

Presidential Address

To the 133rd Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society
Adyar, 26 December 2008

It is with much pleasure that I welcome all of you to this 133rd International Convention, hoping that those who come will be able to respond to the beautiful atmosphere which is in Adyar all the time. From the very earliest years of the Society people have met here like this — a few in the early days, and many nowadays, to have a Convention so those who can come, meet each other and talk over Theosophical work, and expand inwardly both heart and mind. Let us offer ourselves to the Elder Brethren and make our minds free to receive what they are always ready to give.

May those who are the embodiments of Love immortal bless with their help and guidance this Society, founded to be a channel for their work. May They inspire it with their Wisdom, strengthen it with their Power, and energize it with their Activity.

As you all know, during the first part of this year an election of some importance took place. The election is not meant to be a reason for us to be unreasonable. Until now, the Theosophical Society has completed more than one hundred and thirty years; we may say it has been doing well. But this year, there were some members who regarded the election as an opportunity to compete. Very few members perhaps understand that the Theosophical Society has an inner significance which unites all true members throughout the world, and keeps the structure safe and whole. This time, those who were voting had a choice between someone living in Adyar, which has been called 'The Master's Home', and others who felt that the President can function

just as well, even though he may not reside at Adyar.

The election is over. Dr John Algeo was able to get 4323 votes in his favour, while I received 8560 votes. The number of votes is not important, but as far as I can see it is of much importance to decide from where the President should function.

Adyar should not be seen and thought of merely as an entity without a living force. It seems essential to me that Adyar, and to a lesser extent every Section Headquarters, should demonstrate the essential character of the Society, lifting it above petty concerns. We all have an opportunity to proceed according to the wishes of those higher beings on the ladder of evolution who are watching over the events of earth. It must shake off what

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has been useful to people at the time before human incarnation, but have less and less value as they become truly human. This is important for the real human being, not those who are still tainted by the past, to perform its role in evolution. It is the special duty of those who see the mid-point, and appreciate its importance. They learn to abandon all lower concerns, and work towards the heights to which humanity will rise. An election therefore, in the Society, must not be grounded in notions that may take a person into ways that do not help.

What is the way for human beings to rise above to the human stage? The first fact of importance is to realize that many of the thoughts, feelings and actions which surround and instigate us are not compatible with the real work we have to do. As *The Voice of the Silence* says, every person needs 'the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions' and blend mind with soul. 'The rose must re-become the bud, born of its parent stem, before the parasite has eaten through its heart . . . The self of matter and the Self of Spirit can never meet.' We human beings must live in such a way that during each incarnation we live purer lives. Therefore we have to strive, not do the contrary.

The human stage is of great importance because from the beginning it is a stage where the animal nature of the candidate is overcome altogether. This conscious work must be carried out, then progress takes place by itself. The student of Theosophy belongs to a category which

is very important for this reason; then at least a few responsible persons will act in a manner which exercises an influence which is spiritual.

The spiritual is different from the material, social, intellectual and religious fields. 'Religion' can be more harmful than helpful if people misunderstand it. It often demands that a person does what he is told to by people who seem very different. But actually, if one does not cling to anything, but seeks only to know in a deeper way life's meaning, it does not matter whether one is Christian, Hindu, Zoroastrian or Muslim or any other category. The truly religious mind is a pure mind.

In the early days of the Society the members had the opportunity to learn rightly what religion is. The motto of the Society (*satyāt nāsti paro dharmah*) 'There is No Religion Higher than Truth' often brings to our mind the Truth about this way of living. The way anyone claims to be on the religious path — behaviour, interest, and so on — indicates what he is. If he is truly religious he learns to be affectionate to all people, not considering whether the other person is poor, rich, well read or simple. The truly religious person and the real Theosophist are not different. Often we think that the religious consciousness depends on words and phrases, but that may be completely wrong; and religion is not dependent on what a person says, but on how a person lives. The person may be a weaver or a tailor dealing with clothes, but essentially pure and carrying purity with him.

In modern days, especially among

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Indians, superficiality is stressed. The whole of society depends on the people who are part of it, and on their attitudes. So we can on the whole think of modern society as materialistic as most people are concerned with material values, which is quite opposed to the religious life. The religious person on the other hand applies the values he knows theosophically; he is more concerned with his heart, not with his hands. The hands, the feet, the whole body responds to what the mind requires. Can one do one's work in the world which

may be weaving or anything else, but with the religious quality necessary for raising the consciousness?

As Theosophists, we must, each one of us, be a person showing to those who come along that one can be engaged in almost any work, not involving slaughtering, or cheating and so on, and yet be religious, because the one thing that matters for everyone is the condition of the heart and mind. A Theosophist therefore, tends to be someone different from the ordinary man or woman.

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The Indian Section celebrated its 117th convention, as usual, within the ambience of the International Convention in 2007. The membership of the Section on 30 September 2008 was 12,917. This means that the Indian Section continues to be the largest one we have. Although the names of those who have passed away, and also of those who have not renewed their membership have been removed, it still remains the largest Section in the world. The General Secretary has urged members to go on working steadily towards universal values. It is our responsibility to live Theosophy, not merely study Theosophy. The Section is improving its work though at times it is difficult, but problems are being faced.

Many programmes were arranged throughout the year. More than eighty members attended the North Indian Study Camp. Lectures on *Human Regeneration*,

The Way of Self-Knowledge and *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* were discussed. Prof. P. Krishna and Mrs Radha Burnier led another study course on J. Krishnamurti's book, *Freedom from the Known*. One hundred and fifty delegates registered for the South Indian Conference, and several people gave fruitful talks. Many other Federation Programmes took place during the year.

The General Secretary and his wife, Mrs Sundaram, attended the Triennial Conference of the Indo-Pacific Federation which was held early in November in the Philippines. The General Secretary also attended the Marathi Federation Meeting, whose theme was 'Live to Benefit Humanity'. During the Rayalaseema Federation meeting, the centennial issue of the Telugu magazine was presented to the audience, and talks were given by the President. The 125th anniversary of the Anantha Lodge in Trivandrum brought

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Kerala members together. The International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, spoke on 'Unity — the Way Ahead'. The National Lecturers travelled all over India, and tried to stimulate the work. All regions throughout India have been active in the work of the Theosophical Order of Service which is divided in such a way that can be effective.

The General Secretary has made an appeal for funds to repair and renew properties which require maintenance. The places where funds have accumulated contribute to this work, which has commenced on some of the Headquarters buildings at Varanasi. During the year some well-known members passed away, including Bro. Anandamurti Srivastava, who was for many years a worker at the Varanasi Headquarters. Swami Anand, former Secretary of the U. P. Federation and Mr V. M. Parmanand who generously donated a lakh of rupees to the Section and belonged to Bombay, were also among those who passed to other regions.

A meeting specially for officers was tried and proved useful. The General Secretary, Mr S. Sundaram, made a number of valuable suggestions, including help with understanding the Rules and Regulations. Office-bearers should now have a somewhat better concept of Lodge level and Federation level work.

Sri Lanka is functioning under a Presidential Agency. It is reported that monthly meetings for members are supplemented with guest speakers delivering talks on various spiritual matters. This is followed by a free lunch.

Three thousand copies of Colonel Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* were distributed by Hamsa Lodge, Badulla, to schools and the university library. This Lodge also brings out a periodical called *Sanatana Dhamma*.

The Presidential Representative for South-East Asia reports that, due to unrest in the area, it has not been possible to contact all members. The Seramban Lodge in Malaysia has been restarted with the admission of five new members, while in Selangor the work is going on well. In Bangladesh there are five Lodges and a Study Centre. All have regular study classes. The Lodge at Chittagong in eastern Bangladesh has been very active, and along with Besant Lodge is planning to have a meeting to coordinate attempts to strengthen the work.

The Singapore Lodge started the year with 336 members. Forty-one new members have received diplomas this year. Continued focus has been laid on the presentation of *A Course in Theosophy*. This programme is their principal means of attracting new members. Twenty-one members attended the Indo-Pacific Conference in the Philippines. Speakers from India, the Philippines, Australia and America gave lectures during the year. This has been the centenary year for the TOS, and support included help to elderly persons.

The Australian Section has been doing well. Their funds have increased, and their total number of members is 1312. Membership fees are subsidized when needed by the National Headquarters. The National Members receive letters from

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the General Secretary who also visited a number of places and spoke at the Lodges. Two new study papers were brought out, one being on *The First Leaf of TS History* in tribute to Colonel Olcott. A copy of *Buddhist Meditation* by Samdhong Rinpoche was sent free to all the members while the *Buddhist Catechism*, in memory of Colonel Olcott, was sent at almost no cost to members. The library of the Section was enriched by a donation of personal files from Elaine Murdoch. A thesis entitled 'A Visionary Space' showing the influence of Theosophy on artists, was donated by Dr Jenny McFarlane to the Campbell Library. The theme of the School of Theosophy was 'Occult Science — Principles and Applications.' The director was Dr Edi Bilimoria. The former President of the Indo-Pacific Federation, Mr Pedro Oliveira, was appreciative of the generous support from the Section.

The New Zealand Section is among one of the bigger ones, having 899 members. While the membership has dropped from 982 to 899, we are told this is due to serious culling in two major centres, but membership in several smaller areas is tending to rise. The new General Secretary, Mr Warwick Keys, believes that there should be greater self-reliance in the future. After a lot of work (some of which was done by the former General Secretary, Mr John Vorstermans) the Charities Act is now in force. The Section magazine has changed its name and format and is now called *TheoSophia*.

