

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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CONTENTS

The Uses of this World <i>Tim Boyd</i>	5
The Great Awakening – I <i>Dorothy Bell</i>	10
The Buddha's First Sermon <i>B. R. Ambedkar</i>	16
Mystic Musings with I. K. Taimni <i>Ramkumar Singh</i>	23
First Step on the Path <i>K. Dinakaran</i>	30
How to Live Theosophy <i>Marcos Resende</i>	34
Theosophical Work Around the World	38
International Directory	44

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

The Uses of This World

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world!

William Shakespeare
Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 2

TIM BOYD

I WOULD like to give some consideration to this world in which we live. A great deal of emphasis on the theosophical path is largely related to what we sometimes think of as inner states; but they all seem to take place against a backdrop of the world. In the scriptures and spiritual traditions throughout history, there is frequent reference made to our world. It is variously described, but most often it is seen from the spiritual perspective as a place in which trials are experienced and the soul finds its field for growth.

In the Bible there are a number of ways in which our world is described, but one of the predominant themes is expressed in the 23rd Psalm: “The Lord is my shepherd.” At one point the description of the world is given as “the valley of the shadow of death”, implying that the individual’s experience takes place beneath an ever-present shadow of death and impermanence. It is also described as “the valley of tears” or “the vale of tears”.

The Buddha, after his enlightenment, first spoke about the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. But his third sermon was “The Fire Sermon”, in which the description he makes of the world is

brief and direct. He says that the world is on fire. Then he goes on to describe the nature of this continual blaze that is taking place.

Another one of his teaching stories is called “The Burning House”, about the role of spiritual teachers in the world. In it a wealthy man sees that his house is on fire and his children are inside, but so engrossed in the games they are playing that when he calls them to come out of the house, they do not pay him any attention. The fire is blazing all around them, but they are locked into the games that they are playing with each other. In order to rescue his children from the blaze he lures them out of the house by promising to give them the little carts that they always wanted to play with — carts pulled by goats, carts with horses, and so on. When they hear that, they joyfully run out of the house, but he provides them with a cart of a different nature, symbolic of the teachings leading to enlightenment.

The story points to the idea that great Masters come into this world and, in order to deal with the very childish humanity that we are, they develop teachings. In many ways we are attracted to them because, like toys for children —

The Uses of This World

they draw our eye, our attention, our participation, and gradually we are led toward a deeper insight about the meaning and nature of life in this world.

H. P. Blavatsky described the world in a number of ways. The Christian concept of heaven and hell was completely ridiculous to her: If one is good during one life on the planet, one goes to a heaven forever; if one is bad, then one goes to a blazing hell forever. In answer to that sort of thinking, her description was that if we are looking for hell it can be found on any human-bearing planet. Anywhere there is a humanity of a similar development to ours, does not require the invention of other types of hells. We are continuously inventing it day after day, for ourselves, for the ones around us, for the animal kingdom, and for the natural world.

While writing *The Secret Doctrine*, she was in England during the last days of her life, and she gathered around herself a group of students. She had occasion to talk to them about *The Secret Doctrine*, its writing and meaning, and Robert Bowen was one of those present at that time. We have the good fortune of having his notes passed down to us from those meetings. They are titled “Madame Blavatsky on the Study of *The Secret Doctrine*”. In talking to this group of students, she said that *The Secret Doctrine* contains *all* of the knowledge of the inner side of life that *the world* is capable of understanding for the next one hundred years, and that this was all that our capacity to understand would permit.

One of the questions asked of her in those group discussions was: “When you say that this is all that the world is capable of comprehending, what do you mean by ‘the world’?” Her response is worth our consideration because she said very specifically that the world is humanity living in its *personal* nature. The domination of the personality en masse by each and every one of its human participants in this world, describes what this world is. So the knowledge that would be available at a time, when our attachment to this personal nature was such as it was then, was all contained within *The Secret Doctrine*.

What then is our experience of this world? HPB describes it, so does the Buddha, and the Bible. How do we experience it? We are living in the world from moment to moment, day to day, and it is our every-day, every-moment experience. How could we describe that? Great teachers have come and it is always very good to reference what they have given to us, but it is also good to reference our own insights.

Many people have spoken about our conditioning. J. Krishnamurti particularly talked about the nature of our conditioned minds and hearts. Conditioning meaning that there is a certain pattern that is set up, so that certain things are accepted and others are deflected from our awareness. So our experience from moment to moment is necessarily conditioned by what has been described as desire.

Every single thing that enters the field of our awareness is either something to

The Uses of This World

which we find ourselves attracted, or from which we find ourselves repelled. There is a whole range of neutral items but, generally, what is described as “alive” in the normal sense is the movement that occurs from the period of birth to the period of passing away from the body, which takes us through a range of experiences, pleasurable as well as painful.

The way we try to orchestrate our living is that we try to maximize the pleasurable experiences and eliminate the painful ones, which, just by the nature of the way things are set up in life, is an impossibility. It is a futile attempt that we are continually engaged in, that in some way we will live a life filled with pleasurable experiences and without the painful ones. It is just the nature of this or *any* world that nothing exists that is purely one or purely the other.

As a *very* young person, when I was in high school, I had a summer job working in the office of a manufacturer of soda pop — carbonated beverages. My morning routine at that job was to fill up the coolers in the office with various types of soda pop that was manufactured by this company. As a sixteen-year-old, it seemed like I had landed in a heaven world, because I could choose the drinks that would fill the cooler and could drink all of the soda I wanted.

I thought it could not have been a better situation, but it took me all of one week to drink so much soda pop that I became ill. Pure pleasure for the first two or three days, but give it a week and what I had associated with all that was good,

perhaps in terms of feeling, turned out to be the *very* thing that made me ill.

There is nothing in life that is wholly pleasure-producing or pain-producing. And we find this in many ways, because our control over the cycles of life has limitations. However healthy may be our diet or appropriate may be our exercise, ultimately the body degrades, although we may be able to slow the process. Ultimately, the vehicle becomes ill in one way or another. No matter how we try to avoid people who are coughing, or try to clean our hands every time we touch something we deem impure, it is just the way things work with these cycles that occur.

Theosophical literature and classical theosophical teachings emphasize what they describe as very important moments in the awakening of the spiritual consciousness, described as initiations or initiatory experiences. We know little about them, but they are described as sudden expansions — or extensions — of consciousness that occur at specific moments when an inner seed is prepared to sprout.

We are told that these experiences have occurred throughout history in the mystery schools of Egypt and ancient Greece, and all around the world in different cultures. But the experience as best we understand it is one where, perhaps by virtue of certain rituals that are performed, the inner self is taken away, is parted from the outer, for a period, so the inner consciousness is relieved from its attachment to its body

The Uses of This World

and the personality elements that we cling to. In that state, this expansion of awareness takes place, and then the initiate is said to function at a new level of consciousness.

One of the people in history who had this experience was St Paul, whom Blavatsky describes as, without any doubt, a high initiate. His initiatory experience involved him being struck blind through a vision of the Master as he was going on the road. During this period when he was blinded to the world he had been accustomed to seeing, this experience happened to him, and out of it he became Paul, whereas before, his name had been Saul.

Another example of this type of experience happened to Muhammad, who said that he never received a revelation — the revelations that became the Koran — without feeling that his soul had been torn from him, that it was an experience which had great value, but which no intelligent person would seek again. Five initiations are often depicted in the life of Jesus on his way to becoming the Christ, and his crucifixion is one of these initiatory symbols.

The Buddha, prior to his enlightenment, experienced near-starvation and death. So it is through these dramatic experiences that the personality becomes quelled or, in some of these examples, crucified, starved, blinded, and the person becomes blind to the personality. HPB had said that in order to experience the spiritual life we must first “paralyze the personality”. The paralysis of the per-

sonality permits some deeper level of experience. It is well and good when we hear it described as the initiations that occur to great historical people. Always it is *our* work to try to find out how, in fact, that applies to us, to our living.

During the course of everyone’s life will come some unsought experience which when it comes and visits with us, will not be sought again. Some of the greatest moments, the things that have had the greatest impact and have propelled me in terms of growth, have been events or occurrences that produced a precious or even a priceless outcome, but for which I would give nothing to repeat. All of us have had those experiences, the death of teachers, of loved ones, the very losses we might experience during the course of normal life — loss of job, mate, child — all of these things which, given enough time and distance, when we look back, we can see that they propelled us into some new level of understanding, often a new capacity for compassion.

There is an experience that can occur during the course of our lives, which we hope does not reoccur — the experience of despair. When we despair, we find ourselves in a condition where we recognize fully that a condition or situation is completely beyond our capacity to control. At some point, something like this visits us. It is often something that can seem to be a shattering experience, but also has the capacity to catapult us to new levels of awareness, because the very process of recognizing that there is no personal

The Uses of This World

agency, that there is no personal control that can be exerted, provides, at least for a moment, a certain release. Again, HPB described it as “the paralysis of the personality”. At those moments the personality is powerless and of no use to us.

The boat that has carried us across the waters, that we have depended on so much, is useless on this new shore and it must be abandoned, even if momentarily. These experiences are on a different level, but are the same sorts of experiences that have broken like waves upon the Great Ones. The opportunity that it provides is one that we can avail ourselves of as our *daily* initiation, in the face of the day-to-day routine and demands that come our way every time we awaken.

