

# On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

## **Becoming More Materialistic?**

It is clear that the present day is one of great difficulty. Life has become more complicated, but, more than that, human activity is becoming more materialistic. It is important that we do not get caught unconsciously in this movement towards greater materialism.

Those of us who are interested in the Theosophical Society should be aware of this trend. For instance, the whole idea of profit-making is against living a spiritual life. We can make enough to live decently, and some more may come by chance, but if the aim of life becomes profit-making, in small or big ways, then it becomes an obstacle to spiritual living. Yet this is what almost everybody is taught to do: to make a profit. It would be easy for each one of us to say 'I am not profit-minded', but this may not be a fact. In small things we like to take advantage of situations. But ethical ideas are very important, and we have to consider carefully what is ethical and what is not, in this world which is full of non-ethical action. By being half ethical, should we feel we are on the way?

A gentleman who happened to be a Jain was conscious that ethics are important, so at home he did not eat

anything which he felt was damaging to life, because life is one. But, when on business, he ate meat because his companions expected him to do so. So his standard was one outside, and another when he was with his family and friends. This may be called half ethical. The ethical way is practised when convenient, and not otherwise. We have to see, without immediately pointing our finger at these people, in what way we are, to some extent or another, following in their footsteps.

There is really no such thing as half ethical, but we tend to think that there is. In a statement by HPB (*Lucifer*, January 1890) quoted in the Bulletin of Singapore Lodge, she says:

A Happy New Year to all! This seems easy enough to say, and every one expects some such greeting. Yet, whether the wish, though it may proceed from a sincere heart, is likely to be realized even in the case of the few — is more difficult to decide. According to our Theosophical tenets, every man or woman is endowed, more or less, with a magnetic potentiality, which, when helped by a sincere and especially by an intense and indomitable *will*, is the most effective of magic levers

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placed by Nature in human hands — for woe as for weal. Let us then, Theosophists, use that will to send a sincere greeting and a wish of good luck for the New Year to every living creature under the sun — enemies and relentless traducers included. Let us try and feel especially kindly and forgiving to our foes and persecutors, honest or dishonest, lest some of us should send unconsciously an ‘evil eye’ greeting instead of a blessing.

It is important for us to notice that HPB says that we should send out goodwill. Real goodwill is not an easy thing (but easy to talk about), especially towards those whom we really do not like and to the non-human beings whom HPB includes in this passage.

### What is Good?

Some of the worst things in the world are considered to be good. For instance, in an issue of the *Guardian Weekly* (9 Nov. 2007) a report says that in Oklahoma, USA, an elephant which did no harm was killed by the Director of the Park by shooting into him a cartridge full of hallucinogenic drugs (LSD). The poor animal had no idea what was happening to him. The LSD was three thousand times more than what would normally be given to a human. As soon as it entered his body, the elephant charged around, trumpeted loudly, behaved madly for a few minutes and fell down dead. It was a ‘little experiment’ to find out whether the elephant would become aggressive and secrete a sticky fluid from his glands.

Experiments like this are constantly being done. This article relates that soldiers were taken in a plane and not told of their destination. All of a sudden the pilot announced that the engine had stalled, the landing gear was not functioning, and that he was going to ditch the plane in the ocean. The men were almost sure to die. Then they were handed out insurance forms and asked to complete them. The whole thing was a drama; it was acted out to test what would be the reaction of the men. Briefly, the false emergency had made them undergo great stress. This article cites a number of experiments being carried out even today by people who think they are helping the progress of mankind. Some knowledge of this kind, providing bits of information, can be useful for coming to scientific conclusions, but is it worthwhile?

In ancient India, they believed that all knowledge comes to someone whose mind is capable of receiving knowledge. This was more important than actually getting little bits of information. Nobody can live long enough to get knowledge of all the world or worlds, if we like to think of the whole universe. Then what is worth learning? Is knowledge of ethics in general important, or knowledge of how every animal, every creature, every human being reacts to what we are doing? If ethics are important, that is, right behaviour and conduct in life, the whole problem will be solved in one stroke. Right knowledge has nothing to do with the behaviour of an elephant when a huge amount of LSD is pumped into it.

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Therefore, in India they spoke of the lower, or lesser, knowledge and the higher knowledge. The lesser knowledge has to do with the few things in life that are important. But we can look at ourselves and realize that almost all of us believe in lesser knowledge. If a person has a lot of useless knowledge about various things we think that he is a special person, that he is better than other people. But is it true?

Certain important pieces of knowledge are more important than all the lesser knowledge. For instance, to know what is and what is not ethical, to know what is truly spiritual or not, is important for the human being. We are all traveling in that direction. Even those people who feel hurt go through incarnations in which they will realize that the kind of knowledge that they obtain will not help them. This will be very difficult for them, because they believe in lesser knowledge even after they are dead. It takes incarnations before they get a glimpse of what is true; every kind of life has its own value. We ourselves have had some incarnations when we were not in the same position as we are today, and tomorrow we will be in another condition. If we realize this, not just talk about it, then we have learned something worthwhile. It is very important for us, as students of life, to realize what knowledge we want. But knowledge is not limited if we gain something out of it which affects us very deeply and realize what to reject and what to understand.

The true purpose of life is the same

for all people, that is, to open out what is hidden inside — the divine consciousness. That is the only thing that matters. If that is understood, everything else is arranged accordingly. So I think we have to divorce ourselves from a great deal of modern thinking. Some people have, through science and modern knowledge in general, entered into a whole new realm of understanding, but the average person has not done so. Most people are leading a foolish life, based on the idea that only the physical matters. Are we different? If the question is a real one, we will find the answer to human growth.

### Clear Vision and Action

In what does rightness consist? If perception is not right, then action cannot be right. According to the Buddha's teaching, rightness exists when action — which may be physical, mental, or verbal — brings about the well being, happiness, and wisdom of people. There are various depths at which this can be understood. The teaching of Krishnaji was not very far from the core of Buddhist teaching: you see, and then you act. This refers to seeing things as they really are, not according to one's prejudices, the images in the mind of past experiences, and so on. This is difficult, because it means not just seeing what is visible to the physical or mental eye, but what is in the subtlest, purest vision.

There are varying dimensions to things. When Blake wrote that in a grain of sand there is the whole world, it may be strictly true, although it sounds like

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romantic poetry. To see things as rightly as possible, it is very important to do what is right, but we do not. We may be spreading darkness and believing that we are soldiers of light. Believing is very much in one's viewpoint, and is the bone of contention in many disputes. In the disagreement between religions, one's religious understanding has either divided one from teachers and scriptures, or it contains the truth and therefore one believes 'this only is the truth'. A lot of people in a subtle way believe that what they see is the truth, and this becomes one of the problems.

If we see suffering as something which is not caused by what is within, but by

one or several of many outer circumstances, then we do not see correctly. The whole world looks different when we do not become conscious that the poison is within ourselves. So much of our time is spent in correcting other people, blaming them, and criticizing them. So there is need for complete tolerance. The real core of Islamic teaching is tolerance, and one of the essential points in Jaina teaching is never to conclude that one knows, even if the mind is open. Then it can see further and further, at more subtle levels, and become more sensitive. Right perception is very important, because wrong perception is one of the basic causes of wrong action. ✧

**To be aware is to see the total process of the mind, not only of the conscious mind, but also of the mind which is hidden and which reveals itself through dreams. . . .**

**If the mind can be aware of all its own activities, both conscious and unconscious, then there is a possibility of going beyond. To go beyond, the mind must be completely still, but a still mind is not one that is disciplined. A mind that is held in control is not a still mind; it is a stale mind. The mind is still, tranquil, only when it understands the whole process of its own thinking, and then there is a possibility of going beyond.**

J. Krishnamurti

# The Perennial Philosophy:

## Self and cosmos in the ancient wisdom tradition

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THE perennial philosophy might be described as a group of spiritual but not sectarian philosophies found in the East and the West, in which contemplation and self-examination play a significant part. It is called 'perennial' because of its age, universality, and consistency. As Madame H. P. Blavatsky and many others have noted, it has existed in an unbroken line since time immemorial and will most likely remain long after passing fads and fashions have come and gone in the world of philosophy. Its chief aim is the transformation in consciousness sometimes referred to as Enlightenment, Liberation or Self-realization. Thus, the perennial philosophy is not just concerned with different ways of *seeing* the world, but also with different ways of *being* in the world.

Here I propose to give a brief outline of this ancient tradition, but focusing on its treatment of the self, that is, the human being. We have to keep in mind, however, that because this tradition spans literally thousands of years and has Eastern and Western variants, whatever I say is inevitably going to be couched in the language

and assumptions of just one or two cultures and climes. But if the words are not taken too literally we might see through to the underlying meaning, in which case we will in fact be getting to the heart of the matter as understood by most, if not all, exponents of the perennial philosophy.

