



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Editor: *Mrs Radha Burnier*

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

President: Mrs Radha Burnier

Vice-President: Mr M. P. Singhal

Secretary: Mrs Kusum Satapathy

Treasurer: Mr T. S. Jambunathan

Headquarters: ADYAR, CHENNAI (MADRAS) 600 020, INDIA

Secretary: secy.hq@ts-adyar.org

Treasury: ts_treasury@sify.com

Adyar Library and Research Centre: alrc.hq@ts-adyar.org

Theosophical Publishing House: tphindia@gmail.com & tphindia@adyarbooks.com

Fax: (+91-44) 2490-1399

Editorial Office: editorialoffice@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.ts-adyar.org>

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.

On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

The First Awakening

The world around us may not after all consist of mere objects; perhaps we do not see it as it actually is. One of the Mahatmas said that the world of individual existence is full of latent meaning and deep purpose. Every individual existence shares the meaning and the purpose which are part of the whole life. Nothing is exempt from this: the new grass growing out of the soil, the rock pushing out of the ground, as well as every human being, all are contained in that purpose and meaning. Each exists in its own right, not as an object to be dealt with and used by somebody else.

A tree is not just an object that provides fuel, a lamb is not an object to provide meat, people are not objects for friendship or enmity. But for the average man or woman, the world is divided into objects which serve his pleasure and those that do not. There is a sharp boundary line between *my* people, *my* things, *my* interests and everything that lies outside. So relationships are perceived as something different from what perhaps they are in reality.

When things are converted into objects which are useful to me and to others there is no real perception or relationship.

Everything in the world appears to be separate from another, and is judged to be good or bad according to its usefulness. There is a whole scale of values in every person's mind about what is acceptable and what is not, what is of greater importance and what is of lesser importance, and according to that scale are our judgements fixed, our prejudices, our likes and dislikes.

In order to be calm the mind must be empty; empty of all these sorts of activities, reactions, thoughts, so that there is the beginning of tranquillity and the possibility of a deeper awareness of things. Life is not always what it appears to be. Individual existences are not objects of pleasure or dislike or indifference. They are full of meaning and purpose in their own right. We do not know what life actually is. We are unable to perceive it because of the condition of the mind. One of the Mahatmas said that it is only on the calm and unruffled surface of the mind that truths can impress themselves.

If we attach significance to anything according to our personal desires or our self-will (which is probably what we do at present), we block our own ability to perceive. We attach significance to certain people, to certain things, to certain ideas,

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and we are indifferent to others. We divide life into a number of airtight categories. Some people and movements are important to us because they serve our desires or conform to our ideas. Others are of no importance because they do not. So, unconsciously perhaps, our assessments of others and of events are made from an entirely selfish point of view. We attribute significance to whatever satisfies us, physically or psychologically, while other things belong to different categories. And our whole scale of values is made up in this way.

There are certain attitudes which arise in the mind and which we must be vigilant to identify. For example, there is the person whose aim in life seems to be to make use of people and situations. Those who are not in a position to further his ambitions become objects of indifference and of course, those who cross him in any way are dealt with harshly, for with ambition comes hardness. On the other hand he may flatter and seeks to please those who might promote his schemes; there will also be hypocrisy, jealousy and inevitable disappointments.

But there is no question of real, serious meditation until we begin to realize that we are in darkness — a darkness created by all these movements of the mind, the distortions which are due to desires, the turmoil which is the mind's constant condition. So first we have to see that this is in fact an unreal world — a dream world. This realization is the beginning of our awakening and the first definite movement towards liberty.

Living in Unreality?

We can, if we like, go on living in this unreality; we can continue to cherish our dreams and illusions and at the same time do something which we call meditation. That is all right, but it will not amount to anything. It will be just one move of a number of fascinating little pseudo-spiritual activities that we amuse ourselves with, but it is not the serious meditation that will guide us into light and liberty.

And when with these desires a person meditates, he is in the same world of darkness still. He can go on meditating for twenty or forty years and in his daily life there are the same problems, the same frictions with others, the same disappointments and frustrations, the same upsets over small matters, the same division of the world into what belongs to him and what does not. His meditation — or so-called meditation — goes on and at the same time, the old manner of life continues alongside it. Little wonder his meditation is a constant struggle, when his mind runs along its accustomed grooves to the things that it thinks bring it satisfaction. He tries to bring it back but off it goes once more. And this wearying process never comes to an end. As long as the mind wants to possess, there can be no real success in meditation, because desire is the root cause of the mind's disturbance and the source of all its illusion.

Meditation has nothing to do with acquisition or achievement. It is not the reaching out to some wonderful state of consciousness. If there is ambition in any

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form, even the subtlest, there will be problems.

In order to find out what meditation is, there must be an emptying of the mind, not the addition to it of something else. Some may find this difficult to see or accept. We like to have everything which we are already seeking. We do not want to sacrifice any of our customary pleasures. We want to acquire more and more of what we call knowledge and the getting of it gives us a great deal of satisfaction. So many of the popular books on the spiritual life give the idea that because the mind is filled with so-called lofty ideas, it is progressing and has in fact already reached some well-defined post.

The mind, as has been said, is far from empty; it is teeming with conscious and subconscious thoughts. And if somebody challenges the ideas which are part of that content there is resentment and barriers are erected.

So the content of the mind is a bundle of problems — all the problems that we are familiar with and which we have generated by the way in which our minds function. If we add to that another ingredient, saying ‘I want to achieve something through meditation, I want a different kind of knowledge’, the mind works in the same way. One may be unsuccessful in worldly affairs and the mind may say (probably subconsciously) ‘I will find knowledge in the spiritual field’, ‘I will become a superior person in a different direction’. So even when it meditates, it still wants to add to itself. And that is not at all the proper basis for

meditation. For in meditation, it is a question of emptying the mind, not of adding to it. It is a matter of renunciation, not becoming attached to anything. It is a matter neither of acquisition nor achievement. If we are not attached, then there are no disturbances; we are creating neither problems for ourselves or for other people.

The 2011 Convention

There were on our list, 1262 delegates, and of these, many members who were serious students. The Convention was, speaking on the whole, very successful, because it was useful in more than one way as such Conventions should be. It was an occasion when those who wished to, could draw into themselves the best of things, which we might call the ‘extraordinary atmosphere’ which prevails here, despite the fact that all around is the city of Madras, which has grown by leaps and bounds, stretching for miles in every possible direction except seaward. But it demands more attention on our part to make the Convention a powerful influence, which will draw people as magnets draw iron filings, to respond spiritually to thoughts on higher levels.

On one day only, but forcefully, a cyclonic storm passed through, and made an atmosphere which could have created a problem. But thanks to the Theosophical background which most of the delegates had, that storm took place outside and not inside the people who attended the Convention! Almost all attended the meetings on that day, despite the rain and the wind,

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to take part in the programme which proceeded almost without a disturbance.

We used to have occasional rain or even storms during the Convention, but that was long ago. In recent years, the climate has changed and Adyar has become warmer. But once again a storm came and there were outside happenings which did not disturb the inward condition of the delegates' minds which remained calm and attentive. The meetings during that day proceeded well, and on the last day all was back to the usual condition, and the delegates went away happily. The fact that nobody stayed in a hut as people did many years ago made much difference.

What is Theosophical?

Any Convention that is Theosophical has to have an atmosphere of unity and seriousness. We can ask ourselves what unity means from the Theosophical point of view. There may be a religion to convert 'heathen-ness' into something else which one wants. That is called conversion and those who do it are very satisfied, when they can convert the poor people whom

they have supposedly changed. But we are not speaking about that sort of thing.

A real conversion is one away from selfishness, which will of course vary in strength and quality but is all the same, real, to work for the good of all. We particularly mean the spiritual good. This by itself is not an easy subject to deal with, and we are not trying to do so now, but to hint at what we have to think about. The unity comes among those who share one objective — to take humanity forward along the spiritual path.

If we are serious about it (other things of course exist), all are guided by the same background thought of moving forward spiritually. When there are many objectives in life, some exclusively personal and material, and others partly spiritual or supposedly so, we may say that there is no real movement forward. But if this spiritual objective exists of changing one's attitude to all around in favour of universal advancement, then it may be called truly spiritual. Therefore, the duty of our working together depends on how serious we are as individuals, and therefore as one indivisible group. ✧

The Society is surely concerned that each member shall be a source of goodwill, understanding and solidarity, and not a source of constant discord. In the interests of its own self-preservation the Society has the duty to expect that members will so live that all outer differences of belief and opinion and mode of living, which naturally and rightly separate them, shall tend to strengthen and not to weaken the inner and indissoluble tie of the One Life which all share, and which is the very heart itself both of Theosophy and of the Theosophical Society.

