Letters* in a small Finnish town one winter evening, and I was left pondering over a passage by Mahatma Koot Hoomi, in which he said that much of the world's evil is caused by religions and the teachings of priests. These teachings are repeated millions of times, century after century, whether they are right or wrong. When people are told the same thing repeatedly, they come to believe it and consider other beliefs false. Indeed, people are suggestible.

This was particularly evident during the Second World War, when the German people were made to believe in their own specialness through one-sided, repetitive communication, that is, propaganda. If we look at the situation today, we see the same phenomenon repeated in some nations, with a climate of hatred and revenge growing as the guns do the talking. It is noteworthy that many religious leaders foment revenge when religions should be builders of universal peace and brotherhood.

As our planet's living conditions deteriorate due to the increasing human population, wrong lifestyles, and the use of important human and physical resources for the war industry, it is time to think about its future from a whole new perspective. Would this be the time to forget the old prophets and think sincerely about what path Cosmic Wisdom, called God in many religions, wants us to take today? In this spirit, I have written the Twelve Keys.

The Twelve Keys:

I. Be Clean

When we work in the world, keep Nature clean so that future generations can take pleasure in its purity. Leave the earth, water, air, and fire clean for those that will come after us, as our ancestors left them for us.

When we work on our inner self, we need to watch over our emotions and thoughts so they are clean for ourselves and others. In this way, we will gradually build our being — our soul, spirit, and physical body — to be pure and brilliant, and will be ready to encounter what is highest in us.

II. Be Always True

When we are true in our deeds, speech,

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emotions, and thoughts, we will develop the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. Let us be truthful when working with our inner self, which is the altar of truth, and when we work in the world.

In this way, our qualities will be in tune with one another and will unite us with a circle of life that is now unknown to us. Then we will be able to use our powers for the service of Creation.

III. Only Take That Which Is Yours

Let us consider precisely what we need here in the world, and take only that.

Nobody will starve or live in need if we take only what we need, because the natural economy is so founded that it will feed everybody in moderation. If we take too much, somebody else will get too little.

Also consider what you truly need at the level of your finer qualities. Give away what is not necessary for us.

If we lead a simple and moderate life, we will not create demand for things whose production pollutes our environment and our lives.

IV. Direct Your Power to The Essential

The powers of willing, thinking, feeling, speaking, and doing are yours and yours only. Use these capacities to forward your essential goals and benefit others. If you do work that worsens conditions for others, give it up and work instead to grow a tree of life for them.

Do not use your powers to resist evil but to encourage good.

Be aware of the action of your finer qualities in yourself and use them to serve good. In this way, our tree of life will bear fruit for future generations.

V. Meet Life

The sphere of experience changes year by year. Sometimes we float on the waves of joy, sometimes we wander in the valley of sorrow, and sometimes we are met with pain. Take them all into your life and have them all as your teachers. We cannot choose joy if we do not accept sorrow as its companion.

We create the grounds of our joy and sorrow.

Do not walk stupidly forever in the circle of life, but learn what creates joy, sorrow, and pain.

VI. Show Great Tolerance for Others

Remember that our religion grows from the same root as other religions. If our religion and faith are living, we will bring forth living deeds. If it is dead, we will bring forth dead deeds.

Let our fruits prove our faith. If they ripen in us, others will see that we have found our root.

If we do not bear fruits that are true to our faith, it is useless to speak about our doctrine.

If someone wants to express their soul by dancing, allow them.

If someone wants to paint a picture of their soul, let it be so.

If someone only wants to meditate, let them also have the right to do it.

Take care to do what feels best and worthiest in our innermost heart.

If our doctrine is true, people will absorb it from our lips; we need not impose it. But first this tune must sound purely in ourselves.

VII. Learn Not to Kill or Hurt

Do not kill a human or animal.

Do not cause others to kill for you.

Control your emotional and mental powers. Do not use them to kill.