In this example of a personality that is quietened, the admonition to be still is spoken of as: “Be still and know.” With a stilled personality, a certain knowledge necessarily breaks upon us. To be still, to hear, in hearing to know, and in knowing to obey. Blavatsky said that there were two voices that she would *always* obey,

one was the voice of her Master, and the other was the voice of her higher self; to obey, to act. At our level of development, we are talking about momentary experiences, where the personality drops away, where the desperate moment creates a condition of openness, of stillness.

Ultimately the desperate moment passes and the personality reasserts its influence. But having seen, heard, and experienced the stillness and silent communication of this intuitive mind — this higher self — even though the personality necessarily reasserts itself, its grip is looser than before. Experience by experience, step by step, we can find ourselves loosening the grasp of the personality, coming more under the influence of the counsel of the Great Ones, the Masters of the Wisdom, who have continually advised in so many ways, that our role and task is to step out of our world — to leave our world — and to enter theirs. These are a few things that we can ponder in our consideration of and necessary uses of this world — the ways in which we can put this world to use in this process of unfoldment. ✧

Self-knowledge is the starting point of right action — not imitated but self-initiated. When the movement *of* the mind ceases, then begins a movement *in* the mind which is not *of* the mind. Then the mind becomes a perfect instrument and right action is possible.

Rohit Mehta
The Search for Freedom

The Great Awakening — I

DOROTHY BELL

Introduction

Leading up to the exploration of “The Great Awakening”, we will look at the background of dreams and visions with a message from a church wall in Sussex, England, which gives us an opening insight:

A vision without a task is merely a dream
A task without a vision is drudgery
A vision and a task is the hope of the world¹

This voice from the past may prompt us to ask: Is this message applicable to our Society today? Are we mere dreamers? Is the Society, as the vehicle of theosophical teachings, “the hope of the world”?

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) thought so. In her Letter to the 1888 American Convention, she wrote: “The recognition of pure Theosophy — the philosophy of the rational explanation of things and not the tenets — is of the most vital importance in the Society, inasmuch as it alone can furnish the beacon light needed to guide humanity on its true path.”

The importance of a theosophical vision and goal that would guide “orphan

humanity” on its true path — and which inspired the early founders — cannot be underestimated. They dedicated themselves and the Society, as HPB expressed in closing her Letter, “to the truth of the Great Cause we are all working for”.

Her vision of the liberation of the individual — and thereby humanity — from self-imprisonment in an illusory world of separateness, death, and form, was embodied in the occult truth of Oneness and Universal Brotherhood. This was, presumably, “the Great Cause” and the invisible battery that impelled and powered her in a particular direction. And, like all batteries, it can lose its initial power of propulsion if that power is not anchored in a continuous source — the eternal — by means of the spiritual heart connection.

So, to reflect further on the power and importance of a vision, we will look at the visions of two great spiritual warriors: Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, with his vision of an America that would live true to the ideals of its Constitution and Declaration of Independence; and Dr Annie Besant, with her vision of a “new civilization” of

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The Great Awakening — I

humanity, the ground of which was to be prepared by the work of the Theosophical Society (TS).

We will then look more closely at the meaning of this envisioned new civilization in terms of the “Great Awakening” and its context in the Divine Plan of evolution of Consciousness. The final focus of the article will be on self-education strategies, building on Annie Besant’s early work on perception and learning to see with the eyes of the spirit to “grow Theosophy more and more [as] a living power” in our lives.²

Two Visionary Warriors

On 28 August 1963, Dr Martin Luther King delivered his magnificent “I Have a Dream” speech in Washington, DC. He spoke in the language of those times about having to face the tragic fact that 100 years after President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation — freeing millions of Negro slaves — the Negro had not been emancipated; the “chains of discrimination” were still being worn; and the Negro was living “on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity”. Let us taste more of his dream, echoing the magnificent words of the US Constitution and Declaration of Independence:

I have a dream — that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and

the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. . . .

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today! . . .

With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. . . . And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. . . .

And when this happens, . . . we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing, in the words of the old Negro spiritual: “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”³

Martin Luther King — the spiritual warrior with strong religious convictions of the future realization of brotherhood — galvanized the civil rights movement, where his dream and vision of equality was shared and it became a collective driving force for social and political change. However, it was to be a long and hard road, and the battle continues to this day.

Further back in time, another spiritual warrior and visionary emerged — Annie Besant. She was also a great orator and social activist, working initially in London, to help to alleviate suffering due to the discrimination that came from class

The Great Awakening — I

and cultural oppression — as in Ireland — and eventually became deeply involved in the Home Rule movement in India.

Halfway into her life, in 1888 London, she reviewed the voluminous epic by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), *The Secret Doctrine* — designed to bring the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom out of the East and into the Western mind. It resonated deeply with her, and her life completely changed. The teachings answered problems that had troubled her for many years as a social activist, such as prejudice, poverty, privilege and injustice, morality, religion and freethinking, tyranny and exploitation.

From her brief but close association with the author, HPB, she came to understand the Ancient Wisdom teachings more fully, evidenced by the numerous lectures, articles, and books that she generated throughout her life. Above all, she saw the potential of every human being to become enlightened and wake up to their true identity and reality, and to evolve into the next step in the Divine Plan of the evolution of consciousness.

In *The Theosophist* of April 1927, Annie Besant described her vision and plans for a new civilization that would be built on the new continent of thought — the terminology used by Mahatma Koot Hoomi to describe the Ancient Wisdom teachings. Her intention was to create in America the conditions in which could be sown the seeds of this new culture, or civilization.

One community had already been

established in Holland, and she saw “the ideal setting in the New World for such a community to be in the beautiful Ojai Valley in California”, and she went on to state her intention:

We desire to form on this land a Centre which shall gradually grow into a miniature model of the new civilization in which bodies, emotions, and minds shall be trained and disciplined in daily life . . . fit dwellings for the Divine Life, developing the spirit of brotherhood practically in everyday arrangements and methods of living.⁴

In describing the motivation behind this intended cradle of a new civilization, she said:

We are “gods in exile”, and we are striving to return to our native land. So our Centre must have high ideals and thus tread the homeward path.⁴

Annie Besant had captured the vision from the magnificent scenario of the Divine Plan, which is the context of our own experiences on schoolhouse Earth and other places. She saw humanity as gods in exile, on a great pilgrimage: first on the Path of “Forthgoing”, going forth as sparks of the divine from the Source and descending into the density of physical form, then turning to take the Path of Return to the Source, or of Self-realization. And she saw humanity struggling to do so, in these destructive days of the Kali Yuga cycle of evolution.

So in 1927, she published a strategy for a miniature prototype to work to-

wards the new civilization. It was to be a theosophical community actually living, training, and developing together, practising daily the spirit of brotherhood. She also included those who believed in the coming of the World Teacher to help in laying the foundations of his message of a “new and brotherly civilization”.⁴ Such was the vision and the task.

It is not my intention to assess the work of the two great warriors: that is a matter of historical record. The purpose is to understand the importance and power of great visions to translate into movement and action. These two living visions burned in the hearts of all those who worked them. And it is the nature and power of the vision embedded in the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom that draws our attention for more detailed exploration.

Awakening to Oneness

Annie Besant’s vision became a living ideal of the early Society, exemplifying the First Object of the TS. It connected people in the outer as well as the inner, as they perhaps were also aligned with the same bright star in the heavens from which the invisible battery was being charged. It was a vision she got from HPB, of the liberation of the individual, and therefore humanity, to be fully and wholly human in a new state of being, which she called a new culture, a new civilization. She saw it as the next step in the evolution of humanity, depicted in the magnificent Divine Plan of the evolution of consciousness in the con-

text of the *buddhic* “awakening”, the recognition and gradual unfolding of our inner divine nature.

It was the expansion of human consciousness that included the awakening of the Heart to a full and complete realization of the Oneness of all things, beings, and Life. She identified this as spiritual consciousness: “That sense of oneness at the heart of things is the testimony of the spiritual consciousness, and only as that is realized, is it possible that the spiritual life will manifest.”⁵

In theosophical terms, this spiritual awakening to the Oneness of all Life, represents the transition from *‘kama-manas* to *buddhi-manas*”, from a mind that is imprisoned by attachments to desire and passions, imprisoned by beliefs and emotions imposed by the socialization process of our cultures, to a mind that is cleared of modifications and illumined with the inner *buddhic* light of divine Wisdom and Compassion *blended into one energy*. This is really the ‘heart-mind’ of spiritual consciousness, where the light *of loving insight and compassionate understanding emanates spontaneously from the Heart centre*, just as the sun shines naturally and spontaneously on all alike, without prejudice or distinction.

Annie Besant envisaged the emergence of this new culture, or civilization, as people awakened to the truth of who they really are and learned to see the Oneness of all existence with the eyes of spirit. They would learn to see and look at things, think and live in a completely

The Great Awakening — I

new way, gradually realizing the living but hidden Reality of the oneness and unity of all Life as the source of Universal Kinship or Brotherhood with all things, people, and beings. Through her lectures and writings, she ensured members understood that a new way of seeing and thinking was fundamental to making it happen. But how do we understand this Oneness beyond the theory and into the practice?

In her address “Theosophy and Ethics” at the Parliament of World Religions in 1893, she explained how altruism is a stage of progress rather than a goal: “As long as service is consciously service of others, that is, of others separated from our own self, there is still incompleteness in the ethics, there is still lack of spirituality in the soul.” She then told a story to explain “oneness”:

Some of you may remember that exquisite Persian poem in which the lover, seeking his beloved, finds closed against him the door of her chamber, and knocks, pleading for admission.

From within the closed room sounds a voice asking: “Who asks for admission?”

And believing that his love was his best claim that could be given for his entry, he answered: “It is thy beloved that knocks.” But there was silence within the room and the door remained closed against the suppliant.