Let us begin with a very brief overview. The first thing you will find when studying the perennial philosophy is that the whole thing revolves around unity. It is believed that there is a unity in the cosmos that is deeply real, although not immediately obvious. This unity exists not only in a spiritual and metaphoric sense, but physically as well; it is the truth of matter as much as it is the truth of spirit. *However, it takes training and insight to see this.* As a result, a great deal of attention is paid to various methods of attaining this insight.

Another thing that is obvious quite early on, is that there is a particular attitude towards the human being: at once realistic and grand. It is understood that the human being is bodily, and even to some extent mentally, an animal. Yet there is more to us than might be assumed from the

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biological and mental processes taking place in the body/mind complex. The human being is regarded as a microcosm or reflection of the totality, with the unique potential of realizing this fact. But there is something about human consciousness that makes it dull, unreceptive, resistant to change, and intractably stubborn. That something is thought — our nemesis. The trick is for us to balance two equally real but opposing forces: our inherent limitations and our unique potential. As the Islamic scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr put it: ‘There is within us a reality that is the source of the cosmos itself.’

Because the human being is the sum total of both these realities, a great deal of the ‘psychology’ of the perennial philosophy comes down to a very profound kind of self-examination, which leads to the actual realization of our inherent oneness with the totality of life, the underlying reality. Basically, although this may sound prosaic in the circumstances, it all comes down to order in consciousness: a place for everything and everything in its place.

Order in consciousness implies that we understand the structure of consciousness and the process of thought, and that we can tell the real from the unreal, the changing from the eternal, the finite from the infinite. Then things sacred and profane fall into place quite naturally.

To put thought into that sort of order requires that we pay attention to it. Thus, contemplation is paramount in this tradition. Whether in consciousness or in terms of the environment, order depends largely on the quality, extent, and depth

of our seeing. According to Aldous Huxley, the perennial philosophy is:

- ◆ a metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds;
- ◆ a psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; and
- ◆ an ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being. (Huxley, 1947, p. 1)

Thus we can see that aside from broad cosmological and metaphysical questions, the perennial philosophy is also concerned with human nature and specifically with psychology, or better still, pneumatology — from *pneuma*, meaning breath or spirit. We would then have something like psyche-ology instead of psychology: the science of the soul rather than just of the mind, as modern psychology conceives of it. Of concern here, in the broadest and deepest possible sense, is the question: What is a human being?

In contrast to the perennial philosophy, modern science and analytic philosophy are based on the assumption that the human being is a thinking animal and that reason is our highest capacity. They tend to ignore the other two chief functions of the mind: namely, the higher reaches of human intelligence or *buddhi*, and the I-making principle, *ahamkāra*. Various schools of Hindu metaphysics make it quite clear that rational, linear thought is just one function of the mind. The mind is also capable of direct intuitive per-

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ception, and, at the human level, it also constantly engages in the practice of I-making. A focus on only one aspect of the mind, the rational, has arguably left modern analytic philosophy impoverished and without clear direction.

Unless we have a grip on both our divine potential and our inherent limitations, we have no sure guide through the vicissitudes of life. To again quote Seyyed Hossein Nasr:

Modern science may enable man to know how he is constituted chemically or biologically or where he is in galactic space. But this form of science cannot tell man who he is, where he was before his earthly existence, and where he will be after it. It cannot reveal to man where he stands in what has been called existential space, in the hierarchy of universal existence. It therefore cannot provide for man 'orientation', for to orient man's life means to know where he comes from, where he is to go, and, most of all, who he is. (Nasr, 1974, pp. 205-6)

So where have we come from, what are we, and where are we to go?

Bodily and mentally we have much in common with the animal, vegetable, and mineral domains. Yet there is more to us than might be supposed, judging by the chemical, biological, mental, and emotional processes taking place in the body and the mind as they are so far understood.

Various aspects of our nature are reflected in the structure of the brain. (Most scientists would probably say they are caused by the structure of the brain, but

that need not concern us here.) Neuroscientists have treated the brain as largely triune in composition. The oldest part of the brain, the brain stem, is known as the 'reptilian cortex', and is said to be responsible for territoriality, aggression, and ritual (Ferris, 1993, p. 73). Situated above that is the limbic system responsible for sexual instincts and powerful emotions. The most recent and 'human' part of the brain is the neocortex. This is the seat of language, geometry, and abstract thought. All these phases of brain development trace our history as human beings. But there is something more. In some respects the brain or the mind is still developing. Evidence of this is to be found in studies of meditation. A fairly recent talk on meditation at the Theosophy Science Conference at Springbrook, Australia, showed that scientists studying meditation have discovered that during meditation gamma waves connect all the different parts of the brain, so that they all work more efficiently (Kwitko, 2006). Meditation also has an observable effect on the left prefrontal lobe, which is responsible for positive emotions such as happiness.

What scientists have observed taking place in the brain during meditation — and their exploration has only just begun — may indicate that the brain also reflects what we might call our divine or full potential, and not just our historic development.

The Hermetic and Platonic traditions point out that there is something specifically human in the brain that does not arise

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from our animal nature, but, as Paracelsus once remarked, comes from the stars:

Everything that comes from the flesh is animal and follows an animal course; heaven has little influence on it. Only that which comes from the stars is specifically human in us; this is subject to their influence. But that which comes from the spirit, the divine part of man, has been formed in us in the likeness of God, and upon this neither earth nor heaven has any influence. (Paracelsus, 1951/1995, p. 39)

Let us not take ‘the stars’ too literally — we may or may not have come from another planet; there is more than one way to be a celestial being. But the above remark certainly reflects a common tripartite classification of the human being into body, soul, and spirit — with the body taking an animal course, the spirit existing in complete freedom in the likeness of God under the influence of neither heaven nor earth, and somewhere in between, the soul, our ethereal, celestial, or psychic nature. The bodily element is commonly represented by the earth, the ethereal nature by the moon, and the spirit, which is the ultimate source of life and light, is often symbolized by the sun. This representation may be limited, but it well expresses the relationship existing between the various states of being open to each of us (Burckhardt, 1974, p.159). This type of scheme gives us some degree of orientation in the wide world of possibilities and limitations.

I have already mentioned our possibilities and limitations in the same

breath. This has not been by accident, as it is very important to take those two together. We are limited beings with a potential that is almost limitless. That may be paradoxical, but I think it is true. Furthermore, unless we recognize and understand both our limitations and our potential we are not likely to reach the latter. For instance, before we can see for ourselves whether or not there is a Ground of Being, an ultimate Truth, God, or anything of that kind, we must understand our own minds and all the forces active therein that propel us away from ‘what is’, away from reality.

Another interesting aspect of the dynamic relationship between our possibilities and our limitations — and it is a dynamic relationship, always in movement — concerns the fact that our potential lies in what has traditionally been regarded as our divine or theomorphic nature, whilst our limitations lie in the things with which we normally tend to identify, such as the body and the mind. I recently came across a wonderful expression of this teaching in the Islamic tradition as portrayed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, already quoted in this paper. Nasr explains that Islam is based on ‘the encounter between God considered in his absoluteness’ AND MAN CONSIDERED IN HIS FULL NATURE. All creatures mirror the divine in some way, but, as the teaching goes, the human being is unique in being the mirror of all of God’s qualities. As Nasr put it:

Only man reflects all of the divine names and qualities, and this moreover in a cen-

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tral and conscious manner. By virtue of this relation . . . he is a 'central being' in this world, always located in an 'existential space' in which the vertical, transcendent dimension is present. Whether he is aware of it or not, man's situation in this 'space' is not just horizontal and material. The vertical, spiritual axis stands always before him. Reality for man is always three-dimensional, whether man chooses to live in a two-dimensional, material world devoid of the dimension of depth or height . . . or whether he realizes fully the infinite third dimension beyond the limited horizontal surface of existence. (Nasr, 1974, pp. 206-7)

So here we have the idea that the human being is a central being unique in all of creation. But if we are unique it is only because in us the vertical transcendent dimension is always present, whether we are aware of it or not, and because in us there is the possibility, indeed the destiny, of becoming fully aware of it. Thus, the teaching is not just a pat on the back for humanity, it also strongly implies the need for some action on our part. Something must yet be done by us before we can fully taste or experience the wonder of human nature, which is ultimately divine or limitless.