The Philippines Section commemorated its 75th anniversary and many old

members were present at an exhibition of the Publishing House in Manila. At the National Headquarters, a workshop for Lodge officers and leaders was held last August. The Golden Link School, which the Section runs, produced its first high school graduates. The Kern Foundation has sent money to help the School. A number of services and workshops have been established to help young people. A meditation group has been started at the National Headquarters. Among those who passed away during the year was Mr Romeo Velarde who has spent much of his energy on Theosophical work after his retirement.

The American Section has had difficulties because of the economic situation. The General Secretary mentions that they have had to tighten their belts and the membership has dropped by 172, making a total of about 4000 members. It is mentioned that fewer people have joined the Society, but more are interested in making use of Internet programmes. There are about 110 groups out of which there are 45 active branches, and the rest are study groups. The Department of Education has been producing study courses and other work, helping to keep the Society alive. The Audio-Video Department produced eighteen new videos and DVDs. The Library has been awarded a grant of \$25,000 which will enable the conversion of the records to a standard electronic format. The Publishing House sales were disappointing, but a multi-faceted approach that was introduced has made

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Theosophy offer greater service.

The General Secretary of the Canadian Association, Mrs Lorraine Christensen, reports that many changes for the better have taken place. Mr George Duguay, a former General Secretary, who was instrumental in setting up a website, passed away. The newly appointed officers have been provided with a manual giving guidelines, so that they can proceed confidently. Work on their website is underway, and for the time being the magazine *The Light Bearer* will be produced twice yearly.

The General Secretary, Mr Eric McGough, of the English Section reports that interest in their programmes has increased, resulting in increased membership in many Lodges, and much enthusiasm across the Section. The current membership is 1033 and increase is 35. Redecoration of the Headquarters has been completed. The Welsh Region had its triennial congress in June. A study course on *The Secret Doctrine* is being led by Mr Eric McGough. In March 2008 all the members of the Cardiff Lodge resigned, calling themselves 'The Cardiff Theosophical Society'. But, twenty-five new people became members, adding to eighty-one members in Wales.

Work is going on well in Ireland. Belfast Lodge meets regularly, as does Limerick Lodge. Limerick Lodge, in addition, holds a healing service. There is a good group of members in Coleraine, and a number of meetings have been held in Dublin. The website has been running for some time, and it is hoped to produce

a newsletter. Study notes throughout the year, and a covering letter from Mrs Marie Harkness, have been sent to all the members. A successful convention was held in Dublin, and the members were very happy to meet together.

The General Secretary of the Swedish Section, Mr Pertti Spets, reports that there are seven Lodges in Sweden and some study groups, making a total of 162 members. Studies on Self-culture and Reincarnation have been taken up by the study groups. There have been lectures in Stockholm, and in July the Summer School was held there.

In Norway, the work has been kept alive by the Organizing Secretary, Mrs Agnes Gassemyr. She reports that the Watch-Tower Notes were sent every month to members, so that they are able to keep in touch with the work. A successful seminar with Prof. P. Krishna was held in May. Meetings to discuss the work, including a website, will be functioning fairly soon. Members are concentrating on making the Lodges work.

The Italian Section and the Finnish Section are among the largest and most active Sections in Europe. The Italian Section has 1077 members, and is preparing to have the World Congress in Rome in 2010. A larger Headquarters, including a publishing house was set up in Vicenza and donations have increased. The Trieste Headquarters has been remodelled, conserving the old charm. Some other places in Italy are managing their resources so that they can improve their Headquarters in the next few years.

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The General Secretary, Mr Antonio Girardi, reports many features which show that improvements are taking place, including the distribution of 1300 copies of the magazine *Rivista Italiana di Teosofia* sent to subscribers. Some new Study Centres were opened. The General Secretary visited a number of places giving talks and initiating fresh enthusiasm. Prof. P. Krishna was a special impetus when he took part in a seminar near Venice with about eighty people attending. The Italian Section helps Eastern countries, the work of the Olcott Education Society in India, educational activities in Pakistan and Manila, and so on. The General Secretary reports that they have taken an interest in the publication of books by Madame Maria Montessori, who was a member of the Society in Italy.

The Theosophical Society in Spain held as usual in March the Iberian gathering. The subject discussed was *Search for the Path Going Inside*, and about sixty-seven persons attended. There was also a Summer School on the subject of *Human Perfection*, and 130 persons attended. The Theosophical Publishing House brought out several books.

In Portugal, the General Secretary, Dr Licio Correia, reported that the Section is working with enthusiasm and commitment. Some members have been studying Theosophical works and others are focusing on a basic course in Theosophy. All basic Theosophical festivals were duly celebrated, and every month a lecture was given by an invited lecturer. Last June the two Lodges in Porto inaugurated their new

premises. A talk was given on this occasion, and some members from Lisbon attended.

The work of the four Lodges in Slovenia continues. A mini school, a winter school and also a summer school were part of the programme, and a few members from Croatia came. There are seventy-one members in this Section, and we hope that it will increase because of the enthusiasm of the members.

Mr Thomas Martinovich, who looks after the Hungarian TS, reports that regular monthly meetings are held, usually concluding with group meditation. Some books were translated and are available on the computer. Public lectures were held at Budapest four times a year and once a month in another place. Their goal is to increase the number of Lodge members. In the eastern Lodge of Debrecen, 'Living Questions on Theosophy' were discussed, and articles and material from *The Theosophist* were made known to the participants.

The Theosophical Society in Finland has been active as usual with many kinds of programmes that are held in their summer house in Kreivila in cooperation with Theosophically-based organizations. A new Lodge called Isis-Iooz was started. The web pages of I. K. Taimni's *Science of Yoga* and Rohit Mehta's *Creative Silence* were compiled in Finnish, while Ms Eeva Hippula compiled a book entitled *Notes about the History of Finnish Theosophy*. The activities in Estonia have generally been useful. There is a good library in Tallin and several in other

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places. At the end of September 2008, the Section had 460 members.

The French Section has been carrying on in the usual way studying *The Mahatma Letters* under the leadership of Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu. Prof. Robert Ellwood and his wife were the main guests at the Summer School of the Latin countries. The German Section is still quite small. The weekend meetings in the north of the country and the usual Summer School in Lippstadt, with the subject 'Joy — Divine Spark', took place. A new General Secretary, and a new Committee have been elected, and we hope that the Section will do good work as a result.

In Greece, after a period of transition, Mr Theodoros Katsifis was elected as the General Secretary, with Mrs Erica Georgiades as the Secretary. We are told that the Section has approximately 150% more members, and four new Lodges have been founded. The Headquarters of the Society in Greece was extensively renovated, and a study room has been established. They have very many publishing and translating projects underway. The official magazine *Ilisos* has 600 subscribers in Greece and abroad. It is published every three months, and every year articles by well-known Theosophists are included in their magazine.

In Iceland, the General Secretary reported that fifty-one meetings were held during the year, with an attendance of between forty and sixty. There are seven active Lodges in Iceland with two outside the capital. Open-house meetings, with programmes including dialogue,

DVD films with discussion, and refreshments are held weekly. The income from the refreshments helped to run the Section Headquarters. Approximately sixty members attended a summer seminar in Estonia.

The Dutch Section had a difficult year during which two members were expelled. The Headquarters in Amsterdam has a number of people carrying out research, and it seems as if the library has an increasing membership. This Section has nine Lodges and seven Study Centres, with a total of 398 members.

The Theosophical Society in East and Central Africa is spread over four countries. Some short talks are given in Gujarati, apart from the English talks, because there are people who do not know English. The important Theosophical days were observed. Two youth seminars were arranged in Nairobi. The statistics show a decrease in membership, but this is inevitable because Indians are leaving, and many Africans are not yet familiar with the Theosophical point of view. The TOS has been celebrating its centenary and they hope that the authorities concerned will issue a stamp to mark this occasion.

The West African Section continues its work which covers the English-speaking countries, namely, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Liberia. The studies during the year were concentrated on the Ancient Wisdom. Many Theosophical volumes were sold in the bookshop in Ghana, and the study groups also used books from this source. Two journalists interviewed the General Secretary about the aims of the

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Society and an article was printed in a newspaper called *The Moment*. Mr John Boakye, who assists the General Secretary, attended the School of the Wisdom at Adyar. Free copies of *At the Feet of the Master*, translated in the Twi language, were distributed to all the members who do not know English. On the Ivory Coast, weekly meetings were held. Many members and sympathizers studied *The Key to Theosophy*. These studies are particularly helpful for younger members. The work on the African Headquarters building has progressed well, the ground and first floors having been completed. In spite of the difficult ongoing political situation in Africa, the Pan-African Federation's Chairman, Mr Tom Davis, reported that activities continue, and their newsletter is distributed regularly.

From Southern Africa, the General Secretary, Mrs Susan Kaschula reports that a new Lodge with twenty-nine members was chartered. This is the first new Lodge in fifty-eight years. The use of Prof. K. V. K. Nehru's PowerPoint presentation was successful. Attempts are being made to revive the work in Cape Town and Durban.