Learn to use your speech without hurting. Instead, build, animate, heal, and bring joy and solace.

VIII. Forgive

Forgiving will free us from the burdens of the past, and life will stay with us.

IX. Learn Calmness of Mind

Watch over the variations of our temper. Learn to see past the waves of life.

We are not our emotions or thoughts.

Anger weakens our mind. It will take us a long time to repair the damage of our hate, both outside and inside ourselves. Our outbursts of anger can harm our finer qualities.

X. Watch Over Your Motives

If we build only for ourselves, we will make a wall around us.

Learn to serve the whole world.

When we begin to act, consider whether our motives are pure.

XI. Maintain Your Connection with the Highest in You

All our life experiences are included in our highest essence: the Christ in us, our Overself, our higher trinity, our God; call it what we like.

We can feel this connection throughout our being. Therefore seek that connection by praying, meditating, devoting yourself to your ideals, and doing righteous activities.

If this connection is lost, we live for nothing.

XII. Love

Love the whole of creation, where we have only teachers, not enemies.

Final Words

One does not find salvation in the dogmas of external religions but in the inner Self. Theosophy speaks of the path of initiation that one must follow in gradually raising one's consciousness.

One must always begin with oneself, and the aspirant must follow the path of purification before the greater initiations. The inspiration of the winter night reflection brought these Twelve Keys, independent of religions and prophets, to those who wish to enter the path of initiation. It also brought peace to my heart, and it lasted for days. ✧

The Mahayana Buddhists say that enlightenment comes only when there is a deep compassion, a deep feeling for the misery and suffering which exist in the world. The real reason for finding enlightenment should be an altruistic sympathy and compassion for all who suffer.

Radha Burnier

Creating Sacred Spaces — The Transformational Power of Meditative Inquiry

MICHELE SENDER

MEMBERS of the Theosophical Society (TS) are entrusted with the task of sharing the living power of Theosophy. In a letter to the American Convention, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) instructed us to "teach, practise, [and] promulgate that system of life and thought which alone can save the coming [humanity]". This statement is a useful and inspirational guiding principle, but in order to follow it effectively we must examine something that is essential in all collective effort — how we communicate with each other and how this affects our ability to work together.

Conventional communication often stems from the lower mind, which is the concrete and divisive aspect of our consciousness. Consequently, even when seeking consensus or common ground, people unconsciously are inclined to prove points or win arguments. In order to work in mutual understanding and support, we need to move from a perception susceptible to conflict and misinterpretation towards a gentler and more accepting mindset that engages in conversation in the spirit of altruism. This attitude is fundamental to build true brotherhood, which can lead us closer to our ideal of unity.

The practice of Meditative Inquiry is often used in theosophical meetings. However, a lack of structure or guidelines tends to weaken its potential usefulness. In this article, I propose a formatted method of Meditative Inquiry to help us practise it more effectively. I am not presenting new concepts here. Borrowing HPB's statement, I have "made only a nosegay of culled flowers", taken from various theosophical teachings and "brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them".

The practice of Meditative Inquiry is a form of *Jñānā* Yoga. Its purpose is to awaken wisdom by helping us reach a direct perception of truth via a meditative process. The practice of meditation aims at leading us toward a state of *interior silence* through which we can access our true nature — the source of strength, wisdom, and courage. This

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connection helps us transcend our personal ego and bring a sense of harmony in our lives and relationships. However, when in the setting of a group discussion, it is often more challenging to reach this alignment. Through Meditative Inquiry we can create a collective *sacred space* that helps us tap into the "substratum of memory" of our essential unity, as mentioned by HPB in her "Diagram of Meditation".

Meditative Inquiry offers profound potential with numerous applications. It enhances self-examination, personal study, Lodge study, and even everyday interactions by:

1) engaging in an *active exploration* of our mind's inner workings through a present, dynamic, moment-to-moment investigation;

2) recognizing and addressing misunderstandings and misperceptions that may occur in conversations; and

3) transforming the way in which we study, both individually and as a group.