George S. Arundale, Inaugural Address, 21 June 1934

Brotherhood is the First Step

RICARDO LINDEMANN

ONE of the most enigmatic expressions of Mr J. Krishnamurti, due to its paradoxical nature, is ‘the first step is the last step’. About 2600 years ago, Lord Buddha had already taught to humanity the Noble Eightfold Path leading to Nirvāna, suggesting a succession in time. But the expression that the first step is already the last one suggests something instantaneous, timeless, stimulating us to pay more attention to treading the Path of Self-knowledge at the present moment, which is the only real moment. The expression indicates to us that psychological time is an illusion and, therefore, all psychological suffering is virtual, subjective and illusory.

The very path becomes māyā or an illusion. The statement ‘Truth is a pathless land’ is paradoxical because you cannot walk to a place you already are in. According to the Buddhist tradition, it is said: ‘Look inward: thou art Buddha’; therefore, at the last step you will become what you already are. Similarly, meditation has been defined as ‘to be where one is’.

If we are supposed to be already there, we could ask: ‘So, what is psychological suffering?’ It is only the anxiety created

by the mind desiring to repeat in the future the pleasure experienced in the past, or the fear created by the mind desiring not to repeat the pain experienced. All anxiety is a kind of escape from the reality of the present moment, which is virtual, because it is projected by our imagination from past experiences in our memory.

When our action is attached to a result, it is motivated only by the search of a reward; it creates psychological time, which can be measured by anxious waiting for the time to ripen and to take the fruit, the result of the action. The *Bhagavadgītā* says: ‘Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached . . . therefore cleave thou to yoga; yoga is skill in action . . . That which is called renunciation know thou that as yoga; O Pāndava; nor doth anyone become a Yogin with the formative will (*sankalpa*) unrenounced.’¹ The Sanskrit word *sankalpa* refers to that imaginative faculty which makes plans for the future, specifically to reach a goal or a personal reward, being therefore, that which creates psychological time. Without renouncing this

Mr Ricardo Lindemann, an engineer by profession, is a National Lecturer and former General Secretary of the Brazilian Section of the TS. Talk given at the international Convention, Adyar, December 2011.

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one cannot find Nirvāna's peace.

When we love for the sake of love itself, when we act rightly for the sake of justice, when we accomplish duty for its own sake, neither for a future reward nor for any secondary gain, only then is our action pure, an end in itself. It is, therefore, right action, a perfect action without attachment, with no karmic residues, not linked with time because it creates no anxiety for future results.

Ven. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche commented: 'The total awakening, the culmination of meditation, is called *samādhi* in yoga and has been defined or described in many different ways. It is the realization of unity; it is a state of illumination, because to realize that unity is illumination.'²

C. W. Leadbeater preferred to translate the last step as right meditation: 'Right meditation is that which takes you away to higher planes. Such meditation is for Arhats, and for those monks who devote a whole life to it. When you begin to meditate on our Lord, you can hardly expect such results.'³ Prof. Rinpoche also comments: 'People also use an image, a physical image or an image held in the mind, to keep the energy from flowing out in all directions. The average person finds it difficult to hold a mental image, for his mind begins to run off on all kinds of things. But if he has done the necessary work on himself he will be better able to hold the image, especially if it is of something which naturally attracts him, or draws his devotion. And after a time he can begin to penetrate much deeper. That is why meditators place so much emphasis

on devotion . . . Devotion entails awareness of something which is spiritually pure and noble. When we consciously find ourselves in the presence of beauty and greatness, it helps us forget our small self. The sense of the personal self becomes less strong. Complete devotion is complete loss of self, it is self-surrender.'⁴ Even Patañjali remarks that *samādhi* could be directly attained through devotion: 'Or by self-surrender to God',⁵ 'accomplishment of Samādhi from resignation to God'.⁶

Similarly, Dr Besant suggests: 'If you set before an unprepared soul an ideal so lofty it does not move him, we check his evolution. . . . You are placing before him an impossible ideal.'⁷ 'If we fail to help every soul, in its own place, it is because we are ill-trained teachers.'⁸ Bishop Leadbeater also comments about the Noble Eightfold Path: 'The man in the world, even the uneducated man, can take it in its lowest aspects and find a way to peace and comfort through it. And yet the highest philosopher may also take it and interpret it at his level and learn very much from it.'⁹

Dr Taimni considers this in relation to the eight *anga-s* of yoga, as follows: 'Although the different *anga-s* of Yoga appear to be independent of each other and it may be possible to a certain extent to practise *āsana*, *dhyāna*, etc., independently of other *anga-s*, still, we have to keep in mind that they have also a sequential relationship and the effective practice of one *anga* requires at least a partial mastery of those which precede it.

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The main reason why the vast majority of aspirants for the Yogic life keep struggling with the mind year after year and then generally give up the effort as a hopeless task, lies in the lack of systematic preparation without which even the elementary practice of *dhāraṇa* (or concentration) is very difficult, to say nothing of the further stages of *dhyāna* and *samādhi*.¹⁰

The step supposed to be preparatory for *samādhi* is called right memory. In the *Yoga-sūtra-s* it is also considered that a previous clarification of memory is needed for *samādhi*: ‘On the clarification of memory, when the mind loses its essential nature (subjectivity), as it were, and the real knowledge of the object alone shines (through the mind) *Nirvitarka Samādhi* is attained’,¹¹ which is also related in some way to knowledge and *svādhyāya*.

Right memory means to remember what is worthy of remembrance, particularly our real spiritual Self. According to Plato it is essential to have the recollection of our divine nature and origin, and of archetypal ideas of the true, good and beautiful. The cause of evil is ignorance, similar to *avidyā* in the *Yoga-sūtra-s*. Śri Ramana Maharshi suggests that we meditate deeply on the question ‘Who am I?’ Right memory includes forgetting injuries received, and to forgive people who could have injured us in the past; receiving injuries is only a way by which the law of karma returns our past actions to us.

Mr J. Krishnamurti would say that we

must free ourselves from the known, otherwise there would be so much disturbance in the mind that *samādhi* would be impossible. Another way of saying this is that excellence in right memory makes us capable of remembering always our real and spiritual nature, which consequently expresses itself in *samādhi*.

If we are unable to reach excellence, it is because a preparatory lower step which is right exertion was not fully mastered. According to Bishop Leadbeater: ‘Right exertion means putting our work into useful lines and not wasting it.’¹² Mr Krishnamurti also said: ‘Most of us have very little energy; we spend it in conflict, in struggle, we waste it in various manners — not only sexually, but also a great deal of it is wasted in contradictions and in the fragmentation of ourselves which brings about conflict. Conflict is definitely a great waste of energy — the “voltage” decreases. Not only is physical energy necessary, but so also is psychological energy, with a mind that is immensely clear, logical, healthy, undistorted, and a heart that has no sentiment whatsoever, no emotion, but the quality of abundance of love, of compassion. All this gives a great intensity, passion. You need that; otherwise you cannot take a journey into this thing called meditation. You may sit cross-legged, breathe, do fantastic things, but you will never come to it.’¹³

It is also considered in the *Yoga-sūtra-s* that energy is needed for *samādhi*: ‘(In the case) of others, it is preceded by faith, energy, memory and high intelligence for *samādhi*.’¹⁴ Right exertion, in some way,

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perhaps could be related to will, *tapas* or austerity and discipline; Dr Taimni comments: ‘The systematic practice of *tapas* generally begins with simple and easy exercises which require the exertion of will power and is continued by progressive stages with more difficult exercises, the object of which is to bring about the dissociation of the vehicle from consciousness.’¹⁵

These three last steps of the way to Nirvāna are somewhat similar to the preliminary steps of Rāja Yoga, called *Kriya-Yoga* (*tapas*, *svādhyāya*, and *Īśvara-pranidhāna*), which are to be ‘practised for attenuating the *kleśa-s* (or afflictions) and bringing about *samādhi*’.¹⁶ It seems that Madame Blavatsky had some preliminary preparation or *Kriya-Yoga* in mind when she founded the inner section of the Theosophical Society, in 1888, saying: ‘Its general purpose is to prepare and fit the student for the study of practical occultism or *Rāja-Yoga*’,¹⁷ because the *Yoga-Sutra-s* say: ‘Austerity, self-study and resignation to *Īśvara* constitute preliminary Yoga.’¹⁸

Again, if we are unable to have excellence in this step of right exertion, perhaps it is because the right means of livelihood was not fully mastered. This is not only an ethical way of survival, without any kind of cruelty or dishonesty, but also a way of organizing one’s life to offer enough time for meditation and a healthy life. The Mahatma KH comments in one of his letters:

‘How can you know the real from the unreal, the true from the false? Only by

self-development. How get that? By first carefully guarding yourself against the causes of self-deception. And this you can do by spending certain fixed hours each day all alone in self-contemplation, writing, reading, the purification of your motives, the planning of your work in the external life. These hours should be sacredly reserved for this purpose, and no one, not even your most intimate friend or friends, should be with you then. Little by little your sight will clear, you will find the mists pass away, your interior faculties strengthen, your attraction towards us gain force, and certainty replace doubts.’¹⁹

The planning of our work in the external life means that not all professions can offer this kind of time or style for living. These conditions seem to be also related to the right means of livelihood, a way of life where there is enough room for meditation and self-observation, where it is possible to use some available time and energy for this spiritual preparation.

