



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Editor: *Mrs Radha Burnier*

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Official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky, 1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this magazine.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

President: Mrs Radha Burnier

Vice-President: Mrs Linda Oliveira

Secretary: Mrs Kusum Satapathy

Treasurer: Miss Keshwar Dastur

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

Secretary: secy.hq@ts.adyar.org

Treasury: ts_treasury@sify.com

Adyar Library and Research Centre: adyarlibrary@vsnl.net

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

Fax: (+91-44) 2490-1399

Editorial Office: editorialoffice@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

THEOSOPHY refers to the understanding of the nature of life; its significance existed among wise people at all times. If 'X' wrote something or 'B' explained something, we do not have to accept it as Theosophy, but only as what that person understood and said he regarded as Theosophy. Therefore it is not possible to give an outline and say 'this is Theosophy'. But perhaps we can consider certain general principles, a certain ground which seems to exist in all the different sources. One such thing we can take for granted is that the world or life is a great mystery.

What appears to us as existence may be only a very small part of existence as a whole. I think in the present-day world this should not be very difficult for anybody to accept. If the range of our senses were to extend, everything would obviously appear differently. But at the time Blavatsky spoke about unperceived depths of existence, it was considered as nonsense because she spoke to a world which had a highly deterministic, materialistic point of view. That was the time when people who had begun to explore the field of science felt they were on the edge of knowing everything. And they thought that, with a little more advancement, they could solve all problems. She

challenged this determination of the non-believers as well as the theology and dogmas of the believers, whether they were Christian or Hindu or whatever. I think we may consider this presupposition: that existence is a vast thing with immense depths into which one can penetrate only when the limitations of consciousness are overcome.

Theosophical literature, whether it is the writings of Blavatsky or of later prominent Theosophists, or whether it is the Theosophy of Hinduism or whatever else, speaks about the levels of existence. But these levels may not be very clearly separated compartments. When looking at a rainbow it is very difficult to say where the blue ends and the violet begins. If perception were to expand, it may be very difficult to say where is the division between what we call ordinary perception and other levels of perception. Controversy begins here. Some people have said there are five levels, others have said there are seven; some have used some technology, others have used other technologies. And then there are disputes.

But we can leave all that alone and perhaps merely consider the fact that there may be these depths which perhaps could be thought of in terms of different stages

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of perception. The Hindus have spoken even about communication being at different levels — at the ordinary levels of speech, at a subtler level, at a much deeper level, and so on. But no particular view or explanation need be identified absolutely with Theosophy. It is for each one to find out as his own consciousness breaks its bounds.

But one thing is posited in all Theosophical teachings — and that is the wholeness of existence. Whether you classify existence as matter and spirit, which means two divisions, or into four divisions or whatever, the actuality is that it is an indivisible whole.

When the Buddha was asked various questions about the cosmos he refused to answer. He said: If a poisonous arrow were piercing your flesh, what would you do? Would you discuss of what wood it is made, from which place that wood was cut, at what velocity the arrow flew and so on, or would you be concerned with removing the arrow and healing the wound? One must never push analogies too far. But, if we do in this case, we can say that, although I might be concerned with this question of the poison in the flesh, yet it does not mean that the rest does not exist, that the arrow did not come from somewhere, that it was not made of a certain kind of wood, etc. All that may be facts, but only the difference is important.

What is called Theosophy does not ignore all the other things. But we can see the danger of talking about things which, for the time being, are remote from us. It

may be an escape, a distraction which prevents the human being from dealing with the real problems here and now. And therefore the approach of both the Buddha and of Krishnamurti may have been one of not dealing with what is far away, but dealing with the problem which is the human mind, the human self.

Further Thoughts on Ahimsā

Ahimsā is a way of life which embraces all living things; this would include not only human beings but animals, plants, and the earth itself. It is a practice often called non-violence, but which should not turn into an easy way of living unrelated to the vast numbers of other living elements which exist. In this context one could refer to a recent article which appeared in *Hinduism Today*; it is by Ravi Grover who works in DePaul University in Chicago. He draws attention to the fate of animals held in captivity by the entertainment industry. This is a vast area and includes many kinds of cruelty practised on animals in order to make them do what they are told. They of course feel it is not their role in life, and they try to escape. Mr Grover says that there are cases which show that animals defend members of their clan. Those who believe that wild animals can be removed peacefully from their natural habitat are mistaken. Believers in non-violence and protection of the environment should encourage people to stop supporting businesses that keep animals confined. Families can visit a National Park or see documentaries about animals rather than

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donate money to groups which keep animals confined.

Zoo animals often attack and hurt onlookers and trainers, wreaking havoc. As Mr Grover says, 'when isolated, held captive and forced into abnormal situations', animals suffer from severe depression and stress and act aggressively. A cheetah which can run very fast, but confined for life in a small cage, has no way of being what he is meant to be. Electric prods, chains and sticks to beat and choke animals into submission, are no real solutions to their condition, because what they do is controlled by their captivators.