The President of the Inter-American Federation, Mrs Terezinha Kind, reports that the 'First All Central American Convention' was held in El Salvador and resulted in an increase of members, mostly in the Central American countries. The larger Sections are encouraged to help smaller neighbours by interchanging information, materials and experiences.

The IATF Newsletter is distributed twice yearly. At all meetings, there is an emphasis on working together under the guidance of the International Headquarters in Adyar.

Argentina has been active, particularly in the San Rafael centre. They have had a number of sessions with various members including one with younger members. In Mendoza and San Rafael, there were two conferences and a winter school, with thirty-one people in attendance. Similarly, other areas have had gatherings. *The Theosophist* has been translated, and sent to all members in addition to their own magazine. The total number of members is 333. The book *Transformation from the Internal to the External* was printed and distributed, and revision of the *Theosophical Glossary* is being prepared.

The General Secretary of Brazil reports that the membership is now 776, which shows a reduction. Some Lodges and study groups have closed. The system of paying annual dues in instalments is going on. Every year a renewal appeal is made to members asking for their contributions to support the Theosophical work. Two thousand copies of their magazine *Sophia* is published and distributed every three months. There were three national gatherings which studied various Theosophical subjects, including the writings of Clara Codd, N. Sri Ram and I. K. Taimni.

Special meetings are held at the Headquarters and the lectures were useful. The Theosophical Institute in Brazil also held seminars and workshops. Members in all regions participated in various

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programmes. The work is going on well in other places besides Brasilia. The advertising department has done a lot of work, especially preparing talks and seminars which they can broadcast. The TOS is also active and publishes a journal of its own. The Raja Centre holds several seminars during each year.

The three Lodges in Costa Rica are active. A workshop on Therapeutic Touch was conducted by Mrs Nelda Samarel when she visited the country. In Cartago, under the leadership of Mrs Anna Howell, *The Voice of the Silence* was studied. The Society has been given permission by the government to build a 700 sq. m. building. Study programmes are regularly conducted, and a national gathering took place during the year. Meetings were organized by all the Lodges and Mrs Isis Resende visited some of them.

The Mexican Section held a series of nineteen public lectures from March to August on 'What is the Invisible in Theosophy?'. At their National Headquarters a new course was started by Ms Lissette Arroyo called 'Me and Theosophy'. The Mexican Section celebrated all the Theosophical dates and their own anniversary.

In the Ukraine, two Lodges with more than fifty members are working regularly. The keynote of the last year was 'The Inner Guidance Comes from Within'. About a hundred persons participated, coming not only from various places in the Ukraine, but also from Russia, Kiev, Odessa, etc.

In Peru, the Lodges organized talks in October and November which proved to be useful. There are twenty-nine members

at present. Their magazine could not be published because of financial difficulties. The TOS has been active and the first stage of a three-stage effort to recover their property has been initiated.

In Bolivia, a national gathering took place on 'The Path of Discipleship' in San Benito in April. A similar gathering on 'The Way to Adeptship' was held in August. Mrs Isis Resende visited several cities. Weekly meetings continue at the four Lodges. The Theosophical Society in Bolivia is the legal owner of a flat in the town of La Paz.

In Uruguay, all the Theosophical commemorations were celebrated. The total membership is sixty-six. The study of books and informal meetings continue. In Venezuela, work goes on as usual, and includes the commemorations of the Society, their main theme during the year being 'Theosophy as a Process of Healing'. Another small region was Central America, where there are thirty-one members in Nicaragua, and some more in El Salvador and Guatemala. The passing of Mrs Carmen Aguilar Alvarez in Guatemala was a loss, but a new Organizing Secretary has been elected.

The General Secretary of Indonesia reports that a new group with about twenty-five members was formed in Kaliabu in February. A translation of *The Etheric Double* was translated some years ago and has been published for internal use in Java. Two Study Camps near Malang, focusing on the seven manuals of Theosophy, were attended by about twenty participants. Money was distributed

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to the necessary agencies to assist with overcoming earthquake damage. The annual convention was held in the Sala Lodge in Surakarta.

The Theosophical Order of Service has been celebrating its centenary and this involved planning further work that can be done. I am glad to say that there is much more interest than there used to be, and this can be attributed to the enthusiasm of the organizing head, Mrs Diana Dunningham Chapotin.

The Olcott Education Society at Adyar has four main activities, one of which is the HPB Hostel with twenty students. The training given to the hostel boys is such that it will not alienate the boys from their family and relatives. Ninety-one children attend the Social Welfare Centre. The tailoring course issued certificates for work done to produce various items. At the Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary, Dr P. D. Jagannathan and his team cared for more than 8000 animals; a small

proportion of them underwent the operation to control births. The outreach programme operates in six areas, and 80 to 100 animals are treated on most visits.

The work of the Theosophical Publishing House has continued to be satisfactory with good sales figures. Three revised editions were printed and twenty-two books were reprinted and brought out during the year. The Adyar Library acquired quite a number of books; Miss Mary Anderson donated many from her collection. The work of cataloguing continues. The Library readers numbered 2091 and borrowers 835. Lamination of books has been lagging because of a dearth of the films required. Many visitors and scholars continue to visit the Library.

The Besant Scouting Centre during the year had 1600 young people using the facilities, and during their stay, they gained some appreciation of the Theosophical Society. This activity admits many into the ambience of the Society.

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We learn from Theosophical literature that the universe is made up of vast, in fact unknown, areas and these are related to everything that we know at this external level. Scientists may acknowledge this fact, because the more they discover of the limitlessness of the universe, the more appears to be ahead of them. But the scientist has as yet no knowledge of this. Throughout the vast course of evolution everything has converged to bring about more and more intelligence; it is like a flower that opens itself ever more

beautifully. We know that there is a great difference in intelligence between living creatures, but we are unable to say why. The difference between the intelligence of ants and bees and the larger intelligence of the elephants or dogs, between rather primitive human beings and the brilliant man or woman, has no explanation. They all seem to be developing, but are not the same. We have to open our inner eyes to understand this.

We learn while studying Theosophy about the Great Plan. It is a mode in which

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the divine mind makes known something of its own nature. Real knowledge may have something to do with knowing how the mind becomes divine. Knowledge is unlimited when it can understand all this. In the philosophical literature of India they say that knowing the external includes not only the phenomenal but also noumenal. When we live in desires and thoughts stimulated by sense-experience, we are unable to be aware of subtler dimensions.

The Masters wrote about something which seems simple, but is difficult to follow. This is knowledge of our neighbours. Who are they? In *The Key to Theosophy* Madame Blavatsky indicates that the book contains not only what the reader may require, but the basis of Theosophy, and this can be passed on to our neighbours. A philanthropic attitude must go side by side with an altruistic spirit. Knowledge cannot be an objective by itself. This is clearly stated in one of the letters from the Masters, 'Be a missionary of love and charity.'

We tend to look charitably at ourselves, and ignore weaknesses, but harp

on about the weaknesses of other people. But the others are struggling as much as ourselves. Therefore we must try to be more open, and widen our feelings. Obstacles to understanding are many, and include lust, illusion and hatred, which do not help us to understand. Hence, never add fuel to the fire.

When we are more in harmony with the divine mind, we make room for a little part of the knowledge to come down here. An uncharitable attitude indicates ignorance about the divine mind. In Indian tradition, listening with the heart is said to be part of learning. If once we begin to learn of the presence of what we may call God, the consciousness becomes deeper and knows more. *The Voice of the Silence* says: 'Before the soul can see, the harmony within must be attained.' A condition of being awake to the spiritual more and more, the harmony 'within' may be achieved. The preparation may be more important than getting wisdom, because the condition of the heart and mind allows contact, or fails to do so, depending on ourselves. Let us ponder and learn. ✧

Him we can trust under *all* circumstances, and his faithful service is pledged to us come well, come ill . . . Where can we find an equal devotion? He is one who never questions, but obeys; who may make innumerable mistakes out of excessive zeal, but never is unwilling to repair his fault even at the cost of the greatest self-humiliation; who esteems the sacrifice of comfort and even life something to be cheerfully risked whenever necessary; who will eat any food, or even go without; sleep on any bed, work in any place, fraternize with any outcast, endure any privation for the cause.

KH

From Knowledge to Wisdom — and from Wisdom to Knowledge?

MARY ANDERSON

WE KNOW that knowledge is not wisdom. At least, we know it at the level of knowledge!

What is the level of knowledge? In Theosophical terminology, it is the lower mind, the everyday mind, *kāma-manas*. *Kāma-manas* implies not only the logical mind (*manas*) but also the emotions (*kāma*). We cannot think without feeling or feel without thinking. Knowledge is often vitiated, unconsciously, by prejudices, by personal feelings. It is said that with the logical mind one can prove anything (perhaps by reasoning on unproven, insufficient or distorted facts, as unscrupulous lawyers or corrupt judges may do). There is the story of how a wall fell on a thief when he was trying to break into a house and injured him. He took the householder to court, but the housekeeper accused the mason who had built the wall. When the judge sent for the mason, the latter pointed out that, while mixing the cement, he had been distracted by a beautiful woman walking to and fro. The beautiful woman explained that a certain jeweller was to blame; she had had to go again and again to his shop, since he had not made her jewellery according to her

specifications. And finally the jeweller was condemned. This little story is exaggerated but it may remind us of how justice is sometimes flouted.