With practice and proficiency, this approach can have an almost magical effect, fostering affinity and rapport in relationships, and deep insights in our studies. In this article we will explore four teachable elements to better take advantage of the potential that lies in this practice.

The Why

"The average [person], even among the most intellectual, giving all their attention to the testimony of appearance and outward form, and disabled as they are from penetrating a priori to the core of things, are but too apt to misjudge the whole situation." (Mahatma Morya)

Our interactions are often dominated by sensory perception and the instinctive activity of the brain. Wired primarily for survival, brain-driven perceptions lead us to focus on differences rather than shared commonalities. In its turn, this kind of activity engages our lower minds which, colored by past conditioning, memories, and judgments, generate fertile conditions for misunderstanding and discordance. When we try to cooperate from this level of consciousness, we are at best able to achieve a fragile, superficial equilibrium that can crumble easily under pressure. Additionally, when we tend to avoid difficult conversations, mistakenly believing that this is how we maintain peace, we not only fail to create lasting harmony but often this strategy increases underlying tension.

Is it possible to build relationships on unshakeable foundations, leading to true peace and understanding? This is, after all, the ideal presented to us in our First Object — "to form a nucleus of universal brotherhood". One way to do this is to consciously create a sacred space where we can be open and honest, allowing us to move beyond tension and discomfort toward a deeper way of relating with one another.

Four Elements

During my time as a high school teacher and my involvement in the TS, I have explored and implemented a variety of dialogue methods that seek to stimulate more profound engagements and gain new insights. These include Socratic

Dialogue, Native American Council techniques, David Bohm's technique for dialogue, J. Krishnamurti's method of inquiry, among others. Viewing these diverse approaches through the lens of theosophical teachings, I have identified four key elements that are helpful when seeking to communicate from a more unifying perspective. These skills can be cultivated individually; however, they naturally interweave, becoming exponentially more effective when practised in concert.

1. Listen with a Silent Mind

"When you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not just part of it." (J. Krishnamurti)

When we listen from the level of the lower mind, we are listening to our conditioning, concepts, and memories. In addition, we are prone to half-listen, hearing what we think is being said while already formulating responses or opinions. We also have a habit of communicating with a sense of already knowing what the other person is going to say. Naturally, if we are seeking a deeper communication, we must try to go beyond the filter of our own opinions so that we can truly perceive what is being communicated.

Just as meditation can take us beyond the mundane world grasped through the senses, listening with a silent mind can help us perceive what is behind the words we hear. The cornerstone of Meditative Inquiry is learning to bring the silent attentiveness we seek in meditation into our group meetings and, indeed, into all our encounters. It is in this mental quietude that we open ourselves to an inner world full of potential where we can discover our true nature: whole, resilient, resourceful, and perfect.

The space once filled with restlessness and chaos becomes one of stillness and order, and our consciousness expands inward, granting access to valuable insights. We are then able to engage in a collective exploration with a consciousness free from judgments and automatic reactions, nurturing empathy and understanding as the basis for our actions.

Finding a silent mind during conversation is not always easy. A way to induce this state is to begin to listen with a *curious mind.* When we listen with a genuine attitude of interest, we naturally leave our own self-centered thoughts behind and engage with openness and receptivity, one that not only allows us to connect more meaningfully, but also makes others feel welcome, heard, and valued.

2. Respond from the Heart

"The Heart is the center of the Spiritual Consciousness, as the Brain is the center of Intellectual Consciousness." (HPB)

Theosophical teachings describe two levels of consciousness from which we can act: brain-centered (*kāma-manas*) and heart-centered (*buddhi-manas*). Brain-centered consciousness refers to the mind swayed by desires, fears, and strong emotions. It judges, names, and categorizes based on sensory input, resulting in

fragmented, limited, and often unreliable perceptions. Influenced by the desire-nature (*kāma*), this mind gravitates toward pleasure and away from discomfort, and it is often instinctive, self-serving, and reactionary.