Out into the world he went and learned deeper lessons of life and of love; and coming back once more to the closed door,

he struck thereon and asked for entry.

Again the voice came, “Who is it that knocks?” But the answer this time was other than at first. No longer “Thy beloved” came the words, but, “It is thyself that knocks” and then the door unclosed, he passed the threshold. For all true love has its root in unity.⁶

The lover in the poem eventually comes to see everything, including himself and his beloved, with the eyes of spirit — a perception that reflects the introductory statement of a very old Upanishad that says: “All this world is God-inveiled”. He saw himself and his once-“separated” beloved, in this way: both were “divine consciousnesses” — the One Life in all and all in the One Life.

He did not identify with the body and limitations of the programmed lower mind, but with the One True Self in all, as shown in his response: “It is thyself who knocks.” He spoke from the awakened spiritual consciousness of his Heart-mind, radiated by his inner divinity; he recognised Oneness, where each is an aspect of the other, with no separation in the infinite field of consciousness. And it is there for us to learn that Love is a vibration, a frequency; it is the essence of Oneness, the essence of unity; it is the cosmic glue.

And as a segment of Annie Besant’s Universal Prayer confirms: “O Hidden Life! vibrant in every atom, O Hidden Light! shining in every creature, O Hidden Love, embracing all in Oneness, May each who feel himself as one with Thee,

The Great Awakening — I

Know he is also one with every other.”

This short invocation is a powerful teacher; it shows simply how an unveiled spiritual perception expresses through the mind’s eye, the *buddhic* mind. This full awakening of the mind principle involves the entire psychological complex, and it is where the battle between the inner One True Self and the “false and artificial personality-self” as HPB describes it, takes place.

Annie Besant envisioned the emergence of a new culture as individuals expanded their consciousness by learning to see and understand with the eyes of the spirit. The second and final part of this article moves from the theoretical to the practical, exploring the importance and process of spiritual perception, building on Annie Besant’s early work and insights on self-education strategies.

(To be continued)

Endnotes

1. <goodreads.com/quotes>, <sharefaith.wordpress.com>. (Various websites, including these, publish and/or claim this quotation.)
2. HPB concluded her Letter to the 1890 American Convention with the words, “May Theosophy grow more and more a living power in the lives of each one of our members . . . is the wish of your humble co-worker and fellow member.”
3. <archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>, “I HAVE A DREAM”.
4. Annie Besant, “The Happy Valley Foundation”, *The Theosophist*, April 1927, TPH, Adyar, Madras, India.
5. _____, “The Meaning and Method of the Spiritual Life”, *The Spiritual Life*, TPH, Wheaton, 1991.
6. _____, “Theosophy and Ethics”, *The Spiritual Life*, TPH, Wheaton, 1991.

How extraordinarily important it is that there should be at least some who do not belong to any particular group or race or to any specialized religion or society! They will create the true brotherhood of man for they will be seeking truth.

The Collected Works of J. Krishnamurti, Vol. III

The Buddha's First Sermon

B. R. AMBEDKAR

AFTER [the] exchange of greetings, the five Parivrājakas asked the Buddha whether he still believed in asceticism.

The Buddha replied in the negative. He said there were two extremes, a life of pleasure and a life of self-mortification. One says let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. The other says, kill all *vāsanās* (desires) because they bring rebirth. He rejected both as unbecoming to man.

He was a believer in the Madhyama Marga (Majjhima Patipada), the middle path, which is neither the path of pleasure nor the path of self-mortification. "Answer me this," he said to the Parivrājakas. "So long as your self remains active and continues to lust after either worldly or heavenly pleasures, is not all mortification vain?" And they answered, "It is as thou sayest."

"How can ye be free from self by leading a wretched life of self-mortification, if ye do not thereby succeed in quenching the fires of lust?" And they replied, "It is as thou sayest."

Only when the self in ye has been conquered [so] that ye are free from lust; ye

will then not desire worldly pleasures, and the satisfaction of your natural wants will not defile ye. Let ye eat and drink according to the needs of your body. Sensuality of all kinds is enervating. The sensual man is a slave of his passion. All pleasure-seeking is degrading and vulgar. But I say unto you that to satisfy the needs of life is not an evil: to keep the body in good health is a duty, or otherwise you shall not be able to keep your mind strong and clear and have the lamp of wisdom burning.

Know ye, O Parivrājakas, that there are these two extremes which man ought not to follow: the habitual indulgence on the one hand, of those things whose attraction depends upon the passions, and especially of sensuality — a low and pagan way of seeking satisfaction, unworthy, unprofitable — and the habitual practice thereof; and on the other hand, of asceticism or self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy, and unprofitable. There is a middle path which avoids both these extremes. Know ye, that, this is the path which I preach.

The five Parivrājakas listened to him with attention. Not knowing what to say

Dr B. R. "Babasaheb" Ambedkar, a prominent Indian economist, lawyer, and the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, fought relentlessly against the evil practice of untouchability in Hindu society, and became a Buddhist along with 500,000 followers. Excerpt from his *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.

The Buddha's First Sermon

in reply to the Buddha's middle path, they asked him what he had been doing after they had left him. Then the Buddha told them how he left for Gaya, how he sat in contemplation under the Banyan Tree, and how after four weeks of contemplation he obtained enlightenment, as a result of which he was able to discover a new path of life. On hearing this, the Parivrājakas became extremely impatient to know what the path was, and requested the Buddha to expound it to them. The Buddha agreed.

He began by saying that his path which is his *dhamma* (religion) had nothing to do with God and [the] Soul. His *dhamma* had nothing to do with life after death. Nor has his *dhamma* any concern with rituals and ceremonies. The centre of his *dhamma* is man, and the relation of man to man in his life on earth. This, he said, was his first postulate.

His second postulate was that men are living in sorrow, in misery and poverty. The world is full of suffering and that [discovering] how to remove this suffering from the world is the only purpose of *dhamma*. Nothing else is *dhamma*. The recognition of the existence of suffering, and to show the way to remove suffering, is the foundation and basis of his Dhamma. This can be the only foundation and justification for *dhamma*. A religion which fails to recognize this is no religion at all.

Verily, Parivrājakas! whatsoever recluses or Brahmins (i.e., preachers of religion) understand not, as it really is, that the misery in the world and the escape therefrom is the main problem of *dhamma*, such [of

them] in my opinion are not to be regarded as recluses and Brahmins; nor have those worthies come to know fully of themselves what, in this very life, is the real meaning of *dhamma*.

The Parivrājakas then asked him, "If the foundation of your *dhamma* is the recognition of the existence of suffering and the removal of suffering, tell us, how does your *dhamma* remove suffering!"

The Buddha then told them that according to his *dhamma* if every person followed (1) the Path of Purity, (2) the Path of Righteousness, and (3) the Path of Virtue, it would bring about the end of all suffering. And he added that he had discovered such a *dhamma*.

The Path of Purity

The Parivrājakas then asked the Buddha to explain to them his *dhamma*. And the Buddha was pleased to do so. He addressed them first on the Path of Purity.

He told the Parivrājakas:

The Path of Purity, teaches that a person who wishes to be good must recognise some principles as principles of life. According to my Path of Purity, the principles of life recognised by it are: Not to injure or kill; Not to steal or appropriate to oneself anything which belongs to another; Not to speak untruth; Not to indulge in lust; Not to indulge in intoxicating drinks.

The recognition of these principles, I say, is most essential for every man. For every man must have a standard by which to judge whatever he does. And these principles, according to my teachings, constitute the standard.

The Buddha's First Sermon

There are everywhere people who are *patit* (fallen). But there are two classes of the *patit*: the *patit* who has a standard, and a *patit* who has no standard. The *patit* who has no standard does not know that he has fallen. Consequently he always remains fallen. On the other hand, a *patit* who has a standard tries to rise from his fallen state. Why? The answer is, because he knows that he has fallen. This is the difference between having a standard, and having no standard, for regulating a man's life. What matters is not so much the fall of the man, but the absence of any standard.

You may ask, ye Parivṛājakas! Why are these principles worthy of recognition as a standard of life? The answer to this question you will find for yourselves, if you ask: "Are these principles good for the individual?" Also if you ask: "Do they promote social good?" If your answers to these questions are in the affirmative, then it follows that the principles of my Path of Purity are worthy of recognition as forming a true standard of life.

Ashtāṅga Mārga or the Path of Righteousness

The Buddha next addressed the Parivṛājakas on the Ashtāṅga Mārga. He said that there are eight constituents in the Ashtāṅga Mārga. He began his discourse with the exposition of *samma ditti* (right views), the first and foremost element in the Ashtāṅga Mārga.

The Buddha said to the Parivṛājakas:

To realise the importance of *samma ditti*,
O ye Parivṛājakas, you must realise that

the world is a dungeon, and man is a prisoner in the dungeon. This dungeon is full of darkness. So dark is it that scarce anything at all can rightly be seen by the prisoner. The prisoner cannot see that he is a prisoner. Indeed, man has not only become blind by living too long in the darkness, but he very much doubts if any such strange thing as light is said to be, can ever exist at all.

Mind is the only instrument through which light can come to man. But the mind of these dungeon-dwellers is by no means a perfect instrument for the purpose. It lets through only a little light, just enough to show to those with sight that there is such a thing as darkness. Thus defective in its nature, such understanding as this is.