If the level of knowledge is the lower mind or *kāma-manas*, that is, the level of our personal wishes, what is the level of wisdom? Is it not the higher mind, the illuminated mind, the level of insight or true intuition, *buddhi-manas*? *Buddhi* is not only wisdom but also love. Knowledge — in the sphere of *kāma-manas* — belongs to the personality, while wisdom — in the sphere of *buddhi-manas* — is an aspect of the spiritual Ego.

Apart from the level of human consciousness, there are other factors which throw light on the difference between knowledge and wisdom. The method for acquiring knowledge tends to be analytical: facts are dissected; information is memorized. Wisdom, on the other hand, seeks to link isolated facts in synthesis. Knowledge grows by increase, by the accumulation of more and more data of increasing complexity. Wisdom grows by decrease, decrease in the number of facts and in their complexity, but increase in simplicity

Ms **Mary Anderson** is former international Vice-President and has lectured widely in several languages.

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and depth. 'Learning consists in daily accumulating. The practice of Tao consists in daily diminishing' (*Tao-Teh-King*, 48). Once, when the Buddha was in a forest with his monks, he refused to answer their metaphysical questions, but, taking a handful of leaves, he asked them: 'Which are more numerous: the leaves in my hand or the leaves in this forest?' He explained that the leaves in the whole forest represented all knowledge, while the few leaves in his hand could be compared to the knowledge (or wisdom) needed for liberation.

What is the sphere of influence of knowledge? Knowledge remains on its own level, i.e., *kāma-manas*, the level of theory (except of course when applied to such practical activities as driving a car, cooking a meal, etc.). Thus knowledge is horizontal. But wisdom radiates inward or upward towards inner oneness and outward or downward towards daily living. It is, so to speak, vertical.

What does this mean? Knowledge remains on the theoretical level in that it does not transform a person's character and result in a change of his way of living. Wisdom, on the other hand, is at the same time transcendental and practical. Knowledge can enable one to conceive of unity but not to approach it. Wisdom, on the other hand, both contains in itself the concept of the unity of all things and is an approach to unity. Wisdom is in itself a transformation of character and thus of our way of living.

An example: knowledge often strengthens pride, while wisdom leads to

humility. 'Be humble, if thou wouldst attain to Wisdom. Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered' (*The Voice of the Silence*, verses 161-2). 'Wherever there is Wisdom, as distinguished from knowledge, there is the light of humility. Humility makes one wise' (*Thoughts for Aspirants*, N. Sri Ram). Thus humility is not only the effect but also the cause of wisdom.

Wisdom influences character and daily living, while theoretical knowledge influences neither one's character nor one's way of life. After a lecture in which, among other things, cruelty to animals was mentioned, a young lady came to me in tears. She spoke of the depth of her compassion for animals. But later I learned that the same young lady ate meat. Her knowledge was only theory, her compassion only sentimentality.

A complete change in character — in the sense above all, of purification — is a necessary condition for the development of wisdom. Someone who is cruel or even criminal may become a clever scientist or an acclaimed philosopher, but can never become a sage, unless there is a complete change in that person's character.

We can now ask: Can knowledge lead to wisdom? One might say: To a certain extent and if certain conditions are fulfilled. How can it lead to wisdom, that is, how can the activity of *kāma-manas* further the activity of *buddhi-manas*?

1. *The development of certain attributes of kāma-manas* is a necessary preparation for an approach to *buddhi-manas*. Such attributes would include a

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good memory (for what is really important), clarity and order in one's thinking, and the ability not only to analyse but to seek synthesis, that is, holistic thought. What prevents holistic thought is the emphasis we give to differences, to divisive factors. What hinders clarity and order in one's thought is the subjective element, personal desires, selfish wishes, that is, *kāma*.

This brings us to a second type of necessary preparation for the development of wisdom:

2. *An ethical life*, that is, righteousness and unselfishness (or love, which is an attribute of *buddhi*) exemplified in our actions, speech, feelings and thoughts.

3. *Going beyond the level of ordinary logical thought*: Logical thought at the level of *kāma-manas* is only a means and not an end in itself. If knowledge leads to wisdom, this means that *kāma-manas* cleansed of *kāma* is transformed into *buddhi-manas*. In other words, knowledge cleansed of selfishness becomes wisdom. From a practical point of view, how can we go beyond logical thought? There are two stages or factors: evolution and revolution.

Evolution is described in Commander Bowen's notes on Mme Blavatsky's teachings as the way of *jñāna-yoga*, that is, the yoga of knowledge leading to wisdom. The mind seeks logical explanations and finds a wonderful philosophical system which satisfies it for a time but then proves too narrow and is given up. Then the mind seeks further and finds a better, more inclusive system which also satisfies

it for a time but then again becomes too narrow and is given up. And so it goes on. Systems are discovered and in time rejected. It is a process of *neti, neti*, of trial and error, or advancing by rejecting — until the moment of

Revolution, when one realizes that no system is a 'theory of everything' or is 'that knowledge, knowing which, one knows all'. HPB calls this stage, entering the 'world of No-Form'. The forms were the systems which were tried and finally rejected.

This can be compared with the way in which scientists sometimes proceed when they brood over a problem and envisage various possible solutions which they then reject one after the other. Then they cease to brood for a time. They relax. And suddenly the solution is found!

Both stages are necessary: intensive, systematic reflection — or evolution — and relaxation, leaving aside knowledge and entering another level, another dimension — revolution.

This process can also be compared with winding up an old-fashioned gramophone or cranking up an old-fashioned car — or with the heating of water. In the latter process a great deal of energy is used but after a time there is a breakthrough — and the water is transformed into steam. In Zen Buddhism there is, similarly, an attempt to storm the heights by taxing the logical mind to its limits. This process is not without danger, if the pupil is not supervised by a good teacher — and good teachers are rare. A further safeguard lies in the 'long ripening

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of the Dharma-womb', the emphasis on an ethical life, on self-discipline. This is the aspect of evolution — the necessity for effort.

Now we come to the question: Can wisdom lead to knowledge? There are two possible answers: 1) Wisdom can lead to true knowledge, and 2) Wisdom can degenerate into false knowledge.

Wisdom implies intuition or insight, that is, *seeing* things as they are. If we see things as they are, our judgement will be right, also in everyday matters. We will show discrimination, even if we lack learning, which might indeed prove to be a hindrance in the absence of discrimination. Jakob Boehme had little education, but he evolved a wonderful philosophical system. Krishnamurti seemed not to be in favour of academic study but he had much practical knowledge and could give practical advice indicative of wisdom. It is possible because the judgement and the memory of a wise person is clear, not being adulterated or distracted by selfish desires and resultant excitement, etc. This is a positive kind of knowledge. It is really wisdom — discrimination — in everyday life. But

Wisdom may also degenerate into false knowledge. Thus wisdom expressed in the words of the wise may lead to wrong 'knowledge' through false interpretations and misunderstandings. There have been many wrong interpretations of wise sayings and scriptures. How does this happen? Since we are conscious at the level of *kāma-manas* or the lower mind, the logical mind and the emotions, we

understand and express ourselves at that level. This is in order, if we are dealing with material objects and 'practical' matters, such as driving a car, learning a language, cooking a meal or keeping accounts, but not when it is a matter of understanding what is spiritual or reflecting on the Absolute! Our dilemma lies in the fact that our only instrument, even for understanding spiritual things, is our everyday thinking and feeling, that is, *kāma-manas*. We have a certain perception of something higher, but this perception is vitiated by our vehicle of thought, *kāma-manas*, the logical mind and the feelings. And our expression of it is also vitiated by our vehicle of expression, words, which, again, are at the level of *kāma-manas*.

Thus we make wisdom a matter of knowledge, like accountancy, cooking, or the knowledge of a language. And thus also we often misinterpret ideas. It is said that when Hegel lay dying someone asked him how many of his pupils had understood him. His reply was: 'Only one — and he *misunderstood!*' We often express ideas wrongly, for example in wrong translations, or because words are unsuitable vehicles. It is said in *The Mahatma Letters* that words are as unsuitable for expressing certain concepts as an axe for fine carving. Remember the beautiful words in *The Light of Asia*: 'Measure not with words the Immeasurable, nor sink the string of thought into the fathomless. Who asks doth err, who answers errs. Say nought.' In some cases there simply are no

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appropriate words in Western languages:

I . . . have to confess my inability to describe — the *indescribable*. Unless the intuitive perceptions of a trained chela come to the rescue, no amount of description — however graphic — will help. Indeed, no adequate words to express the difference between a state of mind on earth and one outside of its sphere of action; no English terms in existence equivalent to ours . . . (Letter 25)

Thus certain things simply cannot be explained in words.

Nor is it possible to understand certain things in terms of Western logic. Western logic recognizes two possibilities: Either a thing is or it is not. Eastern logic, on the other hand, recognizes four possibilities: A thing is, it is not, it both is and is not, or it neither is nor is not. For the deep thinker, this is a paradox. For the traditional Western philosopher it is nonsense.

He is right — at his level of thinking (*kāma-manas*), because such a statement is inferior to logic. (But it is also superior to logic!) It is nonsense and is inferior to Western logic in that, with such a paradox, one can argue that what is right is wrong and that what is wrong is right. This is what happens if one regards spiritual things from an earthly, personal point of view. For example: Hunches are not intuitions. If one hears the words: ‘My inner voice tells me. . .’, one must remember that there are two kinds of inner voice — the voice of *kāma* or personal desires and the voice of *buddhi* or that wisdom which is also Love. The

former is inferior and the latter is superior to Western logic; it is beyond it. But mostly ‘my inner voice’ tells me . . . what I want to hear!