We may be three-dimensional spiritual beings largely defined by the vertical spiritual axis — as every version of the perennial philosophy would have it — but in practice we tend to ignore the spiritual element and deny our theomorphic or God-derived nature. At the same time, however, we still seek to dominate the

physical world as if we were God's little deputies. We tend to lord it over creation without first submitting to our real master, whether conceived as God 'above' or the *ātman* within; without submitting either to God or to our true potential. Nasr points out that if we are central beings or microcosms, it is only because of our theomorphic or God-derived nature. We are not microcosms because we have egos the size of the great outdoors. And he points out that:

When man boasts most about conquering Nature, the reverse process has taken place, namely an apparent and outward conquest . . . combined with complete lack of asceticism, spiritual discipline, and self-negation, which therefore makes man more than ever a prisoner of his own passions and natural inclinations. (Nasr, 1974, p. 211)

Another important teaching concerns the limits to reason. Nasr explains that reason is the shadow of the intellect. It should not be running the show. In common parlance reason and intellect are more or less synonymous terms. But in this tradition, the word 'intellect' is sometimes used to refer to a higher intelligence, as in the Platonic term *intellectus*, which is not rational, linear, analytic thought, but more like intuition or insight. In this vein, Nasr continues:

If it remains subservient to the intellect . . . then it is a positive instrument that can aid man to journey from multiplicity to Unity. But if it rebels against its own source, against both the intellect

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and revelation, then it becomes the source of disharmony and dissolution . . . . If modern man has been able to dominate but at the same time destroy Nature and himself more than men of all other civilizations, it is precisely because with him, more than ever before, reason has been made independent of its principle. In such a condition reason becomes like an acid burning through the tissues of the cosmos. (Nasr, 1974, pp. 213-14)

That last sentence deserves to be contemplated at some length, but, putting the whole argument in a more modern idiom, we might say that it is only when the brain or thought is subservient to insight or intelligence that we act rightly or know what it is good to do. A similar idea was expressed by J. Krishnamurti and David Bohm in one of their dialogues. Addressing the relationship between the brain and intelligence, they agreed that the brain *can* be an instrument of intelligence, thought *can* be a pointer to intelligence; but in itself thought is barren, it has no value without intelligence (Dialogue with Bohm in Krishnamurti, 1986, p. 520). In this sense, too, our power is at best only

‘borrowed’. This is an important teaching because it emphasizes not only the divine potential within the human being, but also the way to it, which is not via the human being as generally conceived, not through the ego or the intellect, but through our higher natures. We must penetrate beneath the surface of the mind to come to that which is divine in us. We must submit to the real master of Nature before we can safely dominate Nature, or even interact with Nature without causing monumental harm, as is presently the case.

This and numerous other teachings along similar lines, East and West, comprise the perennial philosophy, which is not so much a body of knowledge as a Way of Wisdom. It is concerned with the nature of the measurable, the existence of the Immeasurable, and the relationship between the two. Above all, it seeks to help us overcome the general lack of insight into what is eternal and what is transitory, what is Real and what is only imagined. This is the domain of the true philosophy and spiritual ethics that are the chief subject matter of the perennial philosophy. ✧

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# Abiding in the Heart

(Convention Symposium Talk, Adyar, 27 December 2007)

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THE heart holds a central place in Theosophy, where its spiritual importance is often mentioned. As the essence and centre of our being, heart wisdom flows through body, soul, and spirit. The heart is at once a physical organ of perception and action, dynamic field of empathic relations, radiant intuitive sphere, and seat of the innermost Self. *Light on the Path* (II: 9-11) counsels, 'Regard earnestly all the life that surrounds you. Learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men. Regard most earnestly your own heart.' Recent scientific research has begun to confirm the theosophical view, helping to bring the heart's role in consciousness to a receptive public.

HPB states that of all the body's organs, the heart is the only one of spiritual consciousness. The Spiritual Self, Ātmā-Buddhi-Manas, is seated in seven modes of heart intelligence, seven 'brains' within the Heart; these correspond to seven Hierarchies. HPB states, 'The Eastern Secret School knows each minute portion of the Heart, and has a name for each portion. It calls them by the names of the Gods' (*CW*, XII, 694-6). Divine intelligence and love pervade the human

heart so fully that nothing can satisfy except bringing it to life. The wholeness of human nature is encoded here: the story of evolution, patterns yet latent, the guiding influence of superior beings.

HPB is clear about the heart's role in spiritual practice (*CW*, XII, 695-6). She points out that the heart and brain are linked energetically in polarity. In the ordinary person, the heart's activity is negative in relation to the brain, centre of *kāma-manas*. As electrical current flows from positive to negative, impressions flow from brain to heart. Thus we live primarily through thinking coloured by desire, with intuition and will mostly latent. A Master of the Wisdom observes: 'The world teems with the results of intellectual activity and *spiritual decrease*' (ML No. 14 /66). HPB notes that spiritual consciousness can prevail when we reverse the existing polarity, when our heart is pure and positive.

The effort should be continually made to centre the Consciousness in the Heart, and to listen for the promptings of the Spiritual Consciousness, for though success be far off, a beginning must be made, and the path opened up.

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Current research affirms what mystics and occultists have long known: the heart's intelligence is subtle but powerful. The electromagnetic (EM) field of the physical heart is 5,000 times stronger than that of the brain. Its EM field can be detected ten feet from the body and extends indefinitely into space. As the heart connects directly with brain intellectual centres, its perceptions help us find meaning in sensation, store emotional memory, problem-solve, reason and learn (Buhner, 40-1). The heart's action field, boundless in potential, may influence others nearby. Scientists now echo the wisdom of the ancients: for health and healing, centre consciousness in the heart. Through refined emotion (kindness, compassion, aspiration), strengthen the heart's telligence.

Human evolution involves awakening to wise action in many worlds. The physical world, where apparent separateness and individuality prevail, exerts a very strong pull. The realm of universal consciousness, where unity is primary, likewise calls us to itself. Between these realities stretch vast middle worlds, where spiritual perception may be gradually unveiled. The student of occultism must find an emotional and mental equilibrium as it encounters the wide-ranging forces in these worlds. As it opens to suffering and joy, darkness and light, good and evil, delight and terror, the heart must be steadied in goodwill, in love. Our emotional and mental fields must change from an unsettled turmoil to a rhythmic state, as storm-tossed waves when calmed become regular and reflective.

Feelings of kindness, compassion, and gratitude produce a smooth, rolling heart rhythm that researchers call 'coherent', while anger, fear, and frustration produce a 'jagged and capricious — "incoherent" — image' (Kamp, 25). During coherence, the heart's EM field gains depth and power. Large groups of cells in the brain begin to vibrate to the heart's rhythm, and the brain waves ride on top of the heart waves. As heart and brain functions shift, so does our perception and action (Buhner, 41). Medical practice is changing in the light of these findings, slowly turning towards harmonious living. As we centre in love, the lower emotional field may be as steady as a pendulum. Meditations deepening love and compassion are central to the path, as a sure foundation for equanimity, self-knowledge, brotherhood, and service.

Metaphysical and religious images for heart consciousness include our familiar interlaced triangles, the holy cross, and a fully opened rose or lotus. All convey harmony and wholeness in the midst of great activity. In Eastern occultism, the heart chakra is the fourth of seven major centres which bridge the physical body and subtle fields. The heart chakra is named *anāhata*, a Sanskrit term meaning 'unstruck'. The sound of the heart, its sacred song or voice, arises not from two things striking together. Rather, the heart's song affirms an eternal harmony, the wisdom of love.

Scientists confirm another principle of occultism, that the heart interacts with other fields, entering into a kind of

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dialogue. When two heart fields vibrate in unison, they exchange information; one may lead or capture the other's inclination, a relation termed 'entrainment'. During many months in the womb, an infant's heart entrains with information and meaning in the mother's heart, including how she feels about her baby; the exchange continues after birth. Stephen Harrod Buhner writes (40-2):

We all live immersed in meaning-filled fields of information. These fields flow into us from the moment of our birth. We experience these fields not as a stream of words on a page but as emotions, the touch of life upon us. This interchange, rooted in our hearts, alters our lives, shapes its quality, reminds us that we are never alone. It reconnects us to the ground of being from which we come and nurtures in us a natural empathy with the world around us . . . we are made for the unique nature of each thing to pass into us through our hearts, which store memories of this thing, and engage it in dialogue.

Heart wisdom is aesthetic. In Greek thought, sensation and perception were termed *aisthesis*, taking life into oneself, breathing it in. *The Voice of the Silence* uses similar imagery. At the threshold of the path, the disciple must 'live in the eternal . . . live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee, to feel thyself abiding in all things, all things in Self' (v. 217). And, again, the

heart must 'thrill in response to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes' (vv. 217, 225).

The heart knows and acts through aesthetic participation, through inspiration. A brilliant sunset, a child's pure smile, a puppy bounding to us for play: simple things may bring a gasp of delight. Purified and awake, the heart merges with something beautiful and good in whatever it beholds. The heart is stilled in reverence before messengers of spiritual power, whatever forms they take; it lends itself to cries of pain as easily as the lotus seeks the sun. The heart nurtures, and is renewed, through giving of itself. The disciple must be eager for a dialogue not of words, but of one's whole being.