But know ye, Parivṛājakas! the case of the prisoner is not as hopeless as it appears. For there is in man a thing called will. When the appropriate motives arise, the will can be awakened and set in motion. With the coming of just enough light to see in what directions to guide the motions of the will, man may so guide them that they shall lead to liberty. Thus though man is bound, yet he may be free; he may at any moment begin to take the first steps that will ultimately bring him to freedom.

This is because it is possible to train the mind in whatever directions one chooses. It is mind that makes us to be prisoners in the house of life, and it is mind that keeps us so. But what mind has done, that mind can undo. If it has brought man to thralldom, it can also, when rightly directed, bring him to liberty. This is what *samma ditti* can do.

The Buddha's First Sermon

“What is the end of *samma ditti*?” asked the Parivṛājakas.

The Buddha replied:

The end of *samma ditti*, is the destruction of *avijja* (nescience). It is opposed to *miccha ditti*. And *avijja* means the failure to understand the noble truths of the existence of suffering and the removal of suffering.

Samma ditti requires [the] giving up of belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies, to have disbelief in the sanctity of the Shāstras.

Samma ditti requires the abandonment of superstition and supernaturalism.

Samma ditti requires the abandonment of all doctrines which are mere speculations without any basis in fact or experience.

Samma ditti requires [a] free mind and free thought.

Every man has aims, aspirations, and ambitions. *Samma sankappo* teaches that such aims, aspirations, and ambitions shall be noble and praiseworthy and not ignoble and unworthy.

Samma vacca (right speech) teaches: (1) that one should speak only that which is true; (2) that one should not speak what is false; (3) that one should not speak evil of others; (4) that one should refrain from slander; (5) that one should not use angry and abusive language towards any fellow man; (6) that one should speak kindly and courteously to all; (7) that one should not indulge in pointless, foolish talk, but let his speech be sensible and to the purpose.

The observance of right speech, as I have explained, is not to be the result of fear

or favour. It is not to have the slightest reference to what any superior being may think of his action, or to any loss which right speech may involve. The norm for right speech is not the order of the superior or the personal benefit to the individual.

Samma kamanto teaches right behaviour. It teaches that every action should be founded on respect for the feelings and rights of others. What is the norm for *samma kamanto*? The norm is that course of conduct which is most in harmony with the fundamental laws of existence. When one's actions are in harmony with these laws, they may be taken to be in accord with *samma kamanto*.

Every individual has to earn his livelihood. But there are ways and ways of earning one's livelihood. Some are bad; some are good. Bad ways are those which cause injury or injustice to others. Good ways are those by which the individual earns his livelihood without causing injury or injustice to others. This is *samma ajivo*.

Samma vyāyāmo (right endeavour) is primary endeavour to remove *avijja*; to reach the door that leads out of this painful prison house, to swing it open. Right endeavour has four purposes.

One is to prevent states of mind which are in conflict with the Ashtānga Mārga. Second is to suppress such states of mind which may already have arisen. Third is to bring into existence states of mind which will help a man to fulfil the requirements of the Ashtānga Mārga. Fourth is to promote the further growth and increase of such states of mind as already may have arisen.

The Buddha's First Sermon

Samma satti calls for mindfulness and thoughtfulness. It means constant wakefulness of the mind. Watch and ward by the mind over the evil passions is another name for *samma satti*.

There are, ye Parivrājakas, five fetters or hindrances which come in the way of a person trying to achieve *samma ditti*, *samma sankappo*, *samma vacca*, *samma kamanto*, *samma ajivo*, *samma vyāyāmo*, and *samma satti*. These five hindrances are covetousness, ill-will, sloth and torpor, doubt, and indecision. It is, therefore, necessary to overcome these hindrances, which are really fetters, and the means to overcome them is through *samādhi*.

But know ye, Parivrājakas, *samma samādhi* is not the same as *samādhi*. It is quite different. *Samādhi* is mere concentration. No doubt it leads to dhyānic states which are self-induced, holding the five hindrances in suspense. But these dhyāna states are temporary. Consequently the suspension of the hindrances is also temporary. What is necessary is a permanent turn to the mind. Such a permanent turn can be achieved only by *samma samādhi*.

Mere *samādhi* is negative, inasmuch as it leads to temporary suspension of the hindrances. In it there is no training to the mind. *Samma samādhi* is positive. It trains the mind to concentrate and to think of some *kusala kamma* (good deeds and thoughts) during concentration, and thereby eliminate the tendency of the mind to be drawn towards *akusala kamma* (bad deeds and thoughts) arising from the hindrances. *Samma samādhi* gives a habit to the mind

to think of good, and always to think of good. *Samma samādhi* gives the mind the necessary motive power to do good.

The Path of Virtue

The Buddha then explained to the Parivrājakas the Path of Virtue. He told them that the path of virtue meant the observance of the virtues called: (1) *sila*; (2) *dāna*; (3) *upekkhā*; (4) *nekkhamma*; (5) *vīrya*; (6) *khanti*; (7) *sacca*; (8) *adhitthāna*; (9) *karuna*; and (10) *maitri*.

The Parivrājakas asked the Buddha to tell them what these virtues meant. The Buddha then proceeded to satisfy their desire.

Sila is moral temperament, the disposition not to do evil and the disposition to do good; to be ashamed of doing wrong. To avoid doing evil for fear of punishment is *sila*. *Sila* means fear of doing wrong.

Nekkhamma is renunciation of the pleasures of the world.

Dāna means the giving of one's possessions, blood and limbs, and even one's life, for the good of others, without expecting anything in return.

Vīrya is right endeavour. It is doing with all your might whatever you have undertaken to do, with never a thought of turning back, whatever you have undertaken to do.

Khanti is forbearance. Not to meet hatred by hatred is the essence of it. For hatred is not appeased by hatred. It is appeased only by forbearance.

Sacca is truth. A person must never tell a lie. His speech must be truth and nothing but truth.

The Buddha's First Sermon

Adhitthāna is resolute determination to reach the goal.

Karuna is loving kindness to human beings.

Maitri is extending fellow feeling to all beings, not only to one who is a friend, but also to one who is a foe; not only to man, but to all living beings.

Upekkhā is detachment as distinguished from indifference. It is a state of mind where there is neither like nor dislike. Remaining unmoved by the result, and yet engaged in the pursuit of it.

These virtues one must practice to his utmost capacity. That is why they are called *pāramitās* (states of perfection).

Conclusion

Having explained his *dhamma* and what it involved, the Buddha then asked the Parivṛājakas:

“Is not personal purity the foundation of good in the world?” And they answered, “It is as thou sayest.”

And he continued:

Is not personal purity undermined by covetousness, passion, ignorance, the destruction of life, theft, adultery, and lying? Is it not necessary for personal purity to build up sufficient strength of character so that these evils should be kept under control? How can a man be the instrument of good if he has no personal purity in him?

And they replied, “It is as thou sayest.”

Again, why do men not mind enslaving or dominating others? Why do men not

mind making the lives of others unhappy? Is it not because men are not righteous in their conduct towards one another?

And they answered in the affirmative.

Will not the practice of the Ashtānga Marga, the path of right views, right aims, right speech, right livelihood, right means, right mindfulness, right perseverance, and right contemplation, in short, the Path of Righteousness, if followed by every one, remove all injustice and inhumanity that man does to man?

And they said, “Yes.”

Turning to the path of virtue, he asked:

Is not *dāna* necessary to remove the suffering of the needy and the poor, and to promote general good? Is not *karuna* necessary, to be drawn to the relief of poverty and suffering wherever it exists? Is not *nekkhamma* necessary to selfless work? Is not *upekkha* necessary, for sustained endeavour even though there is no personal gain? Is not love for man necessary?

And they said “Yes.”

I go further and say, “Love is not enough; what is required is *maitri*. It is wider than love. It means fellowship not merely with human beings but with all living beings. It is not confined to human beings. Is not such *maitri* necessary? What else can give to all living beings the same happiness which one seeks for one's own self, to keep the mind impartial, open to all, with affection for every one and hatred for none?

They all said “Yes.”

“The practice of these virtues must,

The Buddha's First Sermon

however, be accompanied by *prajñā*, that is, intelligence. Is not *prajñā* necessary?" The Parivrājakas gave no answer.

To force them to answer his question, the Buddha went on to say that the qualities of a good man are: "do no evil, think nothing that is evil, get his livelihood in no evil way, and say nothing that is evil or is likely to hurt anyone." And they said, "Yes, so it is."

The Buddha asked:

But is doing good deeds blindly to be welcomed? I say, "no". This is not enough. If it was enough, . . . then a tiny babe could be proclaimed to be always doing good. For as yet the babe does not know what a body means, much less will it do evil with its body beyond kicking about; it does not know what speech is, much less will it say anything evil beyond crying; it does not know what thought is, beyond crying with delight; it does not know what livelihood is, much less will it get its living in an evil way, beyond sucking its mother.

The Path of Virtue must, therefore, be subject to [the] test of *prajñā*, which is another name for understanding and intelligence.

There is also another reason why *prajñā-pāramitā* is so important and so necessary. There must be *dāna*. But without *prajñā*, *dāna* may have a demoralizing effect. There must be *karuna*. But without *prajñā*, *karuna*

may end in supporting evil. Every act of *pāramitā* must be tested by *prajñā pāramitā*, which is another name for wisdom.

I premise that there must be knowledge and consciousness of what wrong conduct is, how it arises; similarly, there must also be knowledge and consciousness of what is right conduct and wrong conduct. Without such knowledge there cannot be real goodness, though the act may be good. That is why I say *prajñā* is a necessary virtue.

The Buddha then concluded his sermon by addressing the following admonition to the Parivrājakas.