Certain statements of sages may be wrongly interpreted and produce disastrous consequences, for example ‘Love and do what you will’. A dangerous principle! ‘Love’ can be interpreted in different ways, also as lust. Anyone can assert that he or she is acting out of love. Who can judge? Who can prove that it is love or is not love?

Thus certain sayings are dangerous in the wrong hands. Therefore there are warnings, such as (in the Bible) the injunction: ‘Do not cast pearls before swine’. In the *Bhagavadgītā* we read: ‘Never is this to be spoken by thee to anyone who is without asceticism, nor without devotion, nor to one who desireth not to listen, nor yet to him who speaketh evil of Me’ (XVIII.67). Here certain conditions are laid down: asceticism (the weakening of the desire nature or egoism), devotion (which implies willingness to sacrifice self); earnestness in the readiness to listen, and reverence.

But who is to judge whether the conditions have been fulfilled? Who can look into another’s heart? Only we ourselves can know — but do we want to know? On the other hand, another person can often perceive our weaknesses better than we ourselves. Here we are confronted with another paradox!

We should not expect those to understand higher things who are not ready to do so and therefore either reject or

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misinterpret certain deep truths — or those who feel no urge, like the delightful Sujata in the story of the Buddha, who honestly declared that her whole happiness lay in fulfilling her duties as a wife and mother. In the *Bhagavadgītā* we read: ‘Let no wise man unsettle the mind of ignorant people attached to action . . .’ (III.26)

In this connection, we find in the Western world many completely wrong interpretations of Eastern scriptures. Insights belonging to *buddhi-manas* are interpreted at the level of *kāma-manas*. There are often mistakes in translation, since Sanskrit words, for example, have many different meanings. Or symbols are not recognized as such and are interpreted literally. For example, the moon is not only the heavenly body we know but may also represent the lower mind, because it has no light of its own but only reflects the light of the sun (in this case perhaps the light of *buddhi*). The moon may also have other symbolic meanings, depending on the context.

Another source of misunderstanding in the West is the caste system, which is interpreted as a violation of the principle of equality and is considered undemocratic. But often equality and sameness are confused. Everyone — indeed, every being — is equal at the divine level of *Ātmā* and at the spiritual level of *buddhi-manas*, but not at the level of the personality, where people are different — like children in different classes at school. University students are not the same as primary school children. But they are not *intrinsically* superior to primary school children. How-

ever, they may sometimes think they are. And that is where the mischief begins. In similar cases in society, there may be a justified reaction, a revolt. If the rebels gain the upper hand, they may then wish to impose equality in the sense of sameness — as happens in Communist regimes.

But people are not the same. (Thank goodness for that!) We have different basic needs, pleasures, forms of creativity, talents, duties, etc. — and equal rights to the satisfaction of our different needs, the exercise of our talents, the opportunity to carry out our duties, the enjoyment of our pleasures (provided they are not harmful), and the opportunity to be creative in our own way. The caste system was meant to allow for those differences in our needs, etc., and their satisfaction. We all also have a right to be respected by others and to be happy in our own way.

Unfortunately, the so-called higher castes considered themselves intrinsically superior to the lower castes and it became impossible to change castes. We may assume that in earlier days, perhaps in some ‘Golden Age’, people were born into the ‘right’ caste and that later on this was no longer the case. Thus there were indeed abuses. However, the original teachings were not at fault but rather the way in which they were misinterpreted.

A truth which has led to another misunderstanding in the West is expressed in the saying ‘The dewdrop slips into the shining sea’ or ‘The spark returns to the flame’. We are all conscious most of the time at the level of *kāma-manas*, the separative mind. So we instinctively think

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that the worst that could happen would be to lose that separateness — no longer to be isolated individuals. How do we know? Separation is all we know. But the return to the One is a return to what we really are, that is, one with all. So it must mean bliss.

This saying — ‘the dewdrop slips into the shining sea’ — is sometimes expressed as ‘the dewdrop becomes the shining sea’. This is, again, a paradox. Perhaps both versions are right — or perhaps neither version is right! We shall know only when we get there but it will not be we who will

know because ‘we’, as we are now, will no longer be and, even then, we could not express that state in words understandable to us as we are now: ‘You cannot bring the mountain top to the valley’. Yet people try to do so. It is a good exercise — provided we realize that it is no more than that and we do not dogmatize about it.

The critical faculty which belongs to the logical mind, if influenced as little as possible by personal feelings, should show us the right path. Above all we should be critical of ourselves — and be able to laugh at ourselves! ✧

I am blind and do not see the things of this world; but when the light comes from Above, it enlightens my Heart and I can see, for the Eye of my Heart (*Chante Ishta*) sees everything; and through this vision I can help my people. The heart is a sanctuary at the Centre of which there is a little space, wherein the Great Spirit (*Wakantanka*) dwells, and this is the Eye. This is the Eye of *Wakantanka* by which He sees all things, and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, *Wakantanka* cannot be seen, and if you should die in this ignorance, your soul shall not return immediately to *Wakantanka*, but it must be purified by wandering about in the world. In order to know the Centre of the Heart in which is the Mind of *Wakantanka*, you must be pure and good, and live in the manner that *Wakantanka* has taught us. The man who is thus pure contains the Universe within the Pocket of his Heart (*Chante Ognaka*).

Black Elk

The Third Eye

YVONNE AL-IBRAHIM

THE Third Eye, sometimes known as the 'Eye of Śiva' is first mentioned in the first Stanza of *The Secret Doctrine*.

Alone the one form of existence stretched boundless, infinite, causeless, in dreamless sleep; and life pulsed unconscious in universal space throughout that all-presence which is sensed by the 'opened eye' of the Dangma.

Dangma means purified soul or Mahatma and 'opened' eye means that the inner eye of spiritual vision has been awakened or the faculty of spiritual intuition has been achieved. This faculty is connected to the Third Eye; we have many mythological accounts of races who possessed this inner eye.

What is the story of Odysseus, if not the tale of a race that lost its inner vision — the atrophy of the 'Third Eye'. It relates the history of gigantic beings, living on a land surrounded by sea. One day, Odysseus and his men came upon this land while returning home from the Trojan Wars. Its inhabitants were called Cyclopes, meaning 'round eyes', for they possessed an eye in the centre of the forehead. The story tells of how one of the giants

'Polyphemus' imprisoned Odysseus and his men; they in turn cunningly blinded their adversary and made escape from their captor. Although Homer's tale is fanciful, it was using one of the myths of the day to eternalize a truth in the history of mankind.

Going back to *The Secret Doctrine*, in the second set of stanzas concerning human development we find the following:

Then the fourth race became tall with Pride. We are the kings, we are the gods. They built temples for the human body. Male and female they worshipped. Then the Third Eye acted no longer.

These *śloka-s* confirm that the Third Eye once functioned during the 'golden age' when the gods walked among men, whilst men were still androgynous. But when the gods became invisible, and men became bisexual, humanity sank into the depths of the mire of matter and gradually lost their inner sight.

During the early part of the third race, man and animal were ethereal, possessing only one organ of sight — the third eye; the two physical front eyes were yet to

Ms Yvonne Al-Ibrahim is a member of Coventry Lodge in the English Section. She presented this talk at a session of the Krotana School of Theosophy.

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develop beneath the opaque skin. As man fell into depravity, the eye gradually lost its power and was replaced by the two eyes we possess today, although it did not completely atrophy until the third Atlantean sub-race just before the major submersion of Atlantis.

There is a commentary that gives us further insight into the nature of the Third Eye:

There were four-armed creatures in those early days of the male-females: with one head yet three eyes. They could see before them and behind them.

This suggests that the fourth race had its Third Eye at the back of its head instead of at the centre of the brow. When the fourth race arrived at middle age, the inner vision had to be awakened and acquired by artificial stimuli — this was a secret known to the old sages alone.

The double-faced became the one-faced, and the eye was drawn deep into the head and is now buried under the hair. During the activity of the inner man (during trances and spiritual visions) the eye swells and expands. The Arhat sees and feels it, and regulates his action accordingly. . . . The undefiled Lanoo need fear no danger, but he who keeps himself in impurity will receive no help from the 'deva eye'.

The commentary goes on to state that the Third Eye gradually petrified and ceased to exist. But it has left behind a witness — a small black pea-like protrusion known as the pineal gland.

The 'epiphysis cerebri' or the pineal

body acquires its name from its shape, resembling a pine cone. It is a pea-sized mass of tissue attached by a stalk to the third ventricle of the brain. It is often symbolized by the whirring cone toy of Bacchus, the aptness of which has been confirmed by those who have experienced the sound of the pineal gland in action. The degeneration of the pineal gland begins at the age of six or seven and is complete by puberty when it appears as a thickened strand of fibrous tissue. Nature is economical and has eliminated other parts of primitive man which no longer serve a purpose, but the pineal gland remains. The biological function of the pineal gland is to regulate the endocrine system, thereby controlling both the voluntary and involuntary nervous system. It is known to release both serotonin and melatonin, its discharges being affected by various stimuli — including light.