To transcend this reactionary state, *manas* must be influenced by *buddhi*, the source of spiritual wisdom and empathy. This heart-centered consciousness manifests when we let go of the ego with its personal agenda and ambition, when we operate from a place of affection, not severity, of cooperation, not opposition. Interactions from this level of consciousness yield softened responses characterized by a sense of equability, self-sacrifice, and wholeness.

3. Speak with Purpose and Precision

"Discussions also should not be a matter of venting opinions. Opinions are not truth. Can we succeed in discussing vital questions without being anxious to present our opinions, seriously trying to learn more about the subject discussed, its depth of meaning, and all the implications?" (Radha Burnier)

Another important element allowing for more genuine deeper communication is to become aware of what motivates us in general, but specifically in our speech. We must ask ourselves, "Why do I speak?" "What is the intention behind voicing my point of view?" Do we speak to show what we know; or for a need to be heard, to be seen, to be respected; or to teach, to correct; or just to break the silence? Through an open and honest inquiry about these questions we are better positioned to be aware of the thoughts and feelings that arise during interactions, allowing us to choose what is worth sharing. Being less anxious to speak, our responses are motivated by what is best for the present moment, thus bringing precision and conscious intention to our words. This awareness may often lead us to be less active externally, yet in this space of silence we may find insights into what we are seeking, as well as to what others may need to support their quest for truth.

For those who tend to remain silent, it is equally important to ask, "Why don't I speak?" Examine this question deeply. Is the silence due to fear, lack of confidence, low energy, or absence of motivation?

However, it is important to recognize that a group does not thrive solely on verbal contributions. Mindful silence is a form of action and is valuable in its own right. Engaging in this kind of introspection will help us find an attitude that benefits both the individual and the group as a whole.

4. Tap into the Substratum

"When you are in this uplifted state, ideas can reach you. . . . Even as you are talking . . . keep as it were a mental antenna up so that from somewhere above on high, within, an idea can reach you and enrich your [contributions]." (Geoffrey Hodson) "When the manasic entity [higher ego] sends an impulse downwards to the lower nature . . . it appears to the personality as spontaneous, free, uncaused by any action on the lower plane; and so it is, for the causes that work on the personality are of the higher

not the lower planes." (Annie Besant)

HPB explains that, as we make efforts to elevate our consciousness, an enduring substratum or foundation of higher consciousness is gradually generated. The final skill in this method is to hold the conscious intention of tapping into this substratum while we interact with others. Then, the door may open, bringing forth a wisdom that transcends our ordinary, conditioned responses.

From the perspective of the personality, the influence coming from *buddhi-manas* often manifests as a seemingly natural and spontaneous occurrence. However, this is unlikely to happen unless we have laid the groundwork for it. Meditative Inquiry helps us create a sacred space where the contact between our higher and lower natures can take place.

As we work on these skills, not only in our Lodge meetings but also in our daily interactions, we become a clearer channel through which the higher consciousness can influence our thoughts, emotions, and actions, thus allowing a more cohesive and integrated expression of our true nature.

Summary of the Method

Here I provide a summary of the action items for each element in this framework making it easier to remember during practice.

1. Listen with a Silent Mind: Engage in the exploration with an attitude of curiosity and wonder.

2. Respond from the Heart: Let go of the ego with its personal agenda and ambition, and operate from a place of mutual understanding and collaboration.

3. Speak with Purpose and Precision: Be aware of your motivations for speaking or remaining silent.

4. Tap into the Substratum: Cultivate the conscious intention of interacting with others from your higher nature.

Our Work

When practising this approach to Meditative Inquiry, it is helpful to recognize the challenges inherent in both personal and communal transformation, while keeping in mind the importance of persistent effort in becoming proficient in any practice. Setbacks are a natural part of the process, and maintaining our commitment to growth and service despite obstacles is fundamental.