You are likely to call my *dhamma* pessimistic, because it calls the attention of mankind to the existence of suffering. I tell you such a view of my *dhamma* would be wrong.

No doubt my *dhamma* recognises the existence of suffering, but forget not that it also lays equal stress on the removal of suffering. My *dhamma* has in it both hope and purpose. Its purpose is to remove *avijja*, by which I mean ignorance of the existence of suffering.

There is hope in it because it shows the way to put an end to human suffering. Do you agree with this or not?

And the Parivrājakas said, "Yes, we do."

Reference

1. <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/ambekar_buddha/02_2.html>

Mystic Musings with I. K. Taimni

RAMKUMAR SINGH

WE all have had a few moments in our life that are truly cherished. These can be counted on the fingers of one hand and will never be repeated in our lifetime. They become memorable particularly if they are in the nature of a mystic's musings. I have had such an experience in my life, which was with Dr Iqbal Kishen Taimni. Though it was of a personal nature, I feel the urge to share with you in the hope that it may help you too. Sometimes I wonder if it was even real or only my fantasy, because it was so powerful and amazingly rich in content. Since I have preserved it as short notes in my scrapbook, prepared soon after the events, I have to trust that it was real.

Forty-three years ago I was blessed with the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to figuratively sit at the feet of this mystic yogi, and have one-on-one dialogues (though I should in fact say monologue), which became a beacon for my life's direction from then on, as I was only 35. There were four meetings, each lasting about an hour and a half, taking place during January 1975 to April 1976 at Lucknow, India, where he lived after retire-

ment with his daughter and son-in-law.

I knew Dr Taimni's son-in-law ever since we worked together in the Railways at Varanasi in 1963, where I was living at the Indian Section headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS). In 1975, I met him again when he was posted at Lucknow, and asked permission through him to meet Dr Taimni. This was granted over the phone immediately. I was living in Kanpur, 50 kilometres away.

As I walked to meet him, nearly 30 minutes away, during my first visit, I prepared myself by becoming as tranquil as I could. I knocked at his door, which was opened by Dr Taimni himself. I bowed to touch his feet, but he stopped me half way and hugged me instead. We sat on a sofa such that he was on my left and I was on his right on a separate couch, the correct way of sitting for receiving light, as per spiritual tradition.

The younger members of the TS now may not know him, so let me give a brief introduction about him. Dr Taimni was born in Lucknow on 16 July 1898 in a Kashmiri Brahmin family, and became a FTS (Fellow of the TS) at the age of 21,

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Mystic Musings with I. K. Taimni

on 12 June 1919. He did his PhD in Inorganic Chemistry in 1928 from London University, and served as Professor at Allahabad University during his whole career. I met quite a few of his students who became Fellows of the TS in later life, our past International Vice-President, Mahendra P. Singhal, being one of them. Dr Taimni authored eleven books; each one is outstanding and written in a most scholarly manner. All of them have been published by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, and are in print.

He was head of the Esoteric School from 1973 until his demise on 7 May 1978, at the age of eighty. Please remember, Allahabad is the city where A. P. Sinnett lived and where his correspondence with the Mahatmas began in 1880. The Anand Lodge's present building is Dr Taimni's legacy, along with its magnificent library, which I visited in 1972. He was short, slim, could not have been more than 50 kg, clean-shaven, always jolly and smiling, deep-set eyes, looking barely open when laughing, almost like Dora Kunz (tenth President of the American Section of the TS, for twelve years) if you have seen her. There was a special aroma of sanctity in his presence; no one could fail to notice that. He had two daughters: Padma, who took care of him after retirement, and Ranjana who lives in USA. Theosophy was his life-long passion after his job of professor.

The quoted sentences below contain the words of Dr Taimni as they were shared with me. Let me begin sharing remembrances of my first two meetings.

He began with praise for the two founders: Col. H. S. Olcott (HSO) and Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB):

They remain the yardstick to measure anything in the TS, setting a sort of benchmark for future generations to follow. In 1888, when *The Secret Doctrine* (SD) was written, three quarters of HPB's efforts were directed towards diverting the tide of materialism towards spiritualism; only one quarter was the teaching part which we call Theosophy now. A lot more remains undone to fill the gap even now.

There is need of effective, practical, uniform, non-sectarian, acceptable practices for which the TS exists primarily. Whatever is available is not working now. Mrs Annie Besant was a good blend of the two founders, the wisdom of HPB and the administrative capacity of HSO. She used to establish Lodges in sweeping tours. That dynamism of the TS could not be maintained in later years. That is resulting in a situation where people are forgetting even our existence.

There are hundreds of international organizations labeling themselves as standing for world peace and brotherhood. Some are really doing a great job, but may have some hidden agenda. None stands out like the TS. We cannot maybe emulate Mrs Annie Besant these days, but perhaps a dozen persons working together, going all out, not limiting their meetings to FTS alone but much larger segments of people, could change the equation positively.

The world has grown in population greatly, but places have become closer in "time to

Mystic Musings with I. K. Taimni

reach” due to faster means of travel. What Marco Polo travelled in a lifetime, one can visit in days now.

Unless radical thinking is done in view of the need of the present-day man, how can we provide a viable alternative? It will be very hard to service even those who know us. We need to be careful not just to take away from a person what he has, but also to tell him with what to replace it. We should not throw the baby away with the bathwater. TS books need more visibility, to be seen by the educated masses — for example, the presence of TS books at fifty major Indian railway-station bookshops, at A. H. Wheeler-type bookshops, and at fifty top international airports’ book-and-newspaper shops to begin with; then plot the results on an experimental basis for a two-year period, and take further course of action accordingly. We can try with a dozen TPH [Theosophical Publishing House] books first, not fifty, and may enclose a brief list of further, selected books along with each book. It may work, but will need investments. Do we know that only eight books existed until the end of HPB’s lifetime? All are currently in print:

1. 1875, *People From the Other World*, HSO
2. 1877, *Isis Unveiled*, HPB (2 vols)
3. 1881, *Occult World*, A. P. Sinnett
4. 1883, *Esoteric Buddhism*, A. P. Sinnett
5. 1885, *Light on the Path*, Mabel Collins
6. 1888, *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB (2 vols)
7. 1889, *The Key to Theosophy*, HPB

8. 1889, *The Voice of the Silence*, HPB

A ninth one in 1892, *The Theosophical Glossary*, by HPB, was published after her demise by G. R. S. Mead. Their influence was enormous and they used to be sold and resold at used-book stores. CWL [C. W. Leadbeater] bought one of those for a few shillings and it changed his life’s direction. Now we have TS books by the truckload.

“Theosophy is not for everybody.” This approach is not working now. It is for everybody for sure; otherwise HSO would not have reached remote places by horse or bullock carts more than a century ago. We have forgotten branching out to the grassroots. We need to enlarge our wings. Who can decide who is ready for it and who is not?

Have you noticed our Lodge libraries, particularly in India? They are mould-infested, new books are not added, and the lending rate is non-existent. Members do not spend time together before or after meetings, most of us have no idea even of the size of the family of our fellow members, and we forget their names. This neglect results in the membership-dropout rate going up.

In earlier days, Mrs Besant and Mahatma Gandhi used to stay with members mostly during travels and used to note the names of the family members in their diaries, and would call them by name on their next trip. That used to help forge a bond with them.

This one surprised me:

Members go to Adyar annual conventions

year after year. Now just watch if it has manifested any noticeable change in one's lifestyle. We listen, talk, and incorporate little inside us. So it becomes like visiting a town *mela* or a fest. We need to consider whether we have really imbibed any call of wisdom and enriched our life in any manner or not.

He was finishing his eleventh and last book, *The Ultimate Reality and Realization — Shiva Sutra*, in those days, and mentioned that his books are in a certain scheme if read in the order of their publishing. He was grateful to Jaideva Singh for having introduced him to later Sanskrit gems on self-realization. His *Science of Yoga* was like delicious food served on expensive china, and without doubt the most popular of his works:

We need to be cautious, falling into the trap of "authority role" by the author. One could be a famous author who is knowledgeable on a subject, but need not be an authority per se. Future generations will produce better authorities than us. Many early TS books either need to be revised extensively or discontinued. Even HPB in the *SD* kept up with the science up to that time. Many things have advanced further by now and future editions will need to catch up with those.

I had no idea what he had in mind when he said that, as my own knowledge of Theosophy was very basic, but probably the TPH or the present President may have some idea about this matter. Looking back today, my notes from decades ago make a lot more sense as

none of the larger telescopes existed during HPB's days. The issue of the nature of light travel has been resolved — wave-particle — and ether matter, dark energy, dark matter, god-particle (Higgs boson) and CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) have made her work more palatable for twenty-first century readers. I agree there is room for revision.

He gave me a typed copy of an article that appeared in *The Sunday Standard* of 24 August 1975 by Bhikshu Chamanlal, "Merchants of Yoga Abroad". I still have it with me. It was about how a little knowledge of yoga is being exploited and encashed abroad. He was sad over that, and said that one needs to be cautious of fake gurus, particularly those who sell yoga for money; hold back the desire for psychic powers until one is ready to cope with them; and have a sound character:

Every TS member must practice *yama-s* and *niyama-s* in daily life. There are no shortcuts for long journeys. When one's character becomes spotless like those of Mrs Annie Besant and Mahatma Gandhi, the world will look up to him and the masses will be moved by a slight hint.

On meditation, he said:

It is not just piety, nor even observing ceremonial practices of some kind. It should also not be compared with sitting 20-30 minutes in the morning and muttering a few selected mantras, *śloka-s*, or affirmations from a sacred book. It is by silencing the chatter of the mind for an

Mystic Musings with I. K. Taimni

extended period with controlled food and activity in a solitary setting that can give some glimpse of it.