HPB speaks of a heart-space of silence, where in hours of meditation we may find refuge, a measure of calmness (*CW*, VIII, 127-9). Sink your consciousness deep in the heart, she advises, and you will reach this place. Even in the midst of turmoil, confusion, doubt, weariness, the silent sanctuary holds. But HPB reminds us that even as we rest, we must not lose sight of the battle. Until all is silence within and without, until we have come to a place of complete self-forgetfulness, the journey continues. As we seek out the way, let us serve that Great Heart, the Supreme Soul whose love-wisdom blesses every step and whose eternal peace welcomes each pilgrim home. ✧

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# Studies in *The Voice of the Silence*, 10

JOHN ALGEO

VERSES 135 to 141 continue the call to action of the altruistic verses 123-134 and introduce a new metaphor, that of the 'three vestures', which becomes a major expression of the call to action in the rest of the *Voice*.

## VERSES [135-141]:

[135] Sow kindly acts and thou shalt reap their fruition. Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin. Thus saith the Sage.

[136] Shalt thou abstain from action? Not so shall gain thy soul her freedom. To reach Nirvāna one must reach Self-knowledge, and Self-knowledge is of loving deeds the child.

[137] Have patience, candidate, as one who fears no failure, courts no success. Fix thy Soul's gaze upon the star whose ray thou art,<sup>17</sup> the flaming star that shines within the lightless depths of ever-being, the boundless fields of the Unknown.

[138] Have perseverance as one who doth for evermore endure. Thy shadows live and vanish;<sup>18</sup> that which in thee shall live for ever, that which in thee *knows*, for it is knowledge,<sup>19</sup> is not of fleeting life: it is the man that was, that is, and will be, for whom the hour shall never strike.

[139] If thou wouldst reap sweet peace and rest, disciple, sow with the seeds of merit the fields of future harvests. Accept the woes of birth.

[140] Step out from sunlight into shade, to make more room for others. The tears that water the parched soil of pain and sorrow bring forth the blossoms and fruits of Karmic retribution. Out of the furnace of man's life and its black smoke, winged flames arise, flames purified, that soaring onward, 'neath the Karmic eye, weave in the end the fabric glorified of the three vestures of the Path.<sup>20</sup>

[141] These vestures are: Nirmānakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Dharmakāya, robe sublime.<sup>21</sup>

COMMENT. Verses 135 and 136 treat the subject of karma. The word *karma* means literally 'action' but is generally understood as referring to the results that inevitably follow any action. And so verse 135 begins with a reminder that being kind to others will result in kindness coming to you. This is the most basic and practical moral principle, one that is the subject of the opening chapter of the *Dhammapada*:

All that we are is the result of what we

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### Studies in *The Voice of the Silence*, 10

have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the wagon. . . . If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.

Immediately after that observation about karma as the fruit of action, the *Voice* considers the nature of action and inaction — a false dichotomy because ‘inaction’, as a decision not to act, is in fact a kind of action. The *Voice* tells us that negative virtues have little to recommend them. If we have the opportunity to do good, the failure to respond to that opportunity has bad consequences. The second sentence in verse 135, ‘Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin’, resumes the theme of verse 126 and echoes the plight of Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā*. Being confused about what he should do, Arjuna decided he would do nothing. But Kṛṣṇa pointed out to him that the very decision not to act was an action, and thus he had committed himself by seeking to avoid commitment.

Verse 136 continues the examination of this subject by looking on the positive side. If we do not become free by avoiding action, but only more entangled, how do we become free? Verse 136 says that freedom depends on Self-knowledge, that is, on knowing who we really are. When we are ignorant of our true nature, we are bound by all the limitations of the personality and its conditioning. Only when

we know the real Self within are we free. And how do we achieve that knowledge? Not, as we might suppose, by study or meditation (good as those are), but rather by a third thing: service or, as the *Voice* calls it, ‘loving deeds’, that is, right action — action prompted by love.

When we act out of love, we discover who we are. When we know who we are, we are free of the bonds that tie us to this world. What the world regards as success or failure is irrelevant to that freedom, which is the only thing that really matters. Verse 137 goes on to compare our real Self to a star, of which our personal identity is only a ray of light. In the Theosophical tradition, it is said that when a disciple becomes an adept, the Star of Initiation blazes forth. That is a symbol of the discovery of who we really are — the blazing star that shines through our personality, or as HPB puts it in a gloss:

Gloss 17. Every spiritual Ego is a ray of a Planetary Spirit, according to esoteric teaching.

The esoteric teaching referred to here is doubtless that of the cosmic seven Rays; each of us is a ray of one of those Rays. Ultimately we are all rays of the one eternal central Sun. Or, as verse 138 puts it, our temporary personalities are shadows of that one light. Shadows come and go, being impermanent:

Gloss 18. ‘Personalities’ or physical bodies are called ‘shadows’, as they are evanescent.

It is notable that our personality is here equated with our physical body,

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in and through which our personality develops. A physical body with its personality is of one lifetime only; neither survives that lifetime. What survives and is permanent (or as permanent as anything in a world that is always changing) is the individuality, which is encapsulated in the principle of pure (or higher) mind within us. That principle is the faculty by which we know what really *is* and especially who we are. It is also what we know, both the means and the object of knowledge:

Gloss 19. Mind (*manas*), the thinking Principle or Ego in man, is referred to as Knowledge itself, because the human Egos are called *Mānasa-putra-s*, the sons of (universal) Mind.

One of the characteristic features of Theosophical thought is its teaching that our individuality, expressed through the principle of *manas* or mind, will never cease to be. Some forms of Indic thought emphasize that, since we are expressions of the Ultimate Reality (whether it is called Brahman or Nirvāna or something else), any separate identity is mere illusion. Hence everything about us, including our individuality, is unreal.

A typical Theosophical response is that, although in truth only one ultimate Reality exists (Parabrahman or whatever we call it), the ultimate One is unknowable but manifests in the relative world in a multitude of forms, some of which are evanescent and some of which (namely the individual expressions of the monad) abide throughout manifestation

and indeed even across the periods of cosmic rest called 'pralaya-s' that separate one period of manifestation from another. Thus, practically speaking, our individuality (*ātmā-buddhi-manas*) never ceases to be, but is our inner Self 'that was, that is, and will be, for whom the hour [of ending] shall never strike'.

This Theosophical view is that the relationship between the absolute One and the relative Many is a mystery and a paradox. We are both all one and yet individually distinct. This paradoxical mystery is expressed in a poem by Kabir, a saintly poet from India, who uses a familiar metaphor for it, namely, the relationship between the sea and a drop of water that comes from it:

I went looking for Him  
And lost myself;  
The drop merged with the Sea —  
Who can find it now?

Looking and looking for Him,  
I lost myself;  
The Sea merged with the drop —  
Who can find it now?

On the one hand, we can say that we are drops of water which come from the sea and are finally merged into it, so that we, as separate realities, are lost in the sea, returning to our source and ceasing to be, as separate units. 'Who can find it [the separate drop] now?'

But, on the other hand, we can also say that when we find that Ultimate Reality for which we are searching, it becomes us. We do not lose our sense of identity, but instead are immeasurably

and inconceivably enriched by the knowledge (the gnosis) that we and it are one. In this sense, the drop does not merge into the sea; rather the sea merges into the drop and thus realizes its identity, both One and Many, both united and distinct. 'Who can find it [the sea separate from the drop] now?'

This Theosophical view thus resolves the dichotomy of the Hindu teaching that at the core of our being there is an 'ātmā' or Self, and the Buddhist teaching that at our core there is only *anātman* or no (*an-*) self (*ātman*). Both are true, but in different ways. We are not ultimately and absolutely separate from the One Reality (the only Ultimate and Absolute), so there is no separate self, but only *an-ātman*. However, we are an individualized expression in the relative world of the ultimate and absolute Reality, so there is a Self at the heart of our being — the same Self as at the heart of every other being, though expressed in relatively different ways in each of us. The paradox is that these apparently contradictory statements are both true: We are the Self, and we have no self.

Eastern, and especially Indic, thought is full of paradoxes like this. Another related one is the teaching of Buddhism that all life is *duhkha*, usually translated 'pain' or 'suffering' but perhaps more adequately rendered as 'frustration', 'insecurity', or 'dissatisfaction', versus the Hindu teaching that all life is an expression of *ānanda*, 'bliss', 'delight', or 'joy'. Both are true. As verses 139 and 140 say in a series of metaphors, life is both

woeful and sweet, shady and sunny, parched and blossoming, smoky and bright with light.