Knowledge of esoteric abstractions was driven underground by persecuting religions, and many symbols were used to disguise the truth of the 'Third Eye'. In the Bible it was often referred to as the shining bowl, and in the Arthurian legends the 'Holy Grail'. In Egyptian Mysteries it was known as the 'Eye of Horus' and in English mysticism, the horn of the unicorn. Jesus said in reference to the 'Third Eye': 'If thy eye be single thy whole body shall be filled with light'.

It has also been suggested that the Egyptians knew that the reptiles present the highest development of the pineal gland; for this reason, the 'uraeus', the

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serpent emblem, was placed on the forehead of pharaohs, where an oriental would have placed the 'Third Eye'.

Descartes saw the pineal gland as the abode for the soul but the true power does not lie in the pineal gland itself but in its spiritual counterpart — the crown chakra which is only visible to a clairvoyant. Fires are always playing around this area, but when Kundalini illuminates it for a brief moment, the whole universe is seen!

To achieve the full power of Kundalini, man must successfully coordinate the three chakra-s in the head. He needs the light of Ātmā, the Will, the compassion of Buddhi, and the abstract thought of Manas to bring into action the pineal gland and thereby illuminate the 'Third Eye'. The energy from the heart transfers to the brow chakra, the energy from the base chakra moves to the crown chakra and the throat to the Alta Major. When these three head centres overlap and form a triangle of esoteric importance, there will be a vortex of energy out of which the 'Third Eye' will be fashioned.

The 'Third Eye' is always a goal of esoteric discipline, so how does it come into action and change the human being into a superbeing? Madame Blavatsky gave us a fine insight into this quest in *The Voice of the Silence*:

He who would hear the voice of nāda, the 'soundless sound', and comprehend it, he

We believe that everything in material life is most intimately associated with spiritual agencies.

has to learn the nature of Dhāranā.

Before the soul can see, the harmony within must be attained, and fleshly eyes be rendered blind to all illusion.

Before the soul can hear, the image (man) has to become as deaf to roarings as to whispers, to cries of bellowing elephants as to the silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly.

Before the soul can comprehend and may remember, she must unto the Silent Speaker be united, just as the form to which the clay is modelled is first united with the potter's mind.

For then the Soul will hear, and will remember. And then to the inner ear will speak

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How can we prepare ourselves for this transformation? By service to mankind, by studying the teachings of Ancient Wisdom, by meditation, by living a life of purity.

Eventually the whole of life should become one continual meditation. Through treading the thorny path of life, we may bring upon ourselves many trials and tribulations, but none that we cannot bear. The work of the Theosophist is to transform one's consciousness and be a true human by illuminating the 'Third Eye'. ✧

H. P. Blavatsky

A Modern Panarion, p.136

Separateness and Unity in Daily Life

LUCY C. BARTLETT

IN THE consideration of a great spiritual ideal such as Theosophy offers us, in the teaching of the unity of all, we are early met by the question: How far can we realize this ideal in daily life — how far must we subordinate it to the practical needs of the moment?

On first sight it would seem as if there could be no compromise; as if either the ideal must be given up as impracticable, or clinging to it, the practical life of affairs exchanged for the life of the recluse and the thinker. For, a special set of duties adhere to the man of the world. It is his to command, to correct, to sharply separate, and respectively deal with, the good and evil in life. And though philosophically he may recognize evil as ignorance only, and as evolving good, practically, for the moment, he has to treat it as something quite different. And if the man in question be both a philosopher and a lover of humanity, such moments of conflict must mean doubt and inevitable pain. He will act according to his nature — according as the dreamy or practical side in him be the stronger. But either way there will be self-questioning and pain. For either he

will seem to himself to have been false to his ideal, or else to have neglected some need of the moment, which his practical self will tell him was a duty.

To the dreamy nature there is probably no duty more painful than this of correction. In that strange manner in which life sometimes deals with us, it is one which we often find laid more and more upon us, as increasing perception and sensitiveness have made its performance more difficult. It is no use crying out against it, saying: 'I do not wish to rule — I do not wish to guide!' Circumstance — karma — places certain power, and with it certain responsibility, in our hands, and we must either use it, or know ourselves unfaithful.

How then combine? How keep the peace and sense of oneness which come from living in harmony with all, and at the same time discharge duties which may involve frequent correction of others? It is not a moral question we are considering, nor yet an intellectual one. If it were only that, there could be no difficulty. Not the most sensitive conscience could see wrong, or feel wrong, in the bestowal of

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needed reproof. But what satisfies the conscience, may not satisfy the Spirit, and whilst our heart may be at peace in the conviction that we have done right, our Spirit may yet be suffering from the pain of separateness. It is a pain which rises every time that we have to correct a fellow-creature, and we come to perceive that rightness and wrongness in no way affect the feeling. For the suffering does not spring from wrong, but from separateness. We have been obliged for some reason to push away a fellow-creature, and it is in alienation that the pain consists.

And if we pursue this analysis further, the second fact which meets us in connection with this pain of Spirit is that it is not dependent upon personal affection. We may suffer more if the alienation be between ourselves and one we love, but we can still feel it, and still suffer from it, though the person in question be a stranger, and of no importance to us. It has nothing to do with the affection then, this pain, any more than with the moral nature. It is something caused solely by discord. It is a jar, which has made our oneness with all seem unreal, and our Spirit is suffering until we can get this sense of oneness back again.

How then regain it? Is it only to be done by giving up the acts that bring the pain — by relegating to others all duties of correction, and adopting some life in which study and compassion shall be the only claims? Many have seen such a path as right — the Sannyāsi of the East, the Monk of the West. And in the East, by the sharp division of the duties of

householder and yogi into different periods, it would seem that the performance of both together has been regarded as impossible. And perhaps if life in the world meant always married life, it would be so; no soul can belong quite so fully to humanity as a whole, who belongs especially to any one human being. But with this concession made, is further retirement right? Probably only within those souls most attracted by retirement, will this question rise in fullest force. If the world still looks the least attractive — if there is any smallest sense of sacrifice in withdrawal from it — then the path of isolation will look the highest. But if this be not so — if a soul knows that its greatest happiness, and greatest temptation to selfishness lie in solitude, then even though solitude be the only path to harmony, well may it ask itself if for it this path be highest. And by that inner sense of truth which often precedes comprehension, such a soul in all sadness will say: 'It is not my way.' And with the pain of believing itself to be choosing a lower thing, it will yet go back to the active life which brings discord and pain and constant failure, and yet which it feels is for it the highest.

But this choice made by intuition is in time justified by reason. The day comes when the soul understands that no peace can be real which depends upon any conditions for its maintenance, and that no conditions can destroy the true peace, when once attained. And the battles and the contests from which once it shrank, seeing in them the destroyers of its peace,

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have become now a sort of holy crucible, in which it gladly sees all that is false in the inner life detected — all that is true, justified and strengthened.

It understands now that it does not push a soul away when it corrects an evil, but rather beckons to it to come closer, by pushing away that evil which would have prevented the union in the Spirit. And it pushes more and more fiercely at the evil — fearlessly — knowing the blows are the blows of love, as its faith in the dignity and omnipotence of the indwelling Spirit grows stronger. *This* it has learned must be the meeting-ground, and knowing this, and working for the perfect union, it no longer troubles if there cannot be momentary union on the lower ground, the temporary ground of human personality. Never for one instant now does it feel tempted to sacrifice the higher to the lower — the ultimate perfect union to the temporary imperfect one. *That* it knows would be the supreme sin — the real denial of the law of love and brotherhood. And so it fights, this soul that has gained wisdom, but fights without pain. For it knows that there is reverence and faith in every blow it strikes — and in abstinence alone would lie disloyalty and lovelessness.

The gaze has been shifted from the outer to the inner man; it is in this way that peace together with the power of battle has been gained. For herein is the secret — the power of blending separateness with unity in daily life. We stand separate from the sin — or try to. And since sin is tied up with personalities, we clash with

these personalities — not apologetically, but fearlessly. But always we know that that which gives us power to do so is our love and reverence for the One Spirit in which they share, and herein we touch unity. It is not always possible for us to feel this Spirit in all the personalities we contact in life; we cannot always feel at once that we assist the inner man, when we do the painful thing that seems necessary to the outer; the inner man is often momentarily beyond our reach. But what we do in such cases is to trust our brothers to the sum total of spiritual force in the world, to the workings of the law. *We* cannot operate upon them directly, but the law will, and we have done our share by just throwing our fragment of weight upon the right side. And we show our deep faith not only in the law, but in them, when we act in this way. We have asserted in action our conviction that they must ultimately respond to the highest influence.

It is in proportion as our love and honour grow for the inner man, that we shall be able peacefully and painlessly to be exacting with the outer. We ask high things of people in proportion as we believe in their ability to achieve them. At the commencement of life we ask these high things only of a few noble souls who have won our trust. As life goes on, it becomes our settled attitude to humanity at large. And whether our fellow-creatures respond, or fail, we know that our demands are right — that such demands convey stimulus and honour, the best gift that man can ever give to brother man.

Charity has perhaps been the most

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misunderstood of all the virtues, and by Theosophists as much as by people of the outer world, and with less excuse. There is some excuse for people blundering who see man only in his outer aspect, or for whom 'the soul' is a somewhat hazy thing, even when they credit its existence. But we have such clear ideas about the inner Self — why can we not concentrate our attention upon this Self more easily, rendering unquestioningly our love and service to that, rather than to the outer man? For us there should be no temptation to confound charity with weakness — no danger of confusing love with leniency. With our gaze fixed on the inner man it will be love itself — the highest — which will often make us stern. But we should not suffer from any sense of harshness in so acting, as the unseeing do, for we should know that what we are taking from the human self, we are giving to the divine — we are being loyal and loving in the deepest sense.