I finally understood what he meant when I attended a Vipassana retreat in India for ten days in total silence and got a taste of it. He further said:

Yoga is not like a four or five-year medical doctor's degree course which makes one a doctor. There is no course to make one a yogi in a fixed number of years of training. It is a very individual thing. Imagine a 1,000-watt light bulb covered by ten thick blankets, totally dark, but begin removing one blanket after the other; a dim light will start to appear which becomes stronger each time, and, when finally the tenth blanket is removed, it will be a blinding light. Can one say how much time will be taken to lift those coverings, layer after layer? It will differ in each person depending on the intensity of effort and control of the procrastination habit.

Life is not smooth sailing for anyone. It depends on how good the sailor is. Prof. S. Radhakrishnan gave in his *Indian Philosophy* a small example that goes like this: Neither have we invented the cards nor made the rules of the game. They are just as they are. Fifty-two cards are dealt to four players blindly, which cannot be changed later. Players have no choice of cards; the game begins; a bad player may lose a game with good cards and an extremely good player can win with bad cards. So, it is the player that matters, not the cards. Therefore, we need to do away

with the blame game: if I had more money, if I had more degrees, if I had better parents or children or circumstances, I could have done "that".

In my third meeting with Dr Taimni, we did not spend enough time together but it is still memorable enough to be shared. John Coats, then the international President, visited Kanpur, where he was gracious enough to have dinner at my home, and then had to go to Lucknow on his next leg of the tour, so a few of us, TS members, escorted him in a taxi. He also had planned to meet Dr Taimni en route. We arrived at his home around noon. He came out and it was a great moment to see both of them hugging and laughing loudly in joy. John Coats was 6'4" tall and had a large body, and Dr Taimni was 5'4" and very slim. Those of us present were overwhelmed with the aura of love that surrounded that space. No one could utter a word until Dr Taimni obliged us all with a hug, one by one.

I have in my notes that, when I was informing Dr Taimni that the local Lodge president will be arriving to escort Mr Coats further, he said boldly — which made us all laugh — "Do not worry. Your President is in good hands and will be provided with the best care and comfort possible." And we parted.

Many tips he would slip in, in the middle: "Take life as it unfolds. No one is perfect; we are all climbing a long ladder and are at different rungs. Some are a few rungs ahead and some a few behind. Take nothing as very bad or very

good; all is relative. There may be still better or worse situations in waiting, so take one step at a time, doing your part in the best possible manner.

It will not be out of place here to share a true story that happened a century ago: A Scottish couple with five children had gotten tired of their low carpenter's income, and decided to migrate to America. In the course of saving money to buy ship tickets, another son got added to the family. This pushed back the expected departure, and the excited kids blamed the new brother as unlucky. After a while, the father bought eight tickets and the family was all set to sail. Just before departure, the same child got smallpox and they missed the ship, as they were not allowed to travel. Imagine now the other kids calling the sick brother so unlucky that he blocked the future of the whole family in a new land of opportunities! That ship was the RMS *Titanic*, which sank en route during its maiden voyage, killing two-thirds of the passengers on board on 15 April 1912. Hearing this news, the whole family now praised the newly arrived brother as an angel who saved their lives. What to say, was he lucky or unlucky?

I sum up our fourth meeting below, which actually became the last, as soon after the meeting I left India for a job abroad, and he passed away; so we never met again. But by then, a link was established with him. I would frequently imagine putting questions to him as if I was sitting with him, and would get proper answers. Early morning on the

day of our last meeting, at my home in Kanpur, I suddenly saw his smiling face signaling as if asking me to go to meet him. I felt nice about it and mentioned it to my wife, who gladly consented to accompany me. When we arrived there, he opened the door and laughed with the words: "So you are here." I knew clearly that he had sent out the thought for me to come to meet him. I informed him about my going abroad — in those days I was in a bad shape financially — and he was happy and started giving instructions, one by one, on the personal, professional, and theosophical fronts. Some are of a very personal nature, so I would not like to share them. Some, however, relate to him, and I will share them as he has gone to the other side now.

He began by saying that his body was getting weaker and could not keep up with what he wants it to do. It was becoming more like a prison house from where one would want to run away. Sitting for extended periods was becoming harder with the joints becoming stiff. He said he could no longer travel alone for conducting retreats, for which he was getting regular invitations. He was having to confine himself to teaching others via letters, articles, and books. He said:

Always keep in mind, ways and means of spreading the TS teachings wherever you go. Develop the habit of reading new books to keep yourself up to date and to share with others.

I replied saying that to spread teachings, first I need to acquire a good base of

Mystic Musings with I. K. Taimni

knowledge myself. He cut me off right there and said:

If you have to wait to share your knowledge with others until you are perfect, then you will have to wait many more lifetimes, because only an Adept is perfect, so none below an Adept can spread teachings.

I was taken aback by his analogy and agreed that no one needed to wait until he had total knowledge, but had to begin with whatever he had. He continued: “More will follow, and filling the vacuum is Nature’s job.”

About the concept of God, he explained various views: his own view, the Hindu view, HPB’s view, and also the view of Albert Einstein, which he liked the best:

My religiosity consists of a humble admiration of the infinitely superior spirit that reveals itself in the little that we can comprehend about the knowable world. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incom-

prehensible universe, forms my idea of God.

He summed up the study of Theosophy in this manner:

One needs to learn to go behind the words, catch the thought of the author, read between the lines, pause between the paragraphs. Look outside the window every few pages, allowing time for reflection by the mind.

The initial TS terminology was coined mainly by Mr A. P. Sinnett in 1881–83 in his two books based on his understanding of the teachings of the Mahatma letters. It was too late to correct it afterwards even in *The Secret Doctrine*. Hence, proper care is needed to use a term in the first place.

He served a tray full of snacks, sweets, and tea, and that was the end of our brief interaction, with the hope of meeting again for sure in the future some time. He blessed us both and said: “Live a righteous life, serve the Masters, and be sure help will always be available a call away. Trust the laws of karma.” ✧

The great Teachers of the Eternal Wisdom and the books dealing with the problem of Self-Realization have pointed out again and again that the Light which can guide the seeker in his search for Truth can come only from within himself.

I. K. Taimni

Self-Culture — In the Light of the Ancient Wisdom

First Step on the Path

K. DINAKARAN

J. Krishnamurti said: “The first step is the last step.” Giordano Bruno stated: “If the first button of one’s coat is wrongly buttoned, all the rest will be crooked.” In every journey, it is the first step that really matters. It is true that long journeys commence with the first small step that we take from *where we stand*. In *At the Feet of the Master*, while describing the qualifications of a disciple, it is warned that these qualifications are to be practised not only at the beginning of the Path, but every day at every step until the end. Therefore those treading the path shall take note that, the qualifications we learn by our intellectual study should be put into practice. The Path is not divorced from our daily life; the challenges we have to face in daily life are the real test. It is easy to state that we have acquired qualifications like discrimination, desirelessness, and so on, but we need to know that every day they are tested in our life. In *The Voice of the Silence* it is stated: “Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself.” When Krishnaji made his historic statement, “Truth is a pathless land”, he may have

meant that one becomes the Path itself.

All great religions proclaim the existence of a Path — the Way of the Cross, *ashtānga-yoga*, the Eightfold Path, and so forth, which should be trodden with great care, because there are chances of distractions in various ways. In short it is razor-edge walking. In *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) mentions: “between the Alpha and the Omega there is the weary ‘Road’ . . .”, and she quotes the poem “Uphill” by Christina Rossetti: “. . . winds uphill all the way? Yes, to the very end.” Pilgrimage to the top of shrines is one way of dramatizing this journey of oneself to Oneself. Instead of going round and round the mountain by an ever-climbing spiral, one can climb straight up the mountainside regardless of cliff and precipice and chasm, put in another poetic way. In the *Bhagavadgītā* IV.11 Krishna says: “Howsoever men approach me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is mine, O Pārtha.”

We have theoretical knowledge of these facts, and we should also have a clear sense of direction in this matter, a

Mr K. Dinakaran is the Secretary of the Kerala Federation of the Theosophical Society. Talk given during South Indian Conference at Adyar on 31 March 2018.

First Step on the Path

dauntless courage to face these challenges at every step. Mere theoretical study of the scriptures or any other so-called spiritual texts will lead us to the dark jungle of ignorance as pointed out by Śrī Śankara in *Vivekachudāmani*.

Does everyone tread the Path? Of course, knowingly or unknowingly everyone is moving ahead. Everyone is evolving. But the individuals who tread the Path with a determined will are very few. Those who strive to hasten their journey are still fewer. Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavadgītā* said: “Among thousands of men scarce one striveth for perfection; of the successful strivers scarce one knoweth me in essence.” (VII.3) This striving for “perfection” is the ultimate goal on this journey. Christ proclaimed: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Mathew 5:48)

Dr Annie Besant declared: “The first step of all, absolutely necessary, without which no approach is possible, by which achievement ever comes within reach of realization, may be summed up in four brief words: the Service of Man.” HPB said: “To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practise the six glorious virtues is the second.” No doubt the six glorious virtues which can be summed up as perfect charity, morality, truth, energy, kindness, and wisdom, are very important to every one of us. But HPB, who was a great lover of humanity, considered that the most important in human life was to have compassion for our fellow beings without any reservation.