Verse 140 introduces another metaphor, that of the 'three vestures', which is an important theme in this and the last Fragment of the book. The three vestures are identified by name in verse 141 and two glosses refer to a gloss in Fragment 3 that discusses the subject in some detail. We will come to that gloss in its proper place, but here we can consider an overview of these vestures.

The concept of the three vestures is a Buddhist one, though interpreted somewhat differently in various schools of Buddhism. Blavatsky also thought that the way Western scholars generally understood the concept was inadequate. Because it is such an important concept in the *Voice*, it is worth considering in some detail. Even the literal sense of the words is noteworthy.

The general term for the concept in Sanskrit is *trikāya*, from *tri* 'three' and *kāya*, literally 'body', but in this context usually translated 'sheath' or 'vesture'. The word *kāya* also refers to the trunk of a tree, among other uses. The Buddha (not just the historical Siddhārtha Gautama, but the metaphysical Buddha nature or Buddha-ness that manifests in all historical Buddhas) is said to have three bodies or vestures.

The first of these is the *nirmānakāya*, the body or vesture of transformation. *Nirmāna* as an independent word means 'measuring' and hence 'building', 'making', or 'creating', and, since all acts of

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creation involve change, it also means 'transformation'. The *nirmānakāya*, or body of transformation and change, is usually said to be the historical Buddha in incarnation, as ordinary human beings might see him.

The second is the *sambhogakāya*, the body or vesture of enjoyment. *Sambhoga* means basically 'pleasure', 'delight', 'love leading to union'. The *sambhogakāya* is usually understood as a heavenly or archetypal manifestation of the Buddha, as Bodhisattvas or other heavenly beings might see him, that is, as an idealized form.

The third is the *dharmakāya*, the body or vesture of *dharma* — a word for which no single English equivalent exists. It is usually translated 'law', but has many meanings, all related but depending on the context. In this context, perhaps we can think of *dharma* as that which abides, the Ground of all existence, the ultimate Reality, the Absolute. All of the Buddhas or enlightened beings exist in that Reality, indeed *are* that Reality. The *dharmakāya* is said to be the Buddha as the Buddha really is, in pure Buddha nature. It is beyond perception but manifests itself as the other two bodies.

Thus, these three bodies are usually understood as three ways in which the Buddha reality can be understood, or three ways in which it is expressed. As such, the *dharmakāya* or 'body of the Absolute' is unmanifest; it is the Buddha nature as the ultimate, ineffable reality, the Ground of all things. The *sambhogakāya* or 'body of realized love' is the Buddha nature as it is seen by enlightened beings,

such as the bodhisattvas; it is expressed by all the archetypal, symbolical Buddhas. The *nirmānakāya* or 'body of making and changing' is the empirically manifested Buddha, the historical incarnations of the Buddha nature, such as Siddhārtha Gautama.

Understood in this way, the doctrine of the *trikāya* or three bodies is that there are three levels of existence: (1) one we are all aware of and experience, an outer reality in which the Buddha nature incarnates as a human being, a teacher (the *nirmānakāya*); (2) one that can be seen by 'the eye of faith' or experienced by the imagination, an inner reality in which the Buddha nature is expressed in great archetypal forms (the *sambhogakāya*); and (3) one beyond all experience, the ultimate reality, which is the very Buddha nature (the *dharmakāya*).

Blavatsky's presentation of the three vestures in subsequent verses and in the last Fragment is somewhat different, as we shall see.

MEDITATION. 1. Meditate on verse 136: 'Shalt thou abstain from action? Not so shall gain thy soul her freedom. To reach Nirvāna one must reach Self-knowledge, and Self-knowledge is of loving deeds the child.'

2. Envision a blazing star that beams a ray of light into the profound darkness of space. See yourself as a spark of light at the very end of that ray. Then follow the path of the ray back to its origin — to the flaming star — and say to yourself, 'I am That'. ✧

# Theosophy and Eastern Wisdom

S. SIDDHARTHA

THEOSOPHY is a school of thought — yet another recent offshoot of the perennial philosophy sought after by Man since he came into existence. This philosophy is many-streamed and varied, and continues to be divided into types, branches, sections, and subsections, forming an infinite mass of thoughts, opinions, principles, and theories, rather like the banyan tree at Adyar.

A hermit in the Himalayas explained these revelations with the sun as an analogy: ‘Behold the Sun! It shines indiscriminately on all the days of the week. Its light is not marked “Monday” or “Tuesday”.’ We have given names to the days of the week for convenience. So also does the ‘Sun of revealed wisdom’ shine in all periods of history and pre-history without calling itself by this or that name. Yet for the sake of convenience, we talk of Hinduism here or Islam there, now of Judaism, then of Christianity, and so on. The so-called varieties of religious experience are the fingers of God pointing to that unity underlying their diversity.

Newness, difference, is only in the form. This form, this new look, this yet another incarnation of the Perennial

Philosophy that rose in the West and was given the name ‘Theosophy’, was greatly influenced by Eastern Wisdom. It was an amalgamation of Eastern and Western thought which took place first in the thought process of HPB. Later, with the help of Olcott — or the other way round: Olcott with the guidance of HPB — gave it a concrete shape for people to study, accept, and follow. I quote from his *Old Diary Leaves*, First Series:

The spiritualism she was sent to America to profess, and ultimately bring to replace the cruder Western mediumism, was Eastern spiritualism, or Brahma Vidyā. The West not being prepared to accept it, her first assigned work was to defend the real phenomena from that prejudiced and militant enemy of spiritual belief — materialistic, scholastic, physical science, with its votaries and leaders. The one necessary thing for the age was to check materialistic scepticism and strengthen the spiritual basis of the religious yearning. Therefore, the battle being joined, she took her stand beside the American spiritualists, and for the moment made common cause with them.

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### East different from West

This is a significant point because the opinions of the East and the West on extraordinary phenomena and miracles were very different. In the East such happenings were looked down upon as misfortunes, the work of evil spirits; and the eyewitnesses scarcely ever dreamt of making them the subjects of scientific research: on the contrary, they considered it proof that the dead are not happily dis severed from earthly concerns, and thus are hampered in their normal evolution towards the condition of pure spirit. On the other hand, the West considered the future life as an extension of this life in time — and in space too, if one comes to consider its physical conceptions of heaven and hell.

Such phenomena were to the people of Asia but evidences of the possession of a low order of psychical power by those who showed them. Actually, many Indians felt that it was a great pity that HPB showed phenomena, for it went to prove that she had not reached a high stage of yoga. Of course we all know that HPB, even while working her wonders, warned us all that they were a very subordinate and insignificant part of Theosophy. And — what is more — with her miracles she convinced some who were thus influenced, to do good work for this great movement of Theosophy; and some of the most tireless of that class came into Eastern out of Western Spiritualism, over the bridge of psychical phenomena, and went on to better understand the oriental theories of spiritual science.

Theosophy, one might say, became a door to Eastern wisdom.

There was in the West a generally prevalent opinion that philosophy belonged in an ivory tower with which practical men of the world had nothing to do, whereas in the East philosophy was the very way of life. Another point of difference was the approach of the two to Philosophy. The West prefers to know the method by which a given conclusion is reached. The East wants the answer first. Moreover, the average Westerner reads everything *critically*. This is an excellent attitude, but it leads to chaos when reading what is written symbolically or esoterically. To a certain extent Westerners do appreciate symbolism. For instance, take Shelley's famous line: 'Like a poet hidden in the light of thought.'

The light cannot hide a poet. But very few will complain that Shelley is wrong saying 'light does not hide, it only reveals'. They understand, but most of them go no further than such romantic poetry, whereas the Eastern mindset is open to such subtle things. This also explains why the Bible is better understood and therefore more revered in the East.

It is true that the critical attitude of the West is not always right. But this does not mean that in the East everything so written is accepted as the gospel truth. It is only that the reader suspends his inquiring faculty for the time being and thus gives his subconscious mind a chance to vibrate in harmony with the subconscious mind of the writer.

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Criticism is not outlawed, it is only postponed. As the best of Eastern Wisdom is written esoterically, its meaning can be revealed only if it is approached as if it were a friend, instead of a book. This different approach of the East has been imbibed by Theosophy.

Another point that has been emphasized by Theosophy is the idea of death as an integral part or phase of life. Our time on earth being limited and the number of things one can know being comparatively unlimited, the average Easterner prefers to concentrate on the relevant answers, provided they are correct or at least capable of being found correct by personal realization. In Eastern philosophy, the burden of proof is on the side which denies the truth of a given statement. The measure of proof required for its acceptance is a balance of probability in its favour. Examples of two such great but unproved hypotheses are Karma and Reincarnation.