Do we ever think in how many applications those words are true: 'No man may serve two masters'? If we cling too much to the human self, we may rarely serve the divine Self with perfect faithfulness. An undue tenderness will veil our sight in some critical hour, and we shall become a millstone round the neck of those we love, instead of the spur which should spur them onwards. It is not that the human self may not be loved, but it must be loved *second* always. Our gaze must be fixed on the inner man, and there must be no division of empire, if we would attain true service. 'I the Lord thy God am

a jealous God', mystically considered, voices not only a truth, but a profound warning. If we would serve the God in man — help the divine Self to evolve — we must serve that Self supremely: the Spirit, and the Spirit's needs, must come first always.

But in doing this we attain unity. In the midst of the battle, in the thickest of the strife, with the service of the One Self in our hearts, we know the joy and peace of brotherhood. There comes a time when we recognize in strife, in separateness, not the foe, but the servant of spiritual unity. We have learnt the difference between the false peace and the true. In a world of error and imperfection we no longer desire a repose which would mean stagnation. The cry of battle rings to us as the cry of progress — man's demand for that perfection which he feels the power to evolve. And as we see this in large issues, so do we see it also in small. In every blow that we ourselves are called to strike, we know that we attest our trust in the *real* man, rather than our distrust in his human form — that we offer honour, more than dishonour. And as we so strike, we find often that the hardest blows bring healing more than hurt. We do not need to wait for the working of the law — the effect is shown us even here and now. And this is the triumph of the Spirit, and the test of unity. Unity through difference — not devoid of difference; the Spirit conquering — not evading. We have solved our problem when we reach this point — we have found how painful duty may be combined with peace. We have learnt that the secret

Separateness and Unity in Daily Life

lies in attitude, and that with the right attitude all actions may be peacefully performed. But the lesson has not come to us from books, but from life alone; only by living has this peace with power been evolved. And knowing this, and looking back over all the stages that have carried

us from self-tuition to the power of service, we recognize how deep was the wisdom of our greatest poet when he wrote:

To thine own self be true!
And it must follow as the night the day
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Lord, make me a channel of Thy peace
That where there is hatred, I may bring love,
That where there is wrong, I may bring forgiveness,
That where there is discord, I may bring harmony,
That where there is error, I may bring truth,
That where there is doubt, I may bring faith,
That where there is despair, I may bring hope,
That where there are shadows, I may bring Thy light,
That where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek to bring comfort
Rather than be comforted;
To understand, rather than be understood;
To love, rather than be loved.

For
It is by giving that one receives;
It is by self-forgetting that one finds;
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven;
It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.

St Francis of Assisi

Forgiveness

PRADEEP TALWALKER

EVERY saint has emphasized the importance of forgiving the wrongdoer. We know well from reading the lives of saints that they have practised first and preached later. Yet, although we have profound respect for them, we do not emulate them. In our own lives 'tit for tat' rules. We feel that this is the right way to behave. Did saints exist only to be looked at with awe from a distance, like exhibits in museums? We should look at what is *good* for us, what *profits* us.

It will be seen that a forgiving heart is the thing that is really good for us. Not just spiritually, but also physically and monetarily.

Let us first consider the popular maxim 'tit for tat'. Of course we are nice to those who are nice to us. But what about those who are NOT? Should we be equally nasty? In other words, do we want *us* to decide how we behave, or do we leave the control to others (for that is what we do when we are 'reactive')? If we have decided to be a good person, how others behave should be of no concern to us. Besides, when we make 'one fitting reply', it is not the end. The chain goes on. As 'difficult' persons are legion, we are driven to harbouring grudges. This may or may

not cause a problem to our tormentors, but the venom definitely adds to *our* own miseries. We fret and fume impotently. Tensions mount. The result is disturbances in blood pressure and heart functioning, breakdown of the immune system, stealthy entry of various ailments, costly medical treatment. All this happens so insidiously that even our doctor is clueless about what really ails us. Pills, injections or surgery never cure the real illness — the doctor can only change the visible symptoms. The real problem has its roots in our very grain. The day we stop being reactive and forgive the wrongdoers (even if only as an experiment), we start to emerge from the stranglehold of vengefulness. Our agitated heart will calm down. Peace and joy will be with us. Afflictions will begin to vanish as if by a magic wand.

However, merely by wishing to start forgiving we cannot expect the Goddess of Forgiveness to put herself at our command. We have to break our lifelong habit of self-centredness, and develop an understanding for others, for we know that 'to understand all is to forgive all'. Learning to understand others means we have to see each matter from the other

Mr Pradeep Talwalker is an active member of the Poona Lodge of the Indian Section of The Theosophical Society.

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person's viewpoint as well as ours. If we have empathy for the other man, and if our effort is sincere, we will see that in his place (in his situation and with his way of thinking) we probably would not have behaved any differently. If we have done this exercise honestly, we will no more be angry with him. Our relationship remains cordial. Once we see the benefit of this experiment it can become our new pattern of behaviour, albeit gradually. Nine out of ten 'tormentors' will be our newfound friends.

The *tenth* one is often so cussed that all our efforts are frustrated. Moreover, he is most likely to be a family member, or in a similar situation of intimate daily contact. When we have lived together with people for years we know each other inside out. At times in a weak moment we do the wrong thing, or react irascibly, adding fuel to fire. Then we seek to justify our outburst. The entire past is before us, the problem has become chronic and is going to last a lifetime. These are persons thrown close together by karmic ties to 'collect old debts'. Intimate relationships are expected to be cordial, but some blunder committed in an earlier incarnation comes back with added fury.

Regarding karma, we are sometimes told that until all our good and bad deeds are exchanged with each other, there is no escape from the whirl of births and deaths. While the cause-and-effect aspect is true, the explanation that good will be repaid by good and bad by bad is the same atrocious tit for tat. Further, as our deeds continue as long as we live, the exchange

can never be complete — we would be stuck here forever.

This 'explanation', besides being imperfect, also hides from view the exquisite beauty of the set-up we live in. If we understand the subtle functioning of the Law of Karma and the consequent need for the rounds of birth and death, we will see how clever and fine-tuned the whole divine arrangement is.

From childhood on, we are given a picture of God as an entity meting out punishment to the 'sinner' and handing out rewards to the 'meritorious'. This portrays God like a 'headmaster of the world'. We need to correct this rather naive view for God's Kingdom is of infinite unconditional love. Behave as you will, there will be no change in His love. His System works towards educating us for perfection. If we do the right thing, the result is pleasant; if we do the wrong thing, the result is unpleasant. It is as simple as that. If a child touches fire, his hand will be scorched. Then the child will be careful of fire, but in due course, will learn the good aspects of fire: that it can cook food, and so on.

Nature, circumstance, society, are the classrooms of this School. Experience and happenings (arising out of the cause-and-effect aspect of our deeds) are the teachers. Guidance is provided from 'within' through conscience and common sense, but we have to 'listen' carefully to what they tell us. Lessons have to be pondered, and learnt by keeping a positive frame of mind. Joy and happiness tell us that we are on the right path. We also have full freedom to ignore the guidance — that is

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what we have done all these years, and suffered the consequences. Misery, distress, and so on, tell us that we have gone wrong somewhere. If we interpret events wrongly, the lesson goes wrong. The lesson will be repeated in different ways until we get it right. The sooner we learn the lesson, the sooner we will be ready for the next lesson, the next class. The more the number of classes that we clear in any life, the sooner will we finish our curriculum and be graduated. With each lesson learnt, our lives will be filled more and more with happiness, durable joy. However, we are all incomplete, ignorant. That is why we have to live here repeatedly as that affords us repeated opportunities to learn our lessons. We must not fail, but get ahead smoothly and swiftly. The more mistakes we commit, the more miseries will come our way. Miseries, therefore, are friends in a way that show us the red lantern of danger and keep us on the right track.

If we make an honest and rigorous effort to examine and improve ourselves, divine Powers race to our aid, and lead us to sure success. Innumerable men have experienced this, and it is true even today. Then we invariably come to realize from within that we are not really the doers of our good deeds — God is the Doer and is getting these done through us. Our misconceptions of being the doer of deeds, and also of our separateness end effortlessly. This is also the end of the creation of new karma. All our lessons would have been learnt, and there would be no further need to be born again. The

burden of responsibility for our karmas would no longer be borne on our shoulders. We would be relieved of all our worries and anxieties and be left to enjoy life as a ringside spectator.

If we look at this whole scheme, our heart should fill with gratitude. Whatever comes our way: good health or sickness, accidents, bereavements, success or failure, prosperity or penury, physical or social handicaps — we would see divine benediction everywhere, and be grateful for everything. Fear, anger, feelings of injustice and self-pity would melt away: we would see a lesson in every situation.