The effect of excellence in right action obviously expresses itself in the right means of livelihood and the favourable karma is a consequence of right action. Of course, right action is related to living peacefully and with honour, as is expressed in the five classic Buddhist observances of the *pancha-śila* laid down by Lord Buddha. These are for the laity in general, and repeated publicly at the *vihāra-s* (or temples). Col. Olcott, the President-Founder of the Theosophical Society, comments in *The Buddhist Catechism*: ‘The taking of life, sensuality, and the use of intoxicants, cause at least

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ninety-five per cent of the suffering among men.²⁰

If we consider that to refrain from destroying the life of beings implies vegetarianism, these precepts embrace also the suffering of animals and the cause of ecology. Dr Besant also considers this: 'Some other aids in this you have been given in the Five Precepts, marking out for you the wrong actions which you should avoid . . . The man who sustains his own life, who feeds his own life on the slaughtered life of the beasts, that man contributes to the taking of life as much as if he took life himself. If those who desire to practise right action would all abstain from sustaining their own lives upon the life which is slaughtered by another, the slaughter would cease.'²¹

Are we able to accomplish what we have promised? Krishnamurti, in his work, *At the Feet of the Master*, said: 'It is well to speak little; better still to say nothing, unless you are quite sure that what you wish to say is true, kind and helpful. Before speaking think carefully whether what you are going to say has those three qualities; if it has not, do not say it.'²² Right speech can also be an exercise of tuning in or coming into harmony with the three aspects of the Logos, because the true is more related with the first aspect and Ultimate Truth, love with the second, and usefulness is related with the divine plan of evolution which is an expression of the third aspect and Universal Mind.

If there is a contradiction between what we say and what we actually do, the original trouble must lie in thought, because

there is an obvious logical connection between the three steps laid down by the Lord Buddha. Bishop Leadbeater comments: 'If we think always of good things, we shall certainly not speak of evil things, because we speak what is in our mind; and if our thought and speech are good, then the action which follows will also be good.'²³

The effect of excellence in right thought is obviously to express itself in right speech. We have already considered right thought or *samyak sankalpa*, at the beginning, as the need for renunciation, specifically of the goal-oriented imagination or a personal reward with its consequences of anxiety and suffering. If we find resistance to such a natural renunciation we have not come to excellence in right thought and we really do not see or understand the laws of karma and reincarnation in our practical life. We still think in terms of personal plans, and nourish desires for our reward in the world, because our desire for liberation is still weak.

Our real difficulty is to realize the first step, to overcome our conditionings of inertia and attachment to earth, just as in the case of the first journey to the moon, when 98.4% of the mass of the rocket was only fuel, to be used just for the initial eight minutes to come out of Earth's gravitational field. Therefore, even physically we are too attached to Earth.

The translation of *samyak dr̥shti*, the first step on the way to Nirvāna according to Lord Buddha, is literally right vision, also translated as right perception, right

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comprehension, right knowledge, and even right belief. Col. Olcott and Bishop Leadbeater preferred, from a religious point of view, to translate it as belief in reincarnation and karma. Dr Besant preferred to translate it as right knowledge, more like a scientific hypothesis to be tested in life, saying that: 'Truly, all belief should be based on knowledge. That which a man rightly knows, that only can he rightly believe: all else is credulity and folly.'²⁴

Generally, it is understood that one must have the right vision of the initial three Noble Truths that come before the Fourth one. The first Noble Truth is the existence of sorrow or suffering, because in the life of man, sorrow is greater than happiness. Sorrow is due particularly to illness, old age and death, unless man knows how to live wisely. To really see that — is it not to feel compassion for the human condition?

The second Noble Truth is the cause of sorrow, which is generally translated as selfish desire. Professor Murillo Nunes de Azevedo was a former General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Brazil and a Zen Buddhist monk. Before he was ordained, one of the tests he had to pass during his training process was to hold a stick with all his strength, but his instructor was able, through a technique of martial arts, to take the stick from his hands. The instructor then said to him: 'This is so you never forget that attachment causes suffering.' According to Buddhism, the cause of suffering is attachment or the thirst (*trishnā*) to satisfy all selfish desires.

This is the cause of reincarnation ruled by karma, and of ignorance (*avidyā*) which is the foundation of our illusory self.

The third Noble Truth is the cessation of sorrow. Col. Olcott defines it as 'the destruction of that desire, of the estranging of one's self from it'.²⁵ The fourth is the way which leads to escape from sorrow, called the Noble Eightfold Path.

So, we need to come to the first step again — as was also considered by the President, Dr Radha Burnier: "The first step is the last step", and the direction taken with the first step is what matters.²⁶ It is not possible to reach the Supreme Truth walking in falsehood or to reach the peace of Nirvāna walking in contradiction and conflict. The quality and nature of peace should be present from the very first step, otherwise we will be lost. Mr Krishnamurti said 'the means determine the end',²⁷ because if there is no coherence between the steps, which are the means, we will lose the direction of the path. In fact, we will come to a final destiny determined by the nature of the means we are using, by the very nature of our steps. Therefore, the common idea that 'the ends justify the means' just leads to suffering, indicating an evident ignorance of the law of karma that we can only reap what we sow.

Mr Krishnamurti also frequently said: 'To see is to act', as if the four initial steps, beginning with right vision and skipping directly to right action, were integrated in one whole without any intermediate conflict. He said also: 'First, you have to understand your process of thinking',²⁸ and that right thought is the second step.

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He said also: 'When you are aware, you see the whole process of your thinking and action.'²⁹ Indeed, according to Krishnamurti, we need only to discover the first step or to see it, because for him 'to see is to act', and if the real passion for truth is present and the right direction is implicit in the right motive, the whole process will not demand any method to discover the Path moment by moment. Therefore, the first step becomes the last one.

We should find a connection between right vision and right ecstasy or the realization of unity through *samādhi*. Even *nirbija-samādhi* must be attained many times, again and again, before that sublime realization of a Mahatma, called *dharma-megha-samādhi*, the irreversible perception of unity also called Nirvāna, is attained. The first step must be at least a glimpse, a first insight of that vision of perfect unity reflected in our relationships, and that is Brotherhood. A first insight nearer to us is the vision of Brotherhood in our relationships, the first step that we are all able to see. A member of the Theosophical Society is supposed to have had a glimpse of Brotherhood at least when he was signing the application form, but perhaps we will need to recall many times, again and again, that glimpse before the perception of Brotherhood is really assimilated. Are we committed to that glimpse?

As Mr J. Krishnamurti considers: 'In daily life this means two things: first, that you shall be careful to do no hurt to any living thing; second, that you shall always be watching for an opportunity to help.'³⁰

'Because you are discovering yourself in relationship with another from moment to moment, relationship has a completely different meaning. Relationship then is a revelation, a constant process of the discovery of oneself, and from this self-discovery, action takes place. So, self-knowledge can come only through relationship, not through isolation.'³¹ 'Because we do not know how to love one, our love of humanity is fictitious. When you love, there is neither one nor many — there is only love. It is only when there is love that all our problems can be solved, and then we shall know its bliss and its happiness.'³²

According to Vedānta, *viveka* or discrimination between the real and the unreal is the first step on the spiritual path. Krishnamurti expresses brotherhood in *At The Feet of The Master* thus: 'Learn to distinguish the God in everyone and everything, no matter how evil he or it may appear on the surface. You can help your brother through that which you have in common with him, and that is the Divine Life; learn how to arouse that in him, learn how to appeal to that in him; so shall you save your brother from wrong.'³³

Pluto is considered as the planet of Regeneration in Astrology. The last time that Pluto came to the sign of Aquarius, it brought about the French Revolution; the next time, from 2023 to 2044, it would have to bring nothing smaller than the creation of a Federation of Nations, which, according to my astrological calculations, will probably come to reality in 2029, ending wars in this world. Bishop C. W.

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Leadbeater had foreseen this Federation of Nations, as he foresaw eighty years before it happened, the creation of the European Union, a wonderfully political realization of unification — an example to the world of how to cease all wars, and give way to the victory of a living Brotherhood!