It is said that even the Buddha refused to answer when asked about the existence of God. His contention was: 'As our lifespan is limited, only those answers should be given or sought first, which are essential, relevant, or immediately applicable.' So we have to concentrate on the ultimate goal, namely spiritual Enlightenment. The other doubts will be cleared by and by.

Western thought is science-oriented, but in philosophy you cannot expect posterity to continue your researches where you left off. The work of a scientist can be continued by his successor.

That is because scientific inventions are objective and physical. But the essence of philosophy for an individual includes, of necessity, the why and wherefore of his own existence. This has sometimes led to an unjust accusation against Eastern Wisdom, namely, that it is a study devoid of progress. In philosophy, as in religion, progress is attained by each in himself and usually by means of suffering. Philosophy cannot be enjoyed at the expense of somebody else's mental effort. Perhaps that is why people have an aversion to it! But Theosophy has toned down Western religion, science, and cerebral philosophy, to come together with the spiritual wisdom of the East.

### **Eastern Wisdom — one and many**

We have been referring to Eastern Wisdom as one unit. This is only to distinguish it as a whole from the relatively *more* different Western knowledge. But, actually, Eastern thought too has its manifold varieties: the Sufism of Persia, Zen and Shinto in Japan, Confucianism and Taoism in China, Lamaism in Tibet, Vedānta in India and, of course, Buddhism, which spread far and wide, donning the garb of the country which it entered.

Vedānta seems to have been accepted as the most outstanding representative of Eastern Wisdom with which the West has become familiar. Thus Theosophy has imbibed the tenets of Vedānta and woven its threads into the fabric of Theosophy. Primarily Vedānta is based on a spiritual experience of contact with

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the Higher Self present in each of us. Though the impact of Buddhism was great and led to the study of books like *The Light of Asia* and the *Dhammapada*, Vedānta — a developed form of the ancient Vedic Sanātana Dharma — was and became the major base for Theosophy.

When two persons or things come together, the exchange of thoughts and ideas is rarely one-sided. So while the founders affected modern philosophical thought to an extraordinary degree by popularizing certain noble Eastern ideas, Easterners were also impressed and influenced by the approach and understanding of the founders. Why? The East, especially India, while being proud of its Wisdom, was quite frustrated with the pseudo-religious superstitions and ceremonies that had crept into the Hindu way of life slowly and unobtrusively over thousands of years, since the time of the Veda-s. The irony of the situation was that it was this very Religion which had supported and sustained our civilization through the vicissitudes, trials, and tribulations of over two thousand years of foreign invasions and occupations. What went wrong? J. Krishnamurti, in his pamphlet 'Temple Talks', says:

In India, religion is like a vast tree with its roots and branches spreading all over, giving protection. But religion only achieves its purpose when it becomes a reality in our thoughts, in our

emotions, and in our actions. . . . All over the world, but especially in India, although people may attend Church or Pujā every day, the worship, the devotion they feel then, is not applied with intelligence and common sense to the things of daily life. But then the Western nations came here. They brought the scientific knowledge of matter, precision, exact observation, together with tidiness on the physical plane.

The well-to-do intelligentsia from all over the country, seemed to get the answer to their problems and became Theosophists. They could have their cake and eat it too. How? They could discard what they thought was superfluous and yet continue to perform the Sanātana-dharma-s. Their conscience was clear and their reason was satisfied. The rust that had formed on one part of Eastern Wisdom was as if scraped off by Theosophy.

There is another major contribution of Theosophy to the East — the translation into English of books in Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Japanese, Persian and so on. The West had the money, power, and initiative. Even then we cannot discount the significance of their effort. The Sanskrit language was no longer easily comprehensible and yet most of the works were in Sanskrit. So translations into English, though no substitute for the original, also helped the Easterners to better understand their own Wisdom. ✧

**Forgiveness is tapas, forgiveness is purity; this world is upheld by forgiveness.**

*Sanātana Dharma*

# Are We Enquirers?

G. RAMANATHAN

THE spirit of enquiry is the hallmark of a Theosophist. In one of the letters to A. P. Sinnett, former Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, Mahatma KH stated that 'the Adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers' (Letter No. 2). This shows how essential it is to have an enquiring nature. The founders of the Society and those who associated with them during the early period of the TS were real enquirers. They observed the phenomenal world with an open mind and were receptive to that which was poured down from the higher dimensions. They did not believe blindly what was told by others or reject it outright, but learnt the truth by careful observation and meditation.

HPB, in an article on 'Mahatmas and Chelas' (*HPB Teaches* by Michael Gomes), clearly describes 'blind belief and faith'. She states: 'Blind faith is an expression sometimes used to indicate belief without perception or understanding; while the true perception of the Manas is that enlightened belief which is the real meaning of the word "faith".' This belief should at the same time be accompanied by knowledge, for 'true knowledge brings

with it faith'. Occult teachings have been given by HPB herself through her classical Theosophical literature. So also the President-Founder, Col. H. S. Olcott, and other great Theosophists like Dr Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, and others, have written about their enlightened perceptions on the nature of the Universe and the evolution of man. All these are the fruits of enlightened perceptions, and careful and sustained enquiries.

But the real question is whether the ordinary members of the TS simply subscribe to these statements, or deeply meditate upon them and really learn. In the *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* (First Series), Letter No. 59, addressed to Dr Annie Besant by Mahatma KH in 1900 (nine years after the death of HPB), KH says:

The TS and its members are slowly manufacturing a creed. Says a Tibetan proverb 'credulity breeds credulity and ends in hypocrisy'. How few are they who can know anything about us. Are we to be propitiated and made idols of. . . . The crest-wave of intellectual advancement must be taken hold of and

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guided into spirituality. It cannot be forced into beliefs and emotional worship. The essence of the higher thoughts of the members in their collectivity must guide all action in the TS.

The modern Theosophical Society was founded on the guidelines and instructions given by the Masters of the Wisdom through their letters and in other occult ways. In this context, the statement of Mahatma KH assumes great importance, and there is no place for blind worship and superstition in the Theosophical movement.

When the enlightened perceptions of the great ones are put into words, obviously there is severe limitation. J. Krishnamurti, one of the greatest spiritual thinkers of the twentieth century, has time and again cautioned that 'the description is not the described'. Unless we meditate and develop intuitive perceptions on the Theosophical teachings given through books, nothing worthwhile is going to happen. Forming new concepts and ideations at the mental level based on information received from books can only help us to form illusion after illusion. After becoming disenchanted with the outer world, the spiritual seeker may have fantastic ideas about the spiritual life based on mere information gathered from books, and may seek refuge in it. The mind attached to earthly comforts and craving for security is pervaded by sensual desires, and therefore cannot go beyond the physical dimensions of our existence. The wisdom

conveyed through books remains elusive.

*The Voice of the Silence* says (I.26): 'The name of Hall the second is the Hall of Learning. In it thy soul will find the blossoms of life, but under every flower a serpent coiled.' Blind belief and a dogmatic approach can only help us to become hypocrites, and not bring about a fundamental transformation in our life. The wonderful teachings revealed about the existence of higher dimensions, the unity of existence in the universe, and the grand evolutionary scheme explained in Theosophy are subjects to be investigated and perceived. Existence in the visible physical dimension is only the tip of the iceberg, and there are deeper dimensions which are yet to be unfolded. These constitute matter which a serious student of Theosophy should neither accept blindly nor reject, but approach with an enquiring mind.

A pure and open mind is a prerequisite for delving deeply into these questions of life. Mind is the link between spirit and matter, and can be a reflection of what is in the spiritual dimension and receptive to the profound wisdom conveyed through the Theosophical teachings, which are not of the earth. The student of Theosophy must develop insight into the wisdom underlying words by controlling the thought process. Observation of the mind will elevate the discriminating faculty, so as to put an end to wild and unruly thoughts. J. Krishnamurti has repeatedly stated the importance of observing one's thought process and finding out the truth of things without

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depending upon authority, interpretations, and books. His teachings are an exhortation to humanity to enquire.

In books, we see views and interpretations which clearly indicate that we cannot depend upon knowledge as the last word on truth. For example, in *Esoteric Writings* by the great occultist T. Subba Row, we come across different opinions on Śankarāchārya's date and doctrine, which highlights the fact that we cannot take the opinions and views of others as the last word or blindly believe them to be the Truth. In the same book, he writes that 'the Society does not constitute a body of religious teachers, but is simply an association of investigators and inquirers'.