The individual has limited power when compared to the collective. In community, the work of transformation gets easier, grows in strength, and becomes a powerful force in the service of humanity. Yet, we should not forget that the individual change adds to the power of the group, so we should not discount the value of bringing change in the seemingly small, personal daily actions.

Creating sacred spaces can facilitate a lasting transformation, not only individually but collectively. Start today, fail, start again, fail again — fail gloriously, our success is in starting again. All the Mahatmas ask is that we simply — TRY!

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Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

WHEN a young woman went to the Buddha and pleaded with him to restore the life of her dead child, the Buddha, in his compassion, said: Bring me a handful of mustard seeds from a house where there has been no death. After a futile search, she came back. He was not hard-hearted. He was telling her to look at the problem as a universal problem, not as her problem. The problem of death is that of parting from things to which we have become attached, which is universal. If we live with greater depth of awareness, sensitivity, and clarity, a certain richness, an unfailing energy, and inspiration will be there, because these are qualities of the new mind. Regeneration is a wonderful thing. When the mind becomes different, it is full of vitality; it has virtue and goodness.

Let us not be satisfied to remain at a comparatively shallow level in the Theosophical Society. Many people want meditation; perhaps there are people eager for the spiritual life. But what do we mean by meditation? As Krishnamurti said, it is not simply sitting cross-legged, breathing, or practising some formula. It is a way to a radical change in ourselves, bringing abundant energy, inspiration and understanding.

Radha Burnier (15 November 1923–31 October 2013)
International President of the TS (1980–2013)
From *Human Regeneration*, pp. 50–51

Theosophical Work around the World

Centenary of All Religions Conference at Sivagiri, Kerala, India

In 1924 on 3 and 4 March, an All Religions Conference was held at Alwaye (now Aluva) Advaita Ashram in Kerala, India. It was a unique conference, the first of its kind in Asia and second in the world (the first being the World Conference of Religions in Chicago in 1899). The conference was convened by Sri Narayana Guru (1855–1928), a saint who fought for the upliftment of a community which suffered the ill-treatment of so-called upper-caste Hindus. At that time, casteism and untouchability was prevalent in Kerala. H. S. Olcott describes this suffering of lower-caste people in his *Old Diary Leaves*, Second Series. He founded the first theosophical Lodge in Kerala in 1882 at Palghat (now Palakkad) and witnessed the sorrowful condition of the poor *paraya* community there.

Sri Narayana Guru educated the lower castes by starting Sanskrit and Malayalam schools and constructed temples of worship which allowed entry to all devotees irrespective of caste or religion.

The All Religion Conference was held in 1924 in this background. He requested Justice Sadasiva Iyer to preside over the conference. Sadasiva Iyer was the General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society at that time. Manjeri Rama Iyer and Manjeri Ramakrishna Iyer, who were leaders of the TS in Kerala, spoke on Theosophy and Buddhism. Various other religions were also represented.

In order to commemorate the centenary of this conference an All Religions Conference was convened at the Sivagiri Madom (Mutt), Trivandrum, Kerala on 17 September 2024.

Swami Satchidananda, Head of the Sivagiri Madom presided and Hon. Minister of Kerala State V. N. Vasavan inaugurated the Conference. Various religious and spiritual leaders spoke about the unifying impact of Sri Narayana Guru in the socially divided environment of the early 20th century in Kerala and South India. K. Dinakaran, Secretary, Kerala Theosophical Federation, Indian Section, spoke on Theosophy, the Theosophical Society and the connection between Sri Narayana Guru and the TS.

When Dr Annie Besant visited Calicut (now Kozhikode) in 1908, she was asked by Sri Narayana Guru to lay the foundation stone of a temple constructed by him. Sri Narayana Guru was given a warm reception at Annie Hall and a *mangalapatram* (citation) was given by the Lodge. His teachings stand for the universal brotherhood of humanity without any distinction of caste or religion. His slogan was "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Humanity". He wrote more than 60 works in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Malayalam.