The Mahatmas who inspired the beginning of the Theosophical Society represent, so to speak, its special potentiality, and they have always the perception of that Ultimate Unity, as is mentioned in

their letters: ‘The adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths — the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, Śiva, the Creator, the Destroyer, and the Regenerator.’³⁴ They also had given the keynote of the Theosophical Society from its very beginning, saying: ‘The Chiefs want a “Brotherhood of Humanity”, a real Universal Fraternity started’,³⁵ because they know very well that to come to that Ultimate Unity, Brotherhood is not only our first Object, but also our first step. ✧

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Paradoxes of Karma

MARY ANDERSON

KARMA involves many paradoxes, like life itself and all that has to do with life. When we begin to study karma, we find many apparent contradictions, at least for thinking beings like ourselves. However, a paradox is not a contradiction, but it should show us both sides of a question. It adds a dimension. It does not say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or that something is either good or bad exclusively, but ‘yes *and* no’, ‘relatively good *and* relatively bad’.

Let us examine the ways in which karma is paradoxical — and may even seem contradictory to us:

1. *Karma is at once simple and easily understood and complicated and easily misunderstood*, because it is multidimensional and impossible to comprehend completely.

The fundamental principle of karma is simple. To quote Mme Blavatsky: ‘It does not require metaphysics or education to make a man understand the broad truths of Karma and Reincarnation’ (*The Key to Theosophy*). The law of karma is the law of cause and effect. Put simply, it states that every action produces an equal and opposite reaction — or ‘as we sow, so shall we reap’. For example,

good deeds result in happiness and evil deeds bring about unhappiness. Seen thus, karma can be compared to a ledger in which our assets and liabilities or income and expenditure are entered, and finally they cancel each other out. So far, all may seem simple.

One reason why it is not simple but complicated is that karma works simultaneously at the different levels at which we lead our lives: ‘Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being’ (*The Key to Theosophy*). We act not only outwardly and physically but at the same time inwardly, that is, we think and feel, and our thoughts and feelings are also causes that produce results. Moreover these thoughts and feelings are often not exclusively positive or negative but mixed. A good action may be done out of selfishness or unselfishness, but mostly it is done with both selfish and unselfish motives. A rich man may give money to found some charity to help the poor. He may do so for selfless reasons, out of compassion, but he may do so — or do so also — in order to gain gratitude, a good reputation, popularity — and

Ms Mary Anderson is a former international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society and has lectured widely in several languages.

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votes, if he is a politician! — or simply for his own self-satisfaction. Then, as a possible result, we may surmise that he will reap material prosperity because of his material generosity but also discontent because of his selfish motives. How many rich people are unhappy and dissatisfied?

Annie Besant described the karmic effects at different levels of our being and our activity as follows: ‘thought makes character, desire, opportunity; activity, environment’ (*The Theosophic Life*).

So karma cannot simply be compared to a ledger in which debits and credits are entered, but rather to a highly sophisticated celestial computer, which we constantly programme with the software of our actions and our ever-changing thoughts, feelings and attitudes. This computer is personified by beings known in different traditions as the *Lipika*, the three Norns or Fates, the three *Parcas* or the Recording Angels.

We can compare the karmic effects of a multitude of causes to the weather: ‘The weather at a given place on a given day results from a combination of innumerable factors, past and present, local and distant, and new influences keep entering the system to change the outcome’ (*Ancient Wisdom — Modern Insight* by Shirley Nicholson).

2. *Karma is at once absolutely just and merciful.*

Karma is merciful in that it is flexible. On the one hand, we *must* pay our karmic debts to the last cent (although without interest!); on the other hand we may not have to pay them immediately. The

karmic reaction is often delayed. And so, for the time being, the wicked seem to flourish ‘like the green bay tree’ and the good and kindly seem to suffer undeservedly. Here the forces in nature known as the *Lipika* or recording angels are also angels of mercy.

What does this mean? Someone who engages in cheating or cruelty is often what is called ‘a young soul’ — and we have all been and still are in some respects young souls! Such a person may act foolishly out of ignorance and weakness, being unable to control desires or resist temptation. And the weight of ‘just compensation’ in kind might crush that person completely. Thus payment of the heavy karmic debts may be postponed until one is strong enough, wise enough and patient enough to bear it. So the kind, the wise and the just sometimes seem to suffer inordinately through no fault of their own. (We may think of the biblical story of Job.) The heavy karmic results come at a time when we can more easily bear them and learn their lessons. We learn much from our difficulties and trials. And a person who is becoming mature spiritually and who experiences, for example, hunger, poverty, despair, pain, abuse and persecution will be more able to feel compassion for others who suffer likewise.

3. *Karma is hidden in its essence and perceptible only in its workings.*

Why is it hidden and thus unknowable in its essence? That essence is the very stuff of the Universe. It is in a sense the Absolute. And here we come to the next paradox:

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4. *Karma is part of our everyday experience, part of practical living, but it is at the same time universal.*

It is anchored in the Oneness of things, reflecting that Oneness. It is mysterious and eternally at work everywhere in the universe, in all the kingdoms of Nature. It is 'the ultimate law of the universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature' (*The Key to Theosophy*). It is inherent in the Absolute, the One Life. In its first manifestation, the One Life emanates primordial consciousness and primordial matter and begins its work through that differentiation — and that work is karma. Karma is the inner quality of cosmos itself and is all-pervading: 'No spot in the manifested universe is exempt from its sway' (*The Key to Theosophy*). It encompasses all the kingdoms of Nature: 'Every creature is subject to Karma' (*The Secret Doctrine*, II, p.361). It is in the periodic renovations of the universe. It is the Law of Harmony, continually restoring balance and harmony when they are disturbed. In that sense, karma tends to return to the Oneness. So it is in the origin of things, in their final destiny and in their very heart. We may be reminded of the words of the psalmist: 'Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there' (Psalm 139:7 and 8).

5. *Karma affects us both personally and as a group*, for example, a family, a nation or humanity itself. It therefore has social implications and social relevance.

Personal karma means that we are all responsible for our own acts and thoughts and we all receive the repercussions of those acts and thoughts. As Shirley Nicholson says, we are 'sniffed out' by the forces of karma, as a criminal or someone who is lost is sniffed out by a police dog! But, mingled with personal karma, there is also group karma: We share in the karma of our family, a group to which we may belong (like the Theosophical Society), our country and humanity itself. How can it be otherwise, since karma is an expression of the Oneness of all? Thus Mme Blavatsky says 'Nothing . . . can affect one nation or one man without affecting all other nations and all other men. This is as certain and as obvious as that a stone thrown into a pond will, sooner or later, set in motion every single drop of water therein' (*The Key to Theosophy*). In this sense also, Krishnamurti says: 'You are the world.'

This explains the social implications and the social relevance of karma. Mme Blavatsky points to certain causal chains. She speaks of the scourges of humanity as physical and above all, moral suffering, on the one hand, and crime and immorality on the other, and she points to their causes and their cures. She identifies their causes in certain perverse teachings which strengthen selfishness, for example, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' or taking the law into one's own hands and the idea that one can escape the consequences of one's actions. The cure would lie in the teaching of the Unity of all religions and all human beings in their

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origin and their essence, which, if applied, would result in solidarity with and brotherly love for all, and the teaching of Karma and Reincarnation — the realization that ‘your sins will find you out’. Those who are really convinced of the law of karma would turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger. She has a practical suggestion: the importance of education: ‘Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves’ (*The Key to Theosophy*). And how best can we educate? Is it not by example? We ourselves must be independent thinkers and unselfish individuals.

6. *Karma binds us and it frees us.*

We bind ourselves by the karma we have created in the past. It is not karma that binds us: ‘Karma has never sought to destroy intellectual and individual liberty. On the contrary’ (*The Abridgement of the Secret Doctrine*). But we are continually modifying that karma by our present actions, thoughts and feelings. ‘What is necessary first to understand is that the future is not arbitrarily formed by any separate acts of the present, but that the whole of the future is in unbroken continuity with the present, as is the present with the past’ (Essay on *Karma — Light on the Path*). The future is in our hands.

Karma frees us because it teaches us. Consciously we may not be aware that some misfortune is the result of a past action of ours, but deep within ourselves we realize it and the still, small voice of

conscience may warn us not to repeat that action.

Karma means that we are the architects of our good fortune and our misfortune. To realize this, even subconsciously, makes us responsible human beings, dependent only on ourselves. No god and no guru can ultimately help us or free us or take away our karma.

7. *Karma seems to come from outside, but does it not originate within ourselves?*

Since karma is in the very heart of the universe, is it not in our very hearts? Are not the *Lipika* active within us? Perhaps we are our own *Lipika*! — not as our present conscious being, not our physical, emotional and ordinary mental self, but the spiritual being which we are in essence, though at present not consciously, except to some extent in moments of aspiration and inspiration and when we hear the warnings of conscience.

* * *

We have examined some paradoxes of karma. Perhaps we can now clear up some misunderstandings by attempting to say what karma is *not*. Dr Besant says that karma is the most misunderstood of Theosophical teachings and that few things are as dangerous as a little knowledge of karma.