The student of Theosophy has to approach these teachings with an investigative mind. Learning takes place only when the mind is free from all inhibitions and fetters. The deepening awareness of how much we depend upon tradition, blind belief, superstition and, generally speaking, external circumstances, will help us to transcend the shackles of the mind. In our day-to-day

life, there are occasions when our image about ourselves is challenged. Instead of buttressing ourselves with excuses and justifications, if we observe ourselves as a witness, it will provide a wonderful opportunity to perceive how far we are slaves to fear, the opinions of others, tradition, and so on. These are the moments when we can come out of our shell and have a glimpse beyond. Only a mind which does not cling to any belief or desire, and is fearless, is able to observe and learn during such moments, and the profound truths veiled in the great teachings of Theosophy are unfolded.

This is the wonderful teaching imparted to us by Krishnamurti, who emphasized the importance of an enquiring mind. True enquiry and learning flourish only in an atmosphere where freedom of thought exists. The resolution stating 'Freedom of Thought' as a fundamental principle governing the activities of the Theosophical Society, passed by the General Council of the Society, is a clear declaration that it is a centre of Learning. ✧

**Distinguishing between the essential and the non-essential, you have to cultivate a gentle yielding, a sweet courtesy, on all matters that are not essential. It is well to yield in little things that do not matter, in order that you may follow perfectly those things that do matter. . . .**

**You have to learn to distinguish in everything around you, and in every one around you, between the permanent element and the impermanent, between the surface and the content, as it were, between the eternal and the transitory.**

Annie Besant

# Adyar, the Hub of the Movement

CARIN CITROEN

THIS is the title of my talk, but I hope to be able to convey to you that it is not only the title, but that it is what Adyar is meant to be in the structure of the Society. A hub is a point within a circle. Radiating from the hub to the periphery are the spokes; in this case they symbolize the spiritual forces spreading out from the Centre throughout the world. These forces should be picked up and reinforced — if we are functioning properly — by many nuclei, such as Centres, Lodges, study groups, and so on, all over the globe, thus creating, unbeknown to mankind, a network of a beneficial nature, whereby the noble points in the human character — such as love, compassion, understanding, and so forth — may be stimulated and grow.

Outsiders who visit the compound often come under the influence of Adyar's beautiful atmosphere. Sometimes, when one has a friendly chat with visitors, one will hear them say that they did not know that there existed such an oasis as ours, where people live quietly together. It is such a contrast, they say, with the wilderness outside. I was rather interested in the

words 'oasis' and 'wilderness' because the same words were mentioned once by Krishnaji in 1924 (*Adyar Notes and News*, 12 April, 1928):

It is essential for the individual member and for the Society that Adyar, as a great spiritual centre, should be maintained, worthy and dignified. The importance of this is so obvious that few can doubt it. Adyar is, and always has been, a spiritual oasis to which the weary traveller looks for comfort and repose. Though it may not be the privilege of each member in the Society to go there from the world of wilderness, yet the mere existence of such a centre gives hope and encouragement.

The world at present is going through a period fraught with difficulties. The god of vengeance seems to reign these days and not the Lord of Peace and Good Will. So I cannot help thinking that the Great Ones must have known of the terrible times the world would be facing in the not too distant future and therefore wanted to establish — perhaps a little prematurely — an instrument through which beneficial forces could be poured forth, in order to

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**Miss Carin Citroen** was Secretary to the international President for many years. This article was given as a talk during the Adyar Day celebration at Adyar on 17 February 2008.

### Adyar, the Hub of the Movement

avert a disaster, which would not only seriously affect the whole earth, but could also destroy it. And I am very much strengthened in that thought when reading what H. P. Blavatsky stated in 1887: 'If you could see what I foresee, you would begin heart and soul to spread the teaching of Universal Brotherhood. It is the only safeguard.'

Mr C. W. Leadbeater tells us that after HPB left in 1885, there were only a handful of people who threw themselves into the gigantic task before them, with great dedication, determination, and devotion to their Elder Brethren, the Inner Founders. There were only Colonel Olcott, who worked mainly upstairs in the headquarters building when he was not on tour, Mr Leadbeater himself, working and living in the octagonal room in the River Bungalow, and Mrs Cooper Oakley, who worked and lived somewhere in the Headquarters building and whom Mr Leadbeater said he saw perhaps once a day, if even that. They all worked hard at their own activities, as it was not possible in those days to have regular meetings in the hall, since there were so few of them.

And look at our Headquarters today! Had it not been for those very few leading members, who, inspired by their Elders, gave their lives to building the structure through which our philosophy and aims could be disseminated, this Centre or Hub would never have been able to develop the spokes — or those spiritual and magnetic forces — which drew then, and still are drawing today, those people

who are in consonance with it. At first a small number of members trickled in from the already existing Theosophical Lodges in America, England and Europe, to lend a helping hand. But slowly, when Theosophy was taking root in ever-widening circles, more member-workers arrived. And when facilities to accommodate students, workers, and visiting members were provided, the trickle changed into a steady flow. This is exactly — according to Annie Besant — what HPB intended Adyar to be.

A little excerpt from Annie Besant's article, reprinted in the October 1947 *Theosophist*, follows:

HPB always seemed to bear in mind the method by which she could prepare a place in which people, coming to it for a short time, would receive real help in the spiritual life. And so she dwelt, at her Master's wish, in Adyar for some considerable time, in order that this place might become consecrated to Their service, and inspire all who came to it with the desire to draw nearer to Them.

Mr Jinarājadāsa tells us, though, that Mrs Besant was the one who made the special arrangements for the accommodation of such as cared to come for one year or more, both to study and to help with the work. This necessitated the erection of special students' quarters, and these are the present Bhojanasala, Old Quadrangle, and Leadbeater Chambers, all finished in 1910. In this way, Mrs Besant fulfilled the wish of her revered teacher, HPB.

### The Theosophist

Naturally, in HPB's time members could stay in Adyar only for a short time because of the lack of accommodation. Nowadays members can stay much longer, and, when returning to their home countries, some of them will probably take with them some of that intangible something of Adyar, which will hopefully bring about a change within themselves, such as a deepening understanding of the purpose of life in general and a more sensitive approach in their relationship with all sentient beings. In this way,

they also are mini nuclei, transmitting Adyar's beneficial and unifying force all over the world.

Adyar Day exists to remind the members of this glorious place and to urge them to do their very best to make Adyar a worthy and dignified centre. Adyar lives and works for the world. Thrice happy they to whom Karma gives the privilege of coming to Adyar, and blessed indeed among their generation, if they receive from Adyar what Adyar has to give them. ✧

**Power, wisdom, beauty: each shines in the rainbow of ADYAR's awakening into the many from rest in the white light of the One. Each kingdom of Nature is full of ADYAR. But the human kingdom has to conquer Adyar, so that Adyar and ADYAR may become one.**

Yet even Adyar, the Adyar of the daily living of her residents, with all their shortcomings, failures, difficulties, the Adyar which sometimes proves too great a strain for one or two, has her own wonders, as every resident will tell you. As Adyar is part of ADYAR, so in the life of each dweller at Adyar there is a touch of ADYAR — little or much as is the individual himself. We cannot separate the two selves so very much, after all.

Just as is 'every common bush afire with God', so is every fragment of Adyar afire with ADYAR. ADYAR touches each one of us here at Adyar with her three wands — of power, of wisdom, of beauty — and however much we may be of Adyar, ADYAR lies about us, within us. While we are here we are changed, a little or much. When we go away, something of ADYAR goes with us, for one touch of ADYAR changes us forever.

G. S. Arundale

# The Mystery of All Time

ANON

THE inner light which guides men to greatness, and makes them noble, is a mystery through all time and must remain so while Time lasts for us; but there come moments, even in the midst of ordinary life, when Time has no hold upon us, and then all the circumstance of outward existence falls away, and we find ourselves face to face with the mystery beyond. In great trouble, in great joy, in keen excitement, in serious illness, these moments come. Afterwards they seem very wonderful, looking back upon them.

What is this mystery, and why is it so veiled, are the burning questions for anyone who has begun to realize its existence. Trouble most often rouses men to the consciousness of it, and forces them to ask these questions when those, whom one has loved better than oneself, are taken away into the formless abyss of the unknown by death, or are changed, by the experiences of life, until they are no longer recognizable as the same; then comes the wild hunger for knowledge. Why is it so? What is it that surrounds us with a great dim cloud into which all loved things plunge in time and are lost to us, obliterated, utterly taken

from us? It is this which makes life so unbearable to the emotional natures, and which develops selfishness in narrow hearts.

If there is no certainty and no permanence in life, then it seems to the Egotist that there is no reasonable course but to attend to one's own affairs, and be content with the happiness of the first person singular. There are many persons sufficiently generous in temperament to wish others were happy also, and who, if they saw any way to do it, would gladly redress some of the existing ills — the misery of the poor, the social evil, the sufferings of the diseased, the sorrow of those made desolate by death. These things the sentimental philanthropist shudders to think of. He does not act because he can do so little. Shall he take one miserable child and give it comfort when millions will be enduring the same fate when that one is dead? The inexorable cruelty of life continues on its giant course, and those who are born rich and healthy live in pleasant places, afraid to think of the horrors life holds within it. Loss, despair, unutterable pain, comes at last, and the one who has hitherto been fortunate is on a level with those to whom

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From *Lucifer*, 15 September 1887.