Though they are in similar circumstances, some live happily while others are miserable. Cheerful men are cheerful even in poverty, and give joy to others; irritable people are unhappy even on a bed of roses, and make others miserable. Joy and misery are not parts of circumstances, but are within us. No one can harass us if we choose not to get harassed. Even a wicked man cannot cause the same degree of harassment to everyone: some can stay unfazed while others fall into great distress, depending on their mental make-up. Even from *our* personal viewpoint, similar events affect us differently at different times, depending on our mood at the particular moment, in accordance with our right or wrong reaction to the event. All suffering comes out of our negative reaction. Looked at from a different perspective: suffering is a reminder for us to correct our attitude. Once this is understood and impressed on our mind, the next step is easy; for as soon

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as we honestly accept our shortcomings, corrective action sets in automatically. Each day there is an improvement, felt internally by experience.

Saint Tukaram desired the next-door house for the maligner. Kunti, mother of the Pāndava-s, asked of Śrī Kṛṣṇa a boon of adversities ('Sweet are the uses of adversity' — Shakespeare). Jesus said, 'Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also'. The lives of saints teach us the same object lesson. No saint has ever lived vindictively or only for himself. All spread love copiously. These are the persons who came off with flying colours in the curriculum of life. The road frequented

by them is the best for us also.

Our harasser, in his ignorance, forces us to turn to the right path. Indirectly, he does us a favour. If this view awakens in our breast, we would be grateful, not angry with him. Grudges would be driven out of our mind, the action going even beyond forgiving. The forgiver puts himself on a higher pedestal: the grateful looks on the other person as a benefactor and takes a lower seat. Going beyond forgiveness removes the fetters of vanity automatically. From this point on we would enter the Kingdom of Eternal Joy, Oneness with God. Sainthood is not different from this state. Let us all proceed thither together, hand-in-hand, in enlightened self-interest.

**In reconciling a great injury,
Some injury is sure to remain.
How can this be good?
Therefore the sage holds the left-hand tally
[obligation] of a contract;
He does not blame others.
The person of virtue attends to the obligation;
The person without virtue attends to
the exactions.**

Tao Te Ching, 79

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

WHAT then is an Act of Service, or a Good Turn? It is any kind of help, given freely to any one in need of help 'looking for nothing. . .' To carry a parcel for a tired woman, to lead a blind man across the street, to give water to a thirsty dog, to say a bright word to a weary toiler — all these are Acts of Service, or Good Turns. You say they are trivial? Yes, but the alert mind, the observant eye, the ready hand: these are not trivial, but priceless. The Act of Service wrought is a trifle; but the Habit of Service is all important, and it is built up out of these daily trivialities, until every opportunity of Service means the rendering of help.

Anyone who has deliberately trained himself to do one daily act will soon notice around him countless opportunities of Service. As he goes through life, opportunities unseized by others will crowd around him, and instinctively his quick eye will notice, his quick hand will be outstretched to help.

Great opportunities come to those who utilize the little opportunities of daily life. Do not envy the opportunities of others, but use the opportunities which come unsought to yourself. You may not hitherto have noticed them, for many who dream of great work hereafter overlook the little works which are lying about their feet. When a great opportunity offers itself, the trained Servant seizes it and a heroic deed is wrought; the untrained idler is bewildered and confused by the hidden chance, and while he is thinking what to do the opportunity is gone.

Annie Besant

Yoga and Meditation

ANONYMOUS

YOGA literally means 'becoming one with'. It comes from the root *yuj*, 'to join'. It is a mistake to suggest that in practising meditation as a Yogic *sādhana*, say, as a means of becoming one with God, any departure from the ordinary life of an ordinary citizen or householder is necessary. The less the departure the better. God does not want any of his children to remain in ignorance. He wants each and every one of them to know the Truth and He has therefore imposed very simple precedent conditions for the different ways in which he can be approached by his children — by each of them according to his predilections and opportunities in life. The only important conditions precedent, applicable to all the ways of approach, are sincerity of purpose, a real aspiration to learn and practise the truth, and an honest desire to surrender to His will in good faith. All these precedent conditions are within the capacity of every one of us to fulfil, while we live our ordinary lives as common householders.

It is a mistake to suppose that the practice of bodily austerities is a necessary preliminary. Physical fitness and well-being, if anything, are good aids to yogic practices. Neither austerities nor

indulgences as harmful habits should therefore be allowed to destroy physical fitness and well-being. Nor is it necessary for good and successful meditation to practise painful bodily postures while meditating. Bodily relaxation, if anything, is a good help to meditation, but this relaxation does not mean slothful, lethargic or impious and offensive postures. Sitting cross-legged in the ordinary way, but comfortably, not necessarily in the lotus-*āsana*, is quite enough. Let everything be done in a natural, simple and easy way.

Meditation is an act of mental discipline. The mind is subtle, agile, illusive. Meditation is an attempt to train it into different ways of behaviour. Why should we create further unnecessary difficulties in our work by subjecting the body to painful postures when engaged with so subtle, agile and illusive an opponent? Sitting cross-legged on the ground on a piece of matting or carpet specifically reserved for the purpose is quite enough and is preferable to sitting in the same way on a bench or chair. The reason is that sitting on the ground we are more directly in touch with the magnetism of the earth which is helpful as an energizer. Sitting on the ground is also

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preferable because thereby we avoid the tendency and inclination to slouch and find it easier to keep a straight back which helps concentrating on the Ājñā Chakra (between the eyebrows) or even the Brahma Chakra on the crown of the head.

In the matter of this concentration also the present writer sees no necessity to spoil the eyes and for becoming cross-eyed by fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose, when the concentration on the Ājñā Chakra can be managed so much more easily by fixing one's attention on the point between the eyebrows from behind the bony skull. This is a very simple technique which everybody practises when in deep thought. It is not painful, does not spoil the eyes and is in fact the natural, simple and easy way of doing the thing.

The purpose of meditation is the enlargement of consciousness. The Ājñā Chakra is in the Mānasic body and by concentrating upon it we avoid the over-excitation of the Chakra-s in the Astral body and exposing ourselves thereby to the risk of over-stimulating the state of our desires and feelings. Moreover the Ājñā Chakra is the seat of Śiva's eye which is popularly known as the third eye, though as a matter of fact this Chakra is different from the eye of the soul or spirit which is, really speaking, of the third eye. This third eye resides in the soul and not in the Ājñā Chakra. The functioning of this Chakra must not therefore be confounded with the functioning of the third or spiritual eye. Further by concentrating upon the Mānasic Ājñā Chakra we are trying to activate the mind which in its essence is

Consciousness. We are thus by this act of concentration trying to stimulate our consciousness to expansion.

The first stage of meditation has been described as that of intellectual consciousness. We are all working at this stage even in ordinary life, and what we do in meditation is simply to deepen and intensify this intellectual consciousness of ours. But, we soon come to a stage when we find that we cannot go any further along this intellectual line. We therefore give up conscious effort along this line and wait to see if any impulses will come to us spontaneously either from out of our own soul, or from some outside source which would add nothing to our knowledge or consciousness of Divinity which, it must be remembered, is the object of our search. When such impulses begin to reach our physical consciousness we have reached the second stage of intuitional consciousness in our meditative efforts. The essential condition of this stage is stillness of the mind. As this stillness increases with practice, the intuitional impulses become stronger and more frequent, and the power and scope of intuitional consciousness increases. Here we are coming into a subtle, indivisible and involuntary, and therefore unconscious, contact with our soul, and through the soul with our Ātmā or spirit. It is the beginning of Self-realization.

To establish ourselves in Self-realization we have now to try and make this contact with our soul voluntary and conscious. In our further meditative efforts we invite our soul to make itself

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the ever-present conscious guide, director and ruler of all our thoughts, words and acts, all the twenty-four hours of the day, and patiently await this manifestation of the soul to our physical consciousness. This manifestation may take place through signs, symbols or pictures, but it must result eventually in direct communication through words. When this direct communication with the soul is established, we can tap our hidden memories of past lives and profit by what has been called regression of memory.

The next question is, how to meditate upon God?

Here also, the simpler the technique the better the chances of success for the ordinary householder. Select any one name of God according to your predilection, and go on repeating it to yourself *softly* while you have fixed your attention upon the *Ājñā Chakra*; and allow yourself as it were, to be wafted upon its vibrations, but *without effort*. This effortlessness will ensure the full play of the vibrations upon you, while any effort will set up other vibrations which will hinder the full play of the vibrations of the name of God upon you.

If you would understand the wonderful potency in any of the names of God, remember that a great criminal and

murderer Valia Koli by name, became the great Ṛshi Vālmiki by repeating the word 'Rāma'.

Another important point is not to expect any results. Here also Nishkāma Karma, or desireless action will help most. It is a common saying amongst Muslim fakirs that for every step you take towards God, He takes seventeen steps towards you. Everyday when you meditate for a short while you are taking one step towards Him, and you are taking another step towards Him every night if you adopt the technique of 'service while you sleep'. These two steps of yours coupled with God's (17 plus 17) thirty-four steps will automatically bring you thirty-six steps nearer God every day. You do not know what is the distance between you and God. It depends upon your past. You therefore cannot know what time it will take you individually to bridge the distance; but you may be certain that your search for Him — and we must assume that it is sincere — is surely bringing you nearer to Him every day. If it pleases God, He can any day cut short the distance, and give you His Grace much before the time it would ordinarily fall due. This shortening of the distance and the time will be the measure of your sincerity in approaching Him. ✧

Lord, I am like to *Mistletoe*,
Which has no root, and cannot grow,
Or prosper, but by that same tree
It clings about; so I by Thee.

Robert Herrick