1. *Karma is not reward and punishment*, but simply the action of a law: the law of cause and effect, the law of justice.

2. *Karma is not something foreign to us or outside us*: It is we ourselves who apply that law: ‘Karma creates nothing,

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nor does it design. It is man who plans and creates causes, and karmic law adjusts the effects . . .' (*Abridgement of the Secret Doctrine*).

3. *Karma is not a tyrant but a teacher.* As Dr Besant points out in *The Theosophic Life*, it is not a sword hanging over us or a great lump thrown at our head at birth. It is a continuous creation — our creation, and we are constantly learning from our mistakes. Thus:

4. *Karma is not predestination* or what we often think of as fate or kismet. We are continually modifying our past karma. So we are free and are therefore responsible.

5. *Karma does not encourage passivity*, with regard either to our own karma or to the karma of others. We cannot sit back and say, 'It is my karma'. Karma should provide motivation for wise action. And we cannot refuse to help another who suffers, saying, 'It is his karma', provided of course we *can* help. It may be our karma to help. Thus:

6. *Karma is not a passive acceptance of what we feel we cannot change.* It is rather a stimulus to exertion.

It is said that we must accept undesirable conditions which we cannot alter but that we should change those we can alter. Wisdom lies in knowing the difference. We cannot change certain karma from the past, but we can modify the way we meet it — with acceptance, with optimism, making the best of things, turning them to good account, learning from them. We cannot change the past, but the future is in our hands.

7. *Karma should not be used for personal advantage:* We should not try to 'make good karma' for ourselves. 'He who desires to form good karma will meet with many confusions. And in the effort to sow rich seed for his own harvesting may plant a thousand weeds, and among them the giant . . .', that is the giant weed of selfishness (*Essay on Karma — Light on the Path*).

How do we learn unselfishness? By being unselfish: 'Desire to sow no seed for your own harvesting. Desire only to sow that seed the fruit of which shall feed the world' (*Karma*). Even that can be selfish if we think, 'It is *I* who am helping'.

8. *There is no such thing as 'bad karma'.* All karma is good karma. It may be pleasant or unpleasant, but it is just, merciful and instructive.

* * *

As we are at present, in our present state of consciousness, we shall never understand karma in all its aspects. But 'you who desire to understand the laws of karma, attempt first to free yourself from these laws. This can only be done by fixing your attention on that which is unaffected by these laws (*Karma*)'.

Since karma, the reign of law, is universal, how can there be such a thing as karma-lessness? But by karma-lessness may be meant complete unselfishness, not doing anything with the least trace of selfish motive. Thus karma still exists — we may *be* it, but we are no longer subject to it. ◇

The Future of Theosophy in the Theosophical Society

W. E. WILKS

REGRETFULLY, we find Theosophical journals and Theosophical lecturers telling us that the Society lacks vitality and that something must be done if it is to interest the public or to satisfy its members. On the one hand it is suggested that as the Theosophical Society, like all organizations, has its cycle from birth through maturity to death, perchance it has now reached the decline which precedes death. On the other, it is maintained that Theosophy, the *raison d'être* of the Theosophical Society, must progress and evolve new ideas to keep up with the *zeitgeist*. It is frequently suggested that Theosophy must link up with modern science, which exerts such an overpowering influence on the public mind at the present time.

However, we are not amongst those who expect the decline of the Society, nor do we think it necessary, fitting, or possible to find Theosophy a seat upon the band-wagon of modern science, nor to juggle with the eternal truths of Theosophy to fall in with the fashions of present-day thought.

Valuable as the amazing and very spectacular successes of modern science

have been in confirming so many of the statements made in *The Secret Doctrine*, and helpful as 'depth psychology' has been in enlarging the scope of materialistic psychoanalysis towards the spiritual in man, yet the unchanging principles of Theosophy when clearly and correctly stated stand alone in their ability to shed the greatest light upon the mystery of human existence. The energies of a very high order which brought about the amazing growth of the Theosophical Society in the first fifteen years of its life are, we believe, still there, can we but learn to make proper use of them.

Why has the Theosophical Society lost so much of its vitality? The chief cause, we submit, is that we allowed the Society to fall away from the original lines laid down for it; and to become a semi-religious sect. A far-reaching change in attitude took place in both leaders and members. From being a society of free and fearless investigators in search of truth with the help of Theosophy, it became a sect of believers and followers like any religious sect. This came about largely as the result of the members' conviction of the high occult status, implying

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semi-infallibility, in some leaders. The inevitable result was that every statement made was blindly accepted by the members and acted upon.

No longer was Theosophy put forward as a challenge to intelligent investigation and criticism, as it was when H. P. Blavatsky was alive, as all philosophies and scientific ideas are presented, but as truths to be accepted and believed.

In this way a 'right about turn' in attitude gradually took place in the Theosophical Society in the early days of this century, as a result of which the Society from being an aggregation of free men and women of all types, nationalities and religious backgrounds united in the search for truth for the enlightenment of humanity, became an aggregation of passive followers, unquestioningly believing whatever was presented in the name of Theosophy. This philosophy was no longer presented as from student to student, or from student to enquirer, but as teacher to pupil, as from one who knows to one who does not.

Open *The Secret Doctrine* (or *The Key to Theosophy*) and read a few pages. Always HPB says that Occultism maintains so and so and then argues its truth bringing a host of quotations from all sources to support her contention. There is no suggestion or expectation of blind acceptance here. Rather, Theosophy is put forward as a challenge to intelligence to refute it if possible; to accept it, at least provisionally, where it cannot be exploded, where it is found to be rational, and where it shows its ability to help solve

the mystery of human existence. And now turn to any book regarded as authoritative Theosophical teaching in the first half of this century and note the difference. No longer is it a matter of one intelligence addressing another, but *de haut en bas* the teacher telling the pupil.

In the early days of the Theosophical movement, *The Theosophist* and *Lucifer* were journals filled with articles in which discussion and controversy took a large place and where any sincere view or objection could find expression. But since the turn of the century almost every Theosophical journal has closed its pages to articles offering destructive or constructive criticism, and to discussion of its articles, or to *any* critical comment. It was this denial of freedom of expression which forced many of the older members who saw and opposed the change in attitude and teaching in the Theosophical Society, and who were denied a hearing, to resign from the Society. This change in attitude and practice took place in a Society dedicated to Truth, as its highest value, where freedom of thought and its expression still are widely proclaimed. Yet these freedoms in practice do not exist. On the cover of *The Theosophist* and of many of the official Theosophical magazines is a declaration of 'Freedom of Thought', a Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society 23 Dec. 1924, which ends thus: 'The members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles

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of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise his own right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.' This affords a telling illustration of how little it matters what is said; it is the attitude held and what is actually done which counts.

This complete denial of freedom of comment or criticism, or exchange of views, is the peculiar attitude embraced by practically all the Theosophical journals, and by them alone (with the exception of the religions, of course). It would be difficult to find any magazine in the 'free' countries which deals in articles on serious subjects, such, e.g., as *The Listener* or *New Republic* which does not offer its readers opportunity to discuss and criticize the articles it prints. Alone, the Theosophical journals, which started with the cry: 'The very root idea of the Society is free and fearless investigation', repudiate in practice freedom of thought and its expression. Is not this beyond belief? What are we afraid of? Is our hold on whatever of the truth we each have made our own, so tenuous that we fear it may fail us at the first breath of criticism? Rather we should be boldly proclaiming: 'Here is what we hold, destroy it if you can', a challenge to all free minds. For, if what we hold is true will not stand up to criticism, surely we want to know it, and not live in a fool's paradise. Criticism never destroys truth, it but makes it shine forth the brighter.

Is it conceivable that a more effective way than this change brought about in attitude could have been devised by any

agency determined to destroy a world-wide effort to enlighten humanity? Every movement to spiritualize humanity is, we are told, always accompanied and followed by an equally determined effort to oppose and offset it. But ever the war goes on, and the only real failure is to stop trying, as W. Q. Judge pointed out. And so after half a century of living in the very opposite of the true Theosophical attitude to life, is it any wonder that the Theosophical Society lacks vitality? What can be done? Is it possible to once again reverse the attitude in the Society and to once more become free men, self-reliant and self-responsible individuals, in place of being passive followers? Hardly possible! But is anything less going to be effective in revitalizing the Theosophical Society? Is anything less, worth striving for?

It is possible, we believe today, for the first time in half a century, to bring about this drastic change, partly because of the passage of time and the fading of memories, and new blood coming into the Society all the time, but mostly because we have at present a management which fosters the attitude of student addressing student, throwing the membership back upon its own powers to make its own decisions — an attitude implicit in Theosophical teaching — in place of the attitude of teacher to pupil. Furthermore it was under this management that the important decision must have been made to urge the members to go back to the study of the works of HPB and the Mahatma letters — so evident in the

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Theosophical Society today.