### The Theosophist

misery has been familiarized by a lifetime of experience. For trouble bites hardest when it springs on a new victim.

Of course, there are profoundly selfish natures which do not suffer in this sense, which look only for personal comfort and are content with the small horizon visible to one person's sight; for these, there is but little trouble in the world, there is none of the passionate pain which exists in sensitive and poetic natures. The born artist is aware of pain as soon as he is aware of pleasure; he recognizes sadness as a part of human life before it has touched on his own. He has an innate consciousness of the mystery of the ages, that thing stirring within man's soul and which enables him to outlive pain and become great, which leads him on the road to the divine life. This gives him enthusiasm, a superb heroism indifferent to calamity; if he is a poet he will write his heart out, even for a generation that has no eyes or ears for him; if he desires to help others personally, he is capable of giving his very life to save one wretched child from out of a million miserable ones. For it is not his puny personal effort in the world that he considers — not his little show of labour done; what he is conscious of is the over-mastering desire to work with the beneficent forces of supernature, to become one with the divine mystery, and when he can forget time and circumstances, he is face to face with that mystery. Many have fancied they must reach it by death; but none have come back to tell us that this is so. We have no proof that man is not as blind

beyond the grave as he is on this side of it. Has he entered the eternal thought? If not, the mystery is a mystery still.

To one who is entering occultism in earnest, all the trouble of the world seems suddenly apparent. There is a point of experience when father and mother, wife and child, become indistinguishable, and when they seem no more familiar or friendly than a company of strangers. The one dearest of all may be close at hand and unchanged, and yet is as far as if death had come between. Then all distinction between pleasure and pain, love and hate, have vanished. A melancholy, keener than that felt by a man in his first fierce experience of grief, overshadows the soul. It is the pain of the struggle to break the shell in which man has prisoned himself. Once broken there is no more pain; all ties are severed, all personal demands are silenced forever. The man has forced himself to face the great mystery, which is now a mystery no longer, for he has become part of it. It is essentially the mystery of the ages, and these have no longer any meaning for him to whom time and space and all other limitations are but passing experiences. It has become to him a reality, profound, indeed, because it is bottomless; wide, indeed, because it is limitless.

He has touched on the greatness of life, which is sublime in its impartiality and effortless generosity. He is friend and lover to all those living beings that come within his consciousness, not to the one or two chosen ones only — which is indeed only an enlarged selfishness. While

## The Mystery of All Time

a man retains his humanity, it is certain that one or two chosen ones will give him more pleasure by contact than all the rest of the beings in the Universe and all the heavenly host; but he has to remember and recognize what this preference is. It is not a selfish thing which has to be crushed out, if the love is the love that gives; freedom from attachments is not a meritorious condition in itself. The freedom needed is not from those who cling to you, but from those to whom you cling. The familiar phrase of the lover 'I cannot live without you' must be, to the occultist, words which cannot be uttered. If he has but one anchor, the great tides will sweep him away into nothingness. But the natural preference which must exist in every man for a few persons is one form of the lessons of Life.

By contact with these other souls he has other channels by which to penetrate to the great mystery, for every soul

touches it, even the darkest. Solitude is a great teacher, but society is even greater. It is so hard to find and take the highest part of those we love, that in the very difficulty of the search there is a serious education. We realize when making that effort, far more clearly what it is that creates the mystery in which we live, and makes us so ignorant. It is the swaying, vibrating, never-resting desires of the animal soul in man. The life of this part of man's nature is so vigorous and strongly developed from the ages during which he has dwelt in it, that it is almost impossible to still it so as to obtain contact with the noble spirit. This constant and confusing life, this ceaseless occupation with the trifles of the hour, this readiness in surface emotion, this quickness to be pleased, amused, or distressed, is what baffles our sight and dulls our inner senses. Till we can use these the mystery remains in its Sphinx-like silence. ✧

**When the unit thinks only of itself, the whole, which is built of units, perishes, and the unit itself is destroyed.**

**So it is throughout Nature on every plane of life. This, therefore, is the first lesson to be learnt.**

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What the *true* occultist seeks, is not knowledge, or growth, or happiness, or power, for himself; but having become *conscious* that the harmony of which he forms part is broken on the outer plane, he seeks the means to resolve that discord into a higher harmony.

This harmony is Theosophy — Divine or Universal Wisdom — the root whence have sprung all 'religions', that is, all 'bonds which unite men together', which is the true meaning of the word religion.

Therefore, Theosophy is not a 'religion', but Religion itself, the very 'binding of men together' in one Universal Brotherhood.

Anon

# Theosophical Work around the World

## **The Divya-jñāna Deepikā**

The *Divya-jñāna Deepikā* is the Telugu journal which goes to the members of the Telugu and Rayalaseema Federations, both of which use the Telugu language. On the afternoon of 9 February 2008, the international President, Mrs Radha Burnier, was the chief guest at a programme featuring the release of the special Centenary number of the *Divya-jñāna Deepikā*. In the evening, she gave a public lecture on 'The Deeper Truths We Need', which was followed by dinner.

The importance of reaching out to members, especially large numbers (the Telugu-speaking Federations have about 1,600 members), cannot be overstressed. The magazine is one of the ways to contact them and keep them in touch with Theosophical views through articles drawing attention to important points in the Theosophical outlook.

## **Rayalaseema Federation Conference**

This Conference preceded the above centenary celebration, and was held in the presence of well-known members and others. Mr K. Narasimha Rao, a respected member of Guntur Lodge and Guest of Honour, was particularly welcomed at the opening. The President of the Federation, Mr P. Thanga Raj, Mr K. Krishna Phani, Dr K. V. K. Nehru, Mr A. C. Vatcha, and the Chief Guest, Mrs Radha Burnier, were notable participants.

On the morning of 9 February, before the end of the Conference, there was a symposium on the life of Col. H. S. Olcott, his vision, and the future of the Theosophical Society. The Conference closed with a much-appreciated session of questions and answers by Mrs Radha Burnier, translated by Mr K. Krishna Phani.

The programme closed with the celebration of the 125th Anniversary of Bellary Sanmarga Theosophical Lodge. On this occasion, Mr P. Thanga Raj, gave a talk on Theosophy, and Mr Krishna Phani also spoke, after which proceedings came to an end in peace and harmony.

## **Adyar Day Celebrations**

Adyar Day has been celebrated on 17 February for many years. In fact, it was called Adyar Day even before the death of Col. H.S. Olcott, our first international President, who was elected for life. He died not only in the presence of those who looked after him (Annie Besant, Mrs Russak, and others), but also in that of his Master.

On 17 February 2008 members and friends came together in the Headquarters Hall at Adyar to mark this occasion. Mrs Radha Burnier, international President, spoke about the history of Adyar Day before introducing the three speakers: Mrs Parvati Gopalaratnam, who has lived and worked at Adyar for many years

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and is one of the oldest residents on the estate; Miss Carin Citroen, another equally long-standing worker and resident of the Adyar compound; and Mr Shailendra Agrawal, a new addition to the volunteers for the Society's work. (His grandfather and father were members and contributed to the work of the Indian Section for many years.) Shailendra is carrying out work in various honorary capacities, including making improvements in the Garden Department, and is also a computer software expert. The three speakers talked about the history, purpose, and future of Adyar. At the conclusion of the meeting, members who wished to do so were invited to offer flowers in front of the Founders' statues.

### George Duguay

George Duguay, a key worker for the Canadian Theosophical Society, passed away on 29 January 2008 in Brampton,

Ontario, at 76. He joined the Theosophical Society in 1957, and was active for fifty years in various positions and Lodges. In the late 1950's he served as Treasurer of Montreal Lodge, and as lecturer and publicity coordinator for Isis Lodge. In the early 1970's, at the suggestion of Mr John Coats, he helped to establish Christos Lodge in Montreal for French-speaking members. In 1988 he served as Regional Secretary for the Canadian Federation. In 2000, after retirement, he was elected Regional Secretary of the Canadian Federation.

In 2001, he played a key role in writing the by-laws and overseeing the incorporation of the Canadian Theosophical Association, whose first President he became. He did much fine work until his death, attending to the printing and distribution of *The Light Bearer* and continuing to serve as Secretary/Treasurer of York Lodge, Toronto. ✧

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### THE THEOSOPHIST

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S. HARIHARA RAGHAVAN, PUBLISHER

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