In her historical speech at the World

Religions Conference at Chicago on 17 September 1893 Dr Besant’s subject was “The Supreme Duty”. Each one of us can serve in many ways. Right livelihood, thought, and action will produce positive results. Service really means service in the physical and mental planes, which will lift the degrading humanity rushing towards the pleasures of the senses, material possessions, and positions. The last part of her speech is specially addressed to Americans. She said: “You men and women of America, creators of the future, will you not rise to the divine possibilities which every one of you has hidden in your own heart? Why go only to the lower when the stars are above you? . . . Yours is the future, for you are making it today.” How prophetic her words!

Every unselfish and altruistic action is a step towards the Path. Rulers, teachers, merchants, doctors, and servants are equally important — every brick is equally important in building the castle of humanity.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, while referring to the Buddha and Jesus Christ, HPB remarked that they were preaching the highest type of self-sacrifice to the bitter end. Buddha said: “I would not let one cry whom I could save!” Christ said: “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Still, the world considered them as irreligious and revolutionaries. Buddha, who addressed the fundamental problems of humanity like sorrow and death, was considered an infidel and atheist dur-

First Step on the Path

ing his lifetime by the religious fundamentalists. It was not different with Krishna-murti too who, like the Buddha, said that sorrow can be ended. In *The Voice of the Silence* it is said: “Know, O Naljor, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the ocean’s bitter waves — that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.” (III.290)

The word “service” has different meanings for each individual. From the spiritual point of view it is nothing but *nishkāma-karma*, action without any desire for the fruit. Those in the world who desire for the results of their work are disappointed, however noble their work may be. This is because the desire for results is binding. The desire for liberation, salvation, attainment of heaven, and so forth is nothing but glorified selfishness. Fundamental religions offer their followers a permanent abode in heaven. Teachers like Śrī Śankara and the Buddha shattered these kinds of ideas. And it is said that the Sufi Saint Rabia was once walking on the street with a burning torch in one hand and a jar of water in the other. When questioned she said: “I am going to set Heaven on fire and pour water on hellfire.” In our own days, the very idea of heaven and hell is the driving force of terrorists all over the world. Men are ready to commit any crime in the name of god, religion and the rewards of such beliefs. Real service is not the result of any expectation here or hereafter.

Dr Besant in one of her lectures mentions that an atheist who works for the welfare of society without any selfish

motive is also treading the Path unknowingly. The example she quotes is Mr Charles Bradlaugh who was an atheist and founder of the National Secular Society in England with whom she worked before joining the Theosophical Society (TS).

One of the profoundest facts stated by the TS since its inception is the existence of great initiates who have gone beyond normal human existence. They appeal to our heart, to the spiritual principle within us. They have overcome life and death and are the Masters of the Wisdom, *jeevanmuktas*, as described in great religious texts like the *Vivekachudāmani*.

What are the qualifications we should have before standing in the presence of the Great Ones? *Light on the Path* says: “Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters it must have lost the power to wound. Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.” It demands an unconditional love towards every living being.

In “The Golden Stairs” dictated by H. P. Blavatsky’s Master, the first step is described as “a clean life”, the cleanliness of our physical, mental and emotional bodies. All of us have a sense of cleanliness with respect to our physical body. But on this path something more is expected. A triple purity — of mind, word and deed.

In the *Yoga-Sutras* of Patanjali, the first two lines of *ashtanga-yoga* are *yama* and *niyama*, and *ahimsa* is the first step. It is the avoidance of injury to any living being with our mind, word, or deed.

First Step on the Path

Jesus Christ proclaims in his Beatitudes, during the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see the Lord.” Here the condition is to be pure in heart, free from selfishness and egotism.

In the *Bhagavadgītā* (XVI.1), Lord Krishna mentions the divine qualities, “fearlessness, cleanness of life, steadfastness in the yoga of wisdom”, and so on. The first quality mentioned here is fearlessness. What is the cause of fear? The root cause of fear is nothing but separateness — “the great heresy”. As long as there is division there is conflict and fear.

There are four facts which exist in this

Universe whether we are aware or not — reincarnation, karma, the path, and the Masters of the Wisdom. Theosophy proclaims that the Masters of the Wisdom take deserving people as disciples. They exist only to guide humanity at an infant stage without expecting praise or reward just like the spring season which nourishes every one of us. The only condition is to work unselfishly for the weal and welfare of the world.

The “Path” of the “pathless land” of Truth needs to be trodden with great care and discretion, remembering the words of Krishna in the *Bhagavadgītā* (XVIII. 63): “. . . having reflected on it fully, then act thou as thou listest”. ✧

There are guidelines in Theosophy. One such guideline is that we should not become dependent, acquire crutches. Is that not clear? Do not cling to a teacher and hope that he will regenerate you. Do not depend on some scripture. If we cast the responsibility outside, there will be no regeneration. The test of a true teacher is that he will not make people dependent. The Buddha said: “Do not believe anything because I say it; find out for yourself. “Be a lamp unto yourself.” Is that not a clear guideline?

Radha Burnier
Human Regeneration

How to Live Theosophy

MARCOS RESENDE

THE word Theosophy has its etymological origin in the Greek words *theos* and *sophia*. *Sophia* literally means “wisdom”. The word *theos* can be best translated as “divine”.

We need to be clear that the word is never the thing described. It is a symbol, composed of letters, which tries to point to something. The word is the means, never the end. However, many times we get entangled in words and we lose the sense of the end which is sought through them. The word “god” is not actually God, but a set of three letters that tries to point to something. However, as almost everybody has some idea or concept of God, in using this word, one evokes the content of one’s own personal understanding and often becomes entangled in it. In the same way, the word “love” does not always indicate the meaning that was intended to be conveyed. In an extreme sense it is even used to justify jealousy and passion that makes it impossible for actual love. It is even used for commercial purposes, which have nothing to do with its intrinsic meaning — it is an easily distorted expression.

We must also consider that humanity and civilizations create rigid mental patterns around words and ideas, which in turn become dogmas, which take a long time to dissolve. Until five centuries ago it was thought that the earth was flat and that the sun revolved around it. It was necessary for scholars to challenge the ingrained concept by stating that the earth is round and revolves around the sun. At that time many were persecuted, forced to deny their discoveries, and some even burned alive.

The word “theosophy” was first used in the third century CE in the city of Alexandria in Egypt. A group of scholars entitled Neoplatonists founded the Theosophical Eclectic School, stating that the leaders of different religions should not fight since, in essence, the teachings are the same, which they called wisdom-religion or Theosophy. In 1875, at New York City a group of seventeen people founded the modern Theosophical Society (TS).

Helena P. Blavatsky, one of the founders of the TS, in defining the word “theosophy”, calls it the “wisdom of the

Mr Marcos L. B. de Resende is a member of the General Council of the Theosophical Society and the previous General Secretary of the Brazilian Section.

How to Live Theosophy

gods” in her book *The Key to Theosophy*, stating that the universe is permeated by consciousnesses that act according to universal laws, and not by a god, as believed in the nineteenth century.

Wisdom has to be experiential and not merely a theoretical or intellectual concept. N. Sri Ram, the fifth international president of the TS, says that wisdom without action is pseudo-wisdom. Therefore, wisdom, must be a growing presence in a person’s daily life; otherwise it is mere intellectual exercise without value.

Wisdom is not synonymous with knowledge. A person may be illiterate and yet in every situation in life, he knows what is fair, balanced, harmonious, unifying and beneficial, and therefore acts wisely. Another can be highly intellectually educated, but being unruly and unhappy, creates conflicts and disharmony wherever he/she goes. Wisdom must be experiential, otherwise it is pseudo-wisdom.

I consider Theosophy to be an ocean of universal consciousness, which is profoundly wise. It is not too difficult to consider that there is consciousness permeating all things, both in the objective and in the subjective world. We have difficulties in perceiving consciousness in the mineral kingdom. However, after careful examination, we perceive the existence of transformation and evolution in this kingdom, realizing that precious stones and metals, in general, have typical characteristics, more evolved than other minerals. In the vegetable kingdom, consciousness becomes a little more noticeable. The book, *The Secret Life of Plants*,

shows the existence of consciousness in plants. In the animal kingdom, we can perceive that consciousness is more developed, with clear demonstrations of affection, fear, aggressiveness, and so on.

Quantum physics has proved that the observer interferes with the behavior of subatomic particles. Thus, we can see that consciousness is present in everything from atoms and molecules to their infinite combinations and properties of chemical elements, in the cells that make up the beings that have organic life, and in diversified functions performed by each organ of these beings. It is not difficult to observe that there is consciousness permeating everything from the movement of stars, planets, galaxies and constellations up to the subatomic level.

Many people identify the word Theosophy with the vast literature produced by the modern TS, as well as with some teachings of great religions and scientific discoveries. However, this idea reduces wisdom — which belongs to the Universe and Nature — to a library, as if wisdom were in books; this would restrict and limit something that is as per definition infinite. Wisdom is not in books, with or without the help of books one can discover for oneself the truths that books point to or the mistakes made by authors. Truth or wisdom is to be found in the capacity for discernment.

The vast literature available in the TS is invaluable. It can help to open up vast horizons of understanding. However, if we become attached to it, we may build another mental pattern based on concepts

How to Live Theosophy

like reincarnation, evolution, karma, seven rays, Masters of the Wisdom, and so forth. We may be repeating things that we do not know, or which we know very superficially, acting mechanically, without the vitality that only the living truth, coming from our own discovery, can provide. As we create a new mental pattern, we are shaping a prison for ourselves. Life in all its dimensions, objective and subjective, goes far beyond any mental pattern in which we can accommodate ourselves.