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Speakers on the occasion of the commemoration of the All Religions Conference 1924 on 17 September 2024:
Standing K. Dinakaran, Secretary, Kerala Theosophical Federation, Indian Section;
Seated in the first row, *from l. to r.*: Swami Viviktananda, Head, Chinmaya Mission, Kerala;
Muhammad Faizy Onampilly, Islamic scholar, Trissur; Swami Satchidananda, Head,
Sivagiri Madom; Fr Koshy George Varinjavila, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Kerala;
Swami Atmachaitanya, Head, Santi Madom; Fr Justin Panakal, Carmelite Order, Kerala.





International President of the Theosophical Society, Tim Boyd, delivering the keynote address during the Annie Besant birthday celebrations in the Headquarters Hall at Adyar on 1 October 2024.



In the subsequent cultural programme by Darshan, a sitar recital was rendered by Anupama Bhagwat accompanied by Rahul Pophali on the tabla.

Annie Besant Day Celebration, Adyar

Dr Annie Besant's (AB) birthday was celebrated on 1 October 2024 at the International Headquarters Hall, Adyar, Chennai. After the Universal Prayer that was written by her was recited, President Tim Boyd gave a talk about the remarkable life of AB, highlighting her early years (see p. 5 of this issue).

She had a great influence in reforming the education system both for men and women, the revival of Indian classical art, especially Bharatanatyam, which also emancipated women (see p. 22 of this issue), and the Indian Independence movement. She touched the lives of people at all levels.

Marja Artamaa, international Secretary and author of this report, welcomed the choir, musicians, and dancers, guided by Prof. Srinivas Krishnan. Each of the songs reflected some of the values that AB emphasized, and the singers explained them clearly before each song. Following are some extracts from their words.

"The song '*Kātrinile varum deepam*' is a Tamil composition which reminds us that there is a sense of calmness after every storm. AB fought for the rights and freedom of Indians, and worked hard to ensure education for women and children."

"'*Oruvan oruvan mudalāli*' is a Tamil song that emphasizes the quality of self-awareness that one may relate to a spiritual awakening. It reminds us to develop the ability to stay away from greed and desire and to bring the mind to act and serve."

"AB never failed to embrace the culture and traditions of the country that she was so ardently fighting for, and she never hesitated to fight for Home Rule for India, voicing the concerns of the community. '*Ghoomar*', is a Rajasthani folk composition that mirrors her tough, yet compassionate sense of devotion to India and everything that she put her mind to."

"'*Azeem O Shaan*' is a Hindi composition that has a sense of presence, very regal, much like AB and her leadership. This song has lyrics that say, 'let us always remain protected'."

"Just like the raw emotion in '*Oithe amla*' (a beautiful Punjabi poem sung by the great Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan), AB was not chasing fame or fortune, but spreading love and truth. This song, with its heartfelt melody, captures that sense of devotion she had."

"The composition in Marathi, '*Valhav re nakhva*', is all about team-work, sung by fishermen at the twilight hour before going to sea. It celebrates the universal mother and is a tribute to AB who united the people and fought for Mother India's freedom."

"'*Blowing in the Wind*' by Bob Dylan was always rooted in deep values that deeply resonated with Annie Besant too. In the Indian context, it simply means '*satyameva jayate* — in truth, lies victory'."

"The piece '*vaishnav jan to*', is a beautiful *bhajan*, a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi. He and his wife had come once to the TS in Adyar at AB's invitation ."

The highlight of the event was the performance by the guest artistes Anupama Bhagwat (sitar) and Rahul Pophali (tabla).

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Edited by Mr Tim Boyd, 'Olcott Bungalow', The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai (TS),
Published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, 'Arundale House', TS, and Printed by Mr V. Gopalan, 'Chit Sabha', TS, at the
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