What practical steps should be taken?

1. A thorough realization of the imperative need for a complete change in attitude back to responsible individuality, is the first necessity. This is more especially true of the more deeply dedicated students to whom Theosophy means a good deal more than just a valuable and interesting study. It will not be easy to change the outlook of many years. Much earnest reflection and a willingness to face facts on the part of each student will demand effort and courage, but it is upon these members that the future welfare of the Theosophical Society depends. The rest will follow their lead and perhaps catch fire from their enthusiasm.

What does it mean to become an individual? It means briefly: to live, think, decide and act, from one's own centre. We each live in a world surrounded by opinions, beliefs, influences and pressures, and are more or less strongly moulded and moved by them. To that extent we are living at second hand. We take over ideas and beliefs fully formed and regard them as our own and pass them off to others as ours. We allow ourselves to be pushed into this or that activity, which is often not our own choice at all. We allow some dominant person or group to form our opinions and even to run our lives. All this results from our not having as yet become born out of the herd life about us. It is an immensely big thing to entirely cut loose from all this and become *fully* an individual. Such a person is very rare.

Until we students of Theosophy have

at least made some headway towards becoming individuals, what use can we be to a body like the Theosophical Society, whose work it is to sponsor the noblest philosophy man has ever known before the world of men, or of what use to anyone in a real way if we badly need a helping hand ourselves? What can we do about it? What are the means we can avail ourselves of to start on the road to self-reliant, self-responsible, individuality? This by itself is a big subject, far too large to pursue further here.

2. To open correspondence columns in our magazines will be of little avail to promote discussion and comment unless active and persistent encouragement is made to break down the passive, uncritical attitude so long fostered in the past amongst our members.

3. The complete cessation of the teacher to pupil attitude, and especially of that unworthy hinting at superior knowledge or experience, which is so repulsive to intelligent enquirers and to all students, is imperative. Every public lecture on Theosophy should be introduced with a statement to the effect that Theosophy is not a religion, it is a science and a philosophy, and no statement made gains in the least from authority, but that every idea is put forward for study and investigation, to stand or fall on its own merit.

4. It should be realized that discussion and controversy bring life and vitality to a movement. A dull agreement is deadening in the extreme to the finest ideas, which are often soon forgotten. An illustration of this fact is to be seen in the growth of

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the *Science Group Journal*, London, England, which encourages complete freedom of thought and investigation, and its expression. This attitude of freedom of expression and discussion inevitably attracts the more vital and mature intelligences, the best minds, everywhere.

The idea seems to have grown up in our midst that disagreement, especially if emphatic, is intolerant and unbrotherly. Within the limits of due courtesy, the reverse is true. To allow your brother to labour under some important illusion which you are convinced exists, and to fail to bring it to his attention, is unbrotherly in the extreme. What right have we, members of a Society dedicated above all to Truth, to be afraid of hurting the feelings of a brother-in-arms by exposing a fallacy of his? Or what right have we to protect some belief or conviction of our own from brotherly criticism by refusing to bring it forward as a challenge to critical scrutiny? Are we children in a Sunday school, or grown men and women, embarked on the greatest 'adventure', the search for Truth, for human enlightenment? Should we not realize that we insult one another when we protect ourselves and one another in this way?

We can think of nothing which would help to encourage clarity of mind and the growth of individuality more than discussion among members of the Lodges on such questions as: 'What does it mean to be a Seeker for Truth?' 'What is the Cause of Theosophy?' 'What is a Nucleus of Universal Brotherhood?' 'Why a Nucleus of Universal Brotherhood?'

The object of this article is to show that the lack of vitality in the Theosophical Society cannot be remedied by anything but ourselves. Each individual member is responsible: depending upon outside things will not supply the needed inspiration. When we have put our house in order in the ways indicated, the neglected work of the Theosophical Society lies before us. The Mahatmas, from 1875 on, made their move. They put in our hands part of their philosophy, securely rooted in the human mind and left us to see what we could do with it. They had done their part; now it was up to us to do ours. The enlightenment of mankind is a dual process, like everything else. The effort from above must be reciprocated by an effort from below, and to the extent that the latter falls short, the effort from above is delimited. The effort from above is in the form of ideas, but it consists chiefly of energy of a certain spiritual kind, the amount being strictly determined by the united effort put forth from below, hence the necessity of a *nucleus* of Universal Brotherhood.

Short-sightedly, the Theosophical Society put all its energy into proselytizing a popularized variant of Theosophy. Numbers was, and in most members' minds, is the measure of its success, in spite of HPB's (and the Mahatmas') warning that quality was more important than quantity. Once let us become free men again, devoted to this overlooked work, and there will be no lack of vitality in the Theosophical Society. Our chief concern will be Theosophy itself once again, and not everything and anything *but* Theosophy.

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

THREE days after I was born, as I lay in my silken cradle, gazing with astonished dismay on the new world round about me, my mother spoke to the wet-nurse, saying, 'How is my child?'

And the wet-nurse answered, 'He does well, madame, I have fed him three times; and never before have I seen a babe so young yet so gay.'

And I was indignant; and I cried, 'It is not true, mother; for my bed is hard, and the milk I have sucked is bitter to my mouth, and the odour of the breast is foul in my nostrils, and I am most miserable.'

But my mother did not understand, nor did the nurse; for the language I spoke was that of the world from which I came.

And on the twenty-first day of my life, as I was being christened, the priest said to my mother, 'You should indeed be happy, madame, that your son was born a Christian.'

And I was surprised, and I said to the priest, 'Then your mother in Heaven should be unhappy, for you were not born a Christian.'

But the priest too did not understand my language. And after seven moons, one day a soothsayer looked at me, and he said to my mother, 'Your son will be a statesman and a great leader of men.'

But I cried out, 'That is a false prophecy; for I shall be a musician, and naught but a musician shall I be.'

But even at that age my language was not understood — and great was my astonishment.

And after three and thirty years, during which my mother, and the nurse, and the priest have all died, (the shadow of God be upon their spirits) the soothsayer still lives. And yesterday I met him near the gate of the temple; and while we were talking together he said, 'I have always known you would become a great musician. Even in your infancy I prophesied and foretold your future.'

And I believed him — for now I too have forgotten the language of that other world.

Kahlil Gibran, *Other Language*

The Theosophical Thought

An Approach to Solving the Present-day Crisis

ASHOK PRATAP LOKHANDE

WHEN we look around, the world scene presents a disturbing spectacle. The culture and value systems built by our saints and seers with painstaking effort for centuries, appears to have become mere history. Values like moral conduct and brotherhood, which they set before us by their living example are seen as worthless.

It seems as if the time frame we collectively represent today is perhaps the blackest one. The world is moving through a period of dangers — war, terrorism, all-pervading corruption and techno-power domination. Man has forgotten the natural law of coexistence and cooperation; thereby he has slid into an abyss of self-centred degenerating tendencies, the inevitable consequence of which is that man is perennially moving away from dignity and human values. We are moving towards endless suffering and sorrow. It seems as if, instead of progressing, we are regressing.

Diagnosis of Present-day Crisis

The human being is the most beautiful expression of existence, with the potential of realizing ultimate divinity within

himself. However, he behaves like a demon. We experience this unfortunate phenomenon in our day-to-day life.

The central reason for the misery is ignorance, an incomplete understanding of the unexplained laws of nature. Even if we acquire a partial understanding of these laws; for example, about karma and sacrifice, we would not be able to move even an inch in the direction in which we are moving today.

About 136 years ago, with the blessing of the Masters, the Theosophical Society was established, and continues to be engaged in research of the unexplained laws of nature, for the welfare of the world and its inhabitants. This research has enabled us to identify the root causes of the present-day crisis.

The self-centred tendency manifests as an indulgence for comfort and convenience for one's own self, greed for money, power and control, or 'name and fame'. The ignorance of natural laws is the main reason for the contemporary state of the world.

It is only through the scientific method of research propounded and propagated

Mr Ashok Pratap Lokhande is a member of the Indian Section, living in Nagpur. Talk delivered at the Indian Section Convention, Adyar, December 2003.

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by the Theosophical Society that human beings can be liberated from the infesting wilderness of ignorance of the laws of nature.

In the present-day world, one observes that in some places for some selfish reason terrorism thrives, and innocent children, women and young men are being killed, which could be described as a 'naked dance of violence'. It is a vicious circle, propelled by some economically developed and prosperous sections of the human population. It has no place in any form of human civilization and is a scar and scourge on the world consciousness; for example, the cowardly and shameful attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and the consequential, equally brutal, retaliation in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Theosophical Society strongly believes that deliberate infliction of suffering on living beings is anathema to the spirit of universal brotherhood.

Occupants of high offices in the world indulge in corruption for the worldly pleasures of the senses, in the process of which they brush aside considerations of legality, speech, decency and propriety. The bottom line is to get what they want by hook or by crook.