Now, we return to the original question that we are investigating. How to live Theosophy? As we said, a theosophist is a seeker, a pathfinder in the territories of Truth. The first thing we should know is that we do not know, and when we think we know, we are already limited, losing humility and the investigative capacity.

We must be clear that Truth cannot be possessed. It can be discovered at any moment, but it can never be a mental pattern. It is the fusion of consciousness with the vision and understanding of things as they are, with their intrinsic meanings. The very nature of Truth makes it impossible for dogmatism, it cannot be degraded or be imposed. By nature it should always be questioned, so that it resurfaces clearly. When one is very close to Truth, the most important thing to realize is that one may be wrong. Thus with care, freedom and determination, the territory of Truth — which is infinite — can be opened and consciousness can awaken in infinite progression as well. Incredible as it may seem, the more one

discovers, the more one perceives with humility and self-forgetfulness the greatness of all that exists.

Blavatsky says that ethics are the soul of Theosophy, therefore, there is no way of conceiving wisdom as something that is not experiential, which is dissociated from our daily relationships. Ethics become a way of living, with respect and consideration for one's neighbor and actions directed towards the common good, where one does not do to others what one does not want for oneself.

From my readings, I have come to understand that altruism is the essence of Theosophy. However, the natural condition of the human being in the present evolutionary stage of humanity is selfishness. We are living almost all the time for our own interests, or our families, groups of friends, and so on. Seldom do we spend time on anything other than for some kind of self-interest, whether financial, personal promotion, seeking prestige or physical satisfaction. If we are truly interested in Truth, we cannot deceive ourselves. We need to see our selfishness as it is, without creating conflict or some kind of idealized image that keeps itself from what it really is. If we pretend to perform altruistic actions without realizing our own selfishness and the subtle and dissimulated forms of the ego, we may, without knowing it, be generating more confusion in the world.

Therefore, the path to transformation, from centres of selfishness into centres of love, kindness and selfless service, is infinite. There is no arriving point. Every

How to Live Theosophy

step must be taken from where we stand, being truthful to ourselves and to others. At any moment we can give up egoistic tendencies, in small things of everyday life, always perceiving our egocentric habits, so that they can gradually be dissolved. Renunciation must be spontaneous, always coming from within, and if it is artificially produced by an astute mind that deceives itself by denying what it actually is, it will create more confusion in personal life and in the world at large.

The spiritual path for us, selfish human beings, is to turn inside out, transforming the energies that are self-centered into poles radiating love, wisdom and harmony. This opening and transformation comes with self-knowledge, which is self-perception of life and relationships as they are, without the distortions caused by our self-image, ideas, prejudices, or interests.

To transform the world we need to transform ourselves, by learning and also teaching. The day when a small group of people transform themselves from centers of selfishness to poles radiating love, a great transformation will take place in the world, and life on Earth may be more like it is in the higher planes of Nature.

Living Theosophy means an ever-increasing awakening of consciousness to

broader dimensions. This is not an easy task; it requires daily work of observation of ourselves and of life as a whole, so that dense energies of selfishness rooted in our character are gradually transformed into subtle and more harmonic energies. This transformation will certainly lead to many existences, but this does not diminish the importance of the work we must do now, within ourselves.

Living Theosophy is the discovering of the sacred in all things and all beings. For this to happen, there must be renunciation of the self with all its infinite demands, so that spontaneous flowering of love and compassion can occur.

The panorama provided by the so-called theosophical literature can magnify our horizons of understanding in an extraordinary way, but it may become a hindrance if we stick to details concerning descriptions of things far removed from our daily living, forgetting the essential transformation that must permanently occur in the way we live.

Theosophy in the twenty-first century must be much more than literature. It has to be a force in the lives of all who aspire to be transformed to serve, who want to learn and understand the teachings, who long to awaken, which naturally brings the light that liberates the conscience and heals the pain of humanity. ✧

Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences. Look not behind or thou art lost.

H. P. Blavatsky
The Voice of the Silence

Theosophical Work around the World

International President's Caribbean Basin Tour

The three-week Caribbean Basin lecture tour of international President Tim Boyd, accompanied by his wife Lily, was held from 18 May to 7 June 2018, including Miami, Puerto Rico, Cuba, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. (Although Nicaragua had been included in the schedule, the visit to that country had to be suspended due to current socio-political reasons.)

The trip started with the Convention of the Florida Federation of the TS in America (TSA) in **Miami**, in conjunction with the Inter-American Theosophical Federation (IATF). The latter was instrumental in coordinating the entire tour. The Florida Federation Convention (from 18 to 21 May) was a bilingual event, attended by TS members and friends from different US regions and overseas. The weekend, which was spent on a cruise ship from Miami to the Bahamas, was a very active one, with continuous presentations not only by the keynote speakers — Mr Boyd, TSA National Secretary David Bruce, and international speaker Pablo Sender — but also had the participation of several guest speakers through panels and open forums representing the IATF: its President, Isis Resende, Uma Pandey, and others. The Florida Federation was represented by its President, Mrs Nori Rao, Aryel Sanat, Scott Olsen, and more.

The Convention theme, “Theosophy

in the 21st Century”, was developed from different points of view by all the speakers, focusing on the inner work as individuals interconnected with life as a whole, and the external work of spreading Theosophy for the betterment of humankind.

The tour of the President continued to **Puerto Rico**, where he visited the Gabriela Mistral School in the capital, San Juan. There he spoke with teenagers at the secondary level, and then with their teachers. It was a most fruitful activity, where he gave a brief introduction to both groups about theosophical aspects in general, and then conducted a dialogue with participation from the great majority of those present.

In **Cuba** a great number of people attended the President's lectures, many of them youths, and some of whom were TS members, students, and enthusiasts researching theosophical teachings (appearing in the terrace photo). The President was able to help the Section with a delicate issue dealing with what is appropriate to discuss in Theosophical Lodges, for which the General Secretary and most of the members were very grateful. Members of the TS in **El Salvador** also expressed their great happiness with the President's visit, and although the attendance was not great, it was very valuable.

The theosophical activity in **Costa Rica** started with a conference by the President

Theosophical Work around the World



Some of the main speakers of the Florida and Inter-American Theosophical Federations' gathering from 18–21 May are seated in the middle row, from left to right: (3rd from left) Mr Aryel Sanat, author of *The Inner Life of Krishnamurti*; Mrs Nori Rao, President of the Florida Federation; Mrs Isis Resende, President of the Inter-American Federation; Mr Tim Boyd, international President; Mrs Lily Boyd; Mr U. S. Pandey, Indian Section; and Ms Lysette Arroyo, former General Secretary of the Mexican Section



One of the presentations of the Florida Federation, held on a cruise ship from Miami to the Bahamas

Theosophical Work around the World



Participants of one of the President's lectures at the national headquarters building of the TS in Puerto Rico



A group of Cuban youths on the roof terrace of the national headquarters of the Cuban Section, with the President and his wife, Mrs Boyd



The President giving a lecture in the main hall of the Cuban Section headquarters, with Mrs Barbara Fariñas Piña, General Secretary of the Section, to his left

Theosophical Work around the World



The President and Mrs Boyd visiting with members of the TS in El Salvador



The President and Mrs Boyd with members and guests of the TS in Costa Rica. The Presidential Representative of the Costa Rica Presidential Agency, Mrs Maria Orlich, is standing under HPB's portrait

Theosophical Work around the World

in The European School, directed to secondary level students, which around 80 students between the ages of 15 and 18 attended. It was very well received and made a positive impact on the students, the director, and the teachers present, who stayed back after the conference to dialogue with Tim and Lily Boyd. The School's founder and director along with its co-director attended the last talk given by the President in the TS premises. Also, in the auditorium of Dr R. A. Calderón Guardia Neurosciences Hospital he addressed 15 doctors of medicine, including neurologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors and interns. This was also well received and resulted in good comments from the audience. One of the doctors inquired about how to attend more theosophical activities. In both the above instances the atmosphere was one of genuine interest in the subject matter.

It is also reported that in all the activities of the TS in Costa Rica, both public and those for members only, the President answered many questions before, during, and after each one of his talks. Finally, the TS members in this country celebrated the 114th anniversary of Virya Lodge, the first Theosophical Lodge in Central America.

In all the countries visited by the international President, informal conversations with TS members were very fruitful and valuable. They elicited a feedback on the way to approach different theo-

sophical themes. In the Spanish-speaking countries, Mr Boyd spoke about "The Foundation of Our Future", "The Roots of Suffering and the Source of Health", "Spiritual Development", "Challenges in Life", "Overcoming Fear", "The Four Minds", "Toward an Illumined Mind: The Rationale for Spiritual Practice", and "Forgotten Truths". These topics were chosen by TS members of each country according to local needs. The translators who collaborated with the President were: Isis Resende, Rigel Menéndez V., Carlos V. Fernández P., Stanley Zúñiga C., Rafael Arévalo, and Willy García. They all did an excellent job!

Recent News

TS in South Africa has a new General Secretary since May 2018, Mr Desmond Chapman, in place of Mr Jack Hartmann. Also Mr Tom Davis has taken over as the Chairman of the Pan-African Federation in the place of Mr Hartmann.

Passed to Peace

With deep sadness we report the passing of Mrs Kusum Satapathy in Cuttack, India, on 27 May 2018. To her, service was above self and she devotedly served the Theosophical Society (TS) at Adyar as international Secretary, and later as Head of the Archives and Museum. She is survived by her husband, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, former international Vice-President of the TS at Adyar, and her two daughters, Aparna and Samitha. ✧

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