Does this not amount to betrayal of the people and crime against humanity? Similarly, the so-called developed countries of the world, keeping in mind their selfish and profit-making ends, exploit the developing countries by engineering political instability or by offering incentives of freedom and development of the people, by waging war

against them or inducing civil war within such countries.

Even nature and its resources are not spared by the insatiable rapacious creatures called human beings; for example, there is indiscriminate cutting of trees and forests, and infliction of enormous suffering and pain on animals, for the purpose of industries, medicines, research and cosmetics. This very seriously illustrates barbarity in the human nature.

The cruel treatment given to animals, plants and human beings generates and spreads vibrations of pain and suffering in the environment. All the human actions described above transform nature and its resources and animate beings into objects of human consumption — which may be described as the commodifying of nature and living beings.

The only possible conclusion of the above discussion is that the insensitivity of human beings has reached a peak. Man appears to be totally unaware of the truth of the oneness of all that lives and which is inherent in nature.

The Theosophical Solution

Among the proclaimed purposes of the Theosophical Society, a special emphasis is placed on Universal Brotherhood. Taking this concept in its widest sense, it means that each man exists for the sake of other men. Everything is connected with and interpenetrates everything else according to its mysterious natural law.

Brotherhood is not a formal relationship. It is a relationship of the innermost nature of things.

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In this sense, brotherhood is present everywhere in the world. The corollary is that the mode of life is one of cooperation, complementing each other based on mutual tolerance, goodwill towards all, harmlessness, compassion and justice for all. If in any natural geographical order some deficiencies or excesses are found, Nature seeks to compensate it by the presence of plants and animals possessing certain special properties. In this way Nature creates and sustains equilibrium in the life of the particular region.

If we cogitate on these lines we experience that the entire existence gives shelter and security to our eternal collective life force, provided that we are ready and alert to internalize universal brotherhood and externalize the 'other-hood'.

Mother Nature, in trust of her bounty to us, gives it with love and with brotherhood inscribed on it; however we take it in an anti-natural and aggressive manner. Our self-interest corrupts and thereby corrodes the spirit of brotherhood inherent in nature.

The disharmony between Nature's act of giving and the human act of taking disturbs the inherent and expected equilibrium of brotherhood.

Alienation of man from his 'brotherman' constitutes the most significant reason for the present-day crisis of insensitivity or 'other-hood'. As a consequence of the estrangement our sense of gratitude, our thanksgiving has virtually evaporated. Since we are an indispensable part of existence we have also lost any active sense of our own worth. Our

consciousness is infected by the virus of other-hood; we must strike at the very root of this frightful disease.

It is well accepted in the Theosophical Society that universal life is one (Unity) and for contemporary events and actions, every one is responsible. We live in a particular time frame and develop thoughts and belief systems and actions relevant to the time frame, and we contribute to the strengthening of the collective mind. This collective mind determines, or at least influences, the deeper level of our consciousness, by which we are governed. The distorted existence is responsible for the present-day crisis; we cannot, and should not, try to escape from sharing the guilt and shame for the present state of things.

We must try to find out the answer to the question: How are we responsible for this present-day crisis? We would find the answer if we look at and examine our everyday life with which we are familiar and do not find anything odd in it.

When we are busy watching an entertaining film or movie, our state of mind is different from the one which is in meditation. We can very easily identify ourselves with the events and emotions shown on the screen and we are completely lost in the mood of the characters of the film. In fact, we are hardly aware of time elapsing. Whereas in the meditative state ten minutes may appear to be a very long time for beginners.

We are more or less familiar with the differences in the way our mind experiences, which reacts differently

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while watching a film and while in meditation. The reason is simply that scenes in the film strike a chord with our inner feelings, like selfishness, sex, violence, revenge, and so on, as if they are the reflection of our own self. However, experience in meditation is otherwise.

Let us take for example a huge burning fire; if you add more fire to it nothing will happen because the fire will naturally accept fire without any resistance, whereas if we sprinkle water on the fire there will be an immediate resistance in the form of sound and smoke, because water is anti-fire. The human mind is like the scenes of the film — unchanged by adding fire to the fire, whereas meditation is like sprinkling water on the fire. This is the most direct evidence of our own nature, as the mind does not accept calmness easily.

The human mind pervades throughout the universe; whatever is in our thoughts is reflected in the world and is described as reality.

The message of Theosophical thought seeks to introduce us to our own self. Knowing this we must behave in accord-

ance with natural laws — the law of karma, the law of sacrifice and inherent brotherhood in nature everywhere.

If we want to transform or reform the world scene, we do not have to look elsewhere but towards one's own self. We must reform and recondition our mind with a view to sensitize it to brotherhood, and the laws of karma and of sacrifice.

The bottom line is that divinity is not bestowed on us as a separate, independent, individual self, but as an interdependent mutually sustaining inter-subjective self.

Despite all odds we must adopt an optimistic attitude; the thoughts and teachings of Theosophy make us aware of the truth, and once positive thoughts take root in the human mind, the feeling of competition, exploitation and greed will be replaced by the feeling of cooperation and tolerance.

If we realize this fact, the world will be automatically transformed. It will overflow with goodness and the good of all. We must strive to make it a reality around us by our own feelings, thinking and behaviour. ✧

When we really begin to live in the world, then we understand what is meant by brotherhood or mankind, and not before.

Swami Vivekananda

Spirituality — True and False

D. P. SABNIS

Remember, O disciple, that great though the gulf may be between the good man and the sinner it is greater between the good man and the man who has attained knowledge; it is immeasurable between the good man and the one on the threshold of divinity. Therefore be wary lest too soon you fancy yourself a thing apart from the mass. (*Light on the Path*)

As the words above indicate, there is always the possibility for a spiritual aspirant to have mistaken notions about spirituality, either out of ignorance or owing to hypocrisy. When someone is able to predict a future event or tell of the past, or produce ash out of thin air, he is held in awe and believed to be spiritually advanced. Acquirement of psychic powers, a little progress in meditation, psychic experiences and visions and the like, are mistaken for signs of 'spirituality'.

Often the acquirement of psychic powers, the ability to understand abstruse metaphysics coupled with abstinence from drinks, meat, pungent or *rājasic* food, etc., deludes a person into thinking that he is a thing apart from other 'inferior' men. As St Paul puts it, a person might have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries

or give away all his goods to feed the poor, but if he lacks charity, then those 'gifts' are of no spiritual benefit. It shows that though desires of the lower plane have been conquered, they have got hold of him through *manas*. It may only be described as spiritual darkness.

A 'holier than thou' attitude is detrimental to spiritual progress. 'Even ignorance is better than head-learning', if not guided by soul-wisdom, as it leads to pride. 'Be humble if thou wouldst attain to Wisdom. Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered', says *The Voice of the Silence*. A person who is puffed up about his worldly accomplishments can be corrected with spiritual knowledge, but when a person feels proud of his spiritual achievements how is he to be helped? If something sticks in a person's throat he can drink water to wash it down, but if water sticks in his throat, what can be given? Hence Jesus said to his disciples: 'Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men.'

Our attitude towards those who are not as yet where we are spiritually, should be

Mr D. P. Sabnis is a member of Blavatsky Lodge, Mumbai, Indian Section of the TS.

Spirituality — True and False

as described in *Light on the Path*:

Let the darkness within help you to understand the helplessness of those who have seen no light, whose souls are in profound gloom. Blame them not. Shrink not from them, but try to lift a little of the heavy karma of the world.

A Master of the Wisdom cautions students of Theosophy:

Do not be too severe on the merits or demerits of one who seeks admission among your ranks, as the truth about the actual state of the inner man can only be known to Karma.

If we have learnt to appreciate spiritual living while others around are engrossed in pleasures, then we must help to make their life joyous instead of condemning or criticizing — knowing that their time for spiritual life is not yet ripe.

People will transit into spirit only when they are ready, and trying to speed them up is only a disservice to them for they may even develop a permanent revulsion for it.

If we wish to experience joy and peace then it cannot be by closing up the 'gates of feeling'. Indifference to pleasure and pain does not imply insensitivity. Spiritual progress brings with it a greater sensitivity. To experience the emotion and sensation, but not allow these to shake us from the fixed purpose, is the battle of spiritual life. A disciple enjoys and suffers more keenly than the ordinary man. We should be able to enjoy and appreciate people, places

and things without getting dependent, so that we are able to leave them when the time comes, without being shattered. We may give and receive love without craving for it.

When he (the disciple) has learned the first lesson, conquered the hunger of the heart, and refused to live on the love of others, he finds himself more capable of inspiring love.

A spiritual person may not linger and waste time in idle chatting but also he will not avoid people or miss out on a friendly greeting. He is self-dependent but not self-centred. When the discipline is only external, or when the desire is given up only outwardly, the inner longing eats us up. The state of such a man is as described in the *Gītā*, 'a false pietist of bewildered soul'. Mere external discipline is useless. What good is celibacy if the mind is full of thoughts of the opposite sex?

In Occultism, thought is considered to be more potent than the act. As Jesus says: 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' But in another sense, without action or application, mere knowledge or good intentions do not make us spiritual in any real sense.

'Renunciation' is purely an internal matter. Renunciation of action is not to be construed as inaction. It is the ability to renounce interest in the fruits of action. True spirituality does not call for renouncing the world and running away to a forest or a monastery. Many people asked HPB if discipleship involved deserting wife, children and home. HPB's answer was:

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‘No, because he who plays truant in one thing will be faithless in another. No real, genuine Master will accept a *chela* who sacrifices anyone except himself to go to that Master.’ Our attention is drawn to the principle:

A man tied by his duty to one place has no right to desert it in order to fulfil another duty, let it be however much greater; for the first duty taught in Occultism is to do one’s duty unflinchingly by every duty.

We are asked to be in the world, but not be of the world. Often, erroneously, relationships are seen as bondage and hence the aspirant refuses to enter into kindly relationship with anyone — refusing to either give or receive help. It is a folly to consider near and dear ones as an obstruction to one’s spiritual progress. One may feel, ‘If it were not for my wife and children, I would get more time to study or meditate!’ While another may secretly lament that his spouse is not sufficiently advanced! *The Voice of the Silence* has this to say:

If thou art told that to become Arhan thou hast to cease to love all beings — tell them they lie.

If thou art told that to gain liberation thou hast to hate thy mother and disregard thy son; to disavow thy father and call him ‘householder’; for man and beast all pity to renounce — tell them their tongue is false.

Believe thou not that sitting in dark forests, in proud seclusion and apart from men; believe thou not that life on roots and plants, that thirst assuaged with snow from the great Range — believe thou not, O devotee, that this will lead thee to the goal of final liberation.

Are ‘spirituality’ and ‘joyfulness’ opposed to each other? Should we always be serious, going around with ‘a long face’? Once someone who was trying sincerely to live the spiritual life complained that he was trying to be spiritual but cheerfulness kept interrupting it. A spiritual man is cheerful and joyous so as to make his joy contagious. He can create heaven in hell’s despair with his optimism and positive outlook on life.

Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air . . . But it must be the Eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth. (*Light on the Path*)

Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Luke 18:16–17

Books of Interest

RIDE THE TIGER by Julius Evola, Inner Traditions, 2003, pp. 242.

Evola, a scholar steeped in the world's esoteric traditions, challenges his contemporaries to connect their lives and institutions to the timeless spiritual standards that guided humanity's ancestors. With appropriate and appealing passion, the author asserts that there exist in the contemporary world institutions that permit one to actualize oneself completely, to champion one's personal values, or to clearly structure one's existence without ambiguity. The world is predominated by an antithesis that thwarts an opportunity for living by principles that transcend the human and the transitory. Evola indicts the prevalent idols and illusions, the structures and systems that suffuse this dissolute age. He describes the human who can 'ride the tiger' as capable of transforming destructive tendencies into an inner liberation and inspiring hope inside individuals wanting to embrace tradition. The reality that Evola recognizes is so profoundly different from current thought that his provocative presentation is shocking to people's present-day sensibilities. The author indicates why traditional persons are estranged in the modern world, encourages persons to search beyond theism and atheism, and issues a powerful incentive for abandoning an unauthentic existence. Examining

existentialism and nihilism, Evola surveys the legacy bequeathed by Nietzsche, Sartre, and Heidegger. With considerable insight, he scrutinizes the sickness that suffuses European culture and the dissolution that corrupts modern art. Evola's devastating critique is painfully honest; he shatters illusions with sledge-hammer blows. Evola possesses the courage for eliminating external appearances in an agonizing attempt to see reality clearly.

DANIEL ROSS CHANDLER

A NEW EARTH: CREATE A BETTER LIFE by Eckhart Tolle, Penguin Group (USA), 2009, pp. 309.

This is a popular book, as it ranks among the six million-copy worldwide best-sellers. Its main purpose is not to add new information but to bring about a shift in consciousness. It gives glimpses that initiate the awakening process. The author asks questions like: 'Is humanity ready for a transformation of consciousness?' The author's presentation is lively and that makes for charming reading.

Tolle writes that the human habit of watching television is to fall below thought, not rise above it. Like some drugs, it too has a strong addictive quality. Excessive television watching is largely responsible for Attention Deficit Disorder, a mental dysfunction now affecting millions of children worldwide. Frequent and

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prolonged watching not only makes one unconscious, it also induces passive responses and drains you of energy.

Unfortunately, although for long periods the mind may not be generating any thoughts, it has links with thought activity; this induces a trance-like passive state of heightened susceptibility, not unlike hypnosis. That is why it lends itself to the manipulation of 'public opinion', as in the case of politicians, special-interest groups and advertisers, who know this and will pay millions of dollars to catch you in that state of unawareness. They want their thoughts to become your thoughts, and usually they succeed.

The author says about Abundance: The acknowledgement of the abundance that is all around you awakens the dormant abundance within. 'See the fullness of life all around you. The warmth of the sun on your skin, the display of magnificent flowers outside . . . an abundance of

water falling from the sky. The fullness of life is there at every step' (p.191). Abundance comes only to those who already have it. It sounds almost unfair, but of course it is not. It is a Universal Law. Both abundance and scarcity are inner states that manifest as your reality. He quotes Jesus: 'For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.' The author gives the confidence to let go of fear, anxiety and the eternal quest for more.

The author, a public speaker, travels extensively throughout the world. The ten chapters of the book deal with the Flowering of Human Consciousness, Ego: The Current State of Humanity, The Core of Ego, Role-playing: The Many Faces of the Ego, The Pain-Body, Breaking Free, Finding Who You Truly Are, The Discovery of Inner Space, Your Inner Purpose, and A New Earth.

C. A. SHINDE

THE THEOSOPHIST

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

Dated: 29 February 2012

S. HARIHARA RAGHAVAN, *PUBLISHER*



Ven. Olande Ananda Thera and Mr Bhupendra R. Vora on the dais



Mrs Radha Burnier and Mr Anoop Jaiswal and others bidding time before a **Convention Talk**



Mr M. P. Singhal and Prof. Devdas Menon share a few words before the Theosophy-Science Lecture



Mr S. Ramu, Manager, TPH, describes the DVD, *Adyar — through the Lens*, released by Mr Ricardo Lindemann (right). Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy (centre).

Theosophical Work around the World

India

Mr Ricardo Lindemann, who was the former National President of the TS in Brazil and is currently a National Lecturer, visited four Federations in India together with a National Lecturer of the Indian Section, Prof. C. A. Shinde.

On 7 and 8 January 2012, Mr Ricardo Lindemann gave two Public Talks in Bangalore, hosted by the Karnataka Theosophical Federation, which is one of the largest Federations in the Indian Section. Approximately 120 members attended the meetings, and the talks were immediately translated into the regional language to make it easy for non-English-speaking members to grasp their content. The talks were on Astrology, Karma and Free Will.

On 9 and 10 January, the Bombay Theosophical Federation arranged a Public Talk at the Blavatsky Lodge where Bro. Ricardo Lindemann gave a convincing and uplifting PowerPoint presentation on Astrology and the Wisdom Tradition.

On 11 January, Bro. Lindemann gave a Public Talk arranged by the Marathi Theosophical Federation at the TS Lodge in Pune. It was well attended. An interaction on Astrology and the Future of the Theosophical Society followed the presentation.

On 12 January, Bro. Ricardo Lindemann, along with Prof. C. A. Shinde, visited the University of Pune and the

World Religion Organization for Peace at Pune, where the Hon. Dalai Lama was the Chief Guest.

They also visited in Pune, one of the TOS activities which gives value education to a School of the Rayat Education Society. Both, Prof. C. A. Shinde and Bro. Ricardo Lindemann, gave talks at the School on human values and good conduct. About 100 eighth standard girl students attended and responded well, making the visit a memorable one.

On 15 January 2012, Bro. Lindemann gave a talk on 'Astrology — A Theosophical Perspective'. It was hosted by the Gandhinagar Lodge of the Madras Theosophical Federation, and was very well attended.

U.P. Federation

The Federation has been conducting regular Camps and meetings for school and college students. A special two days' Integrated Development Camp for Youth (B.Ed. students) was organized on 7 and 8 December 2011 at the Kanchan Singh Bhooli Devi Post Graduate College in the district of Ramabai Nagar. About 100 students, both male and female, and twenty teachers participated, and were introduced to Theosophical teachings, including the relevance in daily life of Thought Power, Love and Karma, and the concept of educational work as an act of service. ✧

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