It is nice to be able to report that in five years the number of vegans in India has increased from two thousand to twenty thousand according to *People for Ethical Treatment of Animals in India* (Peta). Some of them have found that even dairy products, which Indians have been much accustomed to use freely, are the products of cruelty, because nowadays cruelty to animals, and cruelty in general, is not considered important. Milk is produced by cows kept in unnatural conditions, and there is danger that the milk will be extracted at an unnatural hour. So it is best to avoid cosmetics, honey, lanolin, milk and dairy products. This whole process is naturally horrifying animal rights activists, environmentally conscious young people, and all those who have seen the connections between deteriorating climatic conditions and the way animals are treated. Those who become vegetarian or even vegan are

doing fine work in making people aware of these issues.

We have to consider also the general benefits that accrue when a person is a vegetarian or vegan. Today we are told that many more people are aware of the vegan foods available. They say that it is not only animal friendly people who are interested, but some businesses have started to sell products which do not do harm to animals. The time is past when vegetarians and vegans are not deprived, but have good food and good conditions for practising what they consider to be important — compassionate living. Vegetarianism is being promoted not merely as an animal-friendly life choice or food choice, but as embracing kindness to all life. So naturally many more people are against circuses, zoos, against food carelessly eaten without considering the source of ingredients, and against any idea of using animals.

Are we Weeds?

We have already had the opportunity to think about the important role that so-called weeds have in the life around us (*The Theosophist*, July 1985); they are extraordinarily tenacious and adaptable. At one time the rhododendron was a weed, and it is said that even now it is a menace to native woodlands in England, and they do not know what to do about this. An interesting book on the subject of *Weeds* has been written by Dr Richard Mabey, which has been reviewed in a recent issue of *The Guardian Weekly*.

Somehow or other, so-called weeds

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are able to spread themselves and continue to exist everywhere; on walls, concrete car parks, railway bridges and other impossible places. Dr Mabey, in writing about weeds in general, says: 'If it wasn't for the fact that they are plants, it would be tempting to wonder if they have a sense of humour.' The East-Londoners christened a weed which is growing plentifully through the rubble that was thrown there 'bombweed'; it can put down roots of several metres and germinate its own seeds after forty years. There is an old saying that a weed is just a plant in the wrong place or growing at the wrong time. We have already mentioned that dandelions have been appreciated, although it is supposed to be a weed. Dr Mabey says that pesticides and herbicides do more damage to people than to the plants. 'If this is a battle, then the weeds are winning.'

There are millions of people in many parts of the world so poor that they survive anyhow, and somehow their numbers increase in many places. This perhaps shows that the poor and despised are also part of the evolutionary journey, and have a place in it; but not always recognizable. They spread as we can see in India and elsewhere and somehow manage to increase their numbers. Although many collapse on the way, they are soon replaced. They eat anything edible, live

on streets and in places that the upper class thinks is impossible, and clothe themselves with anything they can find. We often feel amazed that many of them can smile and appear to be happy in the most difficult circumstances. We can only gape with wonder. They are just like the weeds; they can multiply and extend their domain in all kinds of places; as unlikely plants manage to do 'they grow up on walls' where there seems to be hardly any foothold.

Are these people, and the weeds which we dislike or think of as being of no use, showing others something which people in more fortunate circumstances can never do? It is possible to be smiling even if there are great difficulties. It is also possible to live on very little; we only imagine that we need things that are mostly unnecessary. We do not know what is the beauty of life, and perhaps the weeds, human as well as belonging to the plant world, are showing this which we otherwise miss. One day there may be on earth no weeds either belonging to the plant kingdom or the human world, but until we reach that stage we have to learn from the good and bad things in the world. They are teaching something others can learn when they are ready; otherwise they have to experience life for themselves as people experience the weeds of the earth. ✧

You yourself are your own barrier — rise from within it.

Hafiz

The TS as a Deeply Humanitarian Society

LINDA OLIVEIRA

IF we ask the question, ‘What is the essential purpose of the Theosophical Society?’, we might meet with a variety of responses. Its reason for being is described in different ways, often with reference to the Society’s three Objects, or in terms of making Theosophy known to the world — but not so frequently in terms of humanitarianism. The fact is, though, that a thread which runs through both our Objects and Theosophical teachings is the human condition, with all that this implies, and its significance within the wider context of the cosmos.

The term ‘humanitarian’ denotes that which is concerned with, or seeks to promote, human welfare. In turn, welfare refers to well-being, happiness, health and prosperity. We find the discipline of Humanitarian Studies flourishing in academia today. While humanitarianism and welfare are commonly understood in more material terms, the theosophical student might respond that humans are multi-dimensional, with vistas of our consciousness yet to reveal themselves. Therefore an organization such as the Theosophical Society helps to nurture the

humanitarian ideal deeply. The TS is concerned, not simply with welfare in the commonly understood sense, but with humanity’s well-being at a core level so that it actually emerges from within outwards and is more lasting.

Looking around the world today it would be difficult to deny that humanity, as a collectivity, is ailing. While good things happen regularly in the world which are not so often publicized, and in peoples’ lives, the Buddha was probably the supreme diagnostician of the human condition when he isolated the fundamental human problem as suffering. Of course, responses to suffering vary dramatically. Some people may be materially so disadvantaged that they cannot conceive of anything beyond their next meal. Some may immerse themselves in their mental and emotional suffering, unaware that it may be alleviated, or not really wanting to do anything about it. Some may place the responsibility for the alleviation of their own suffering outside of themselves. Others may follow the pathways of one of the great religious traditions to look into life’s meaning.

Mrs **Linda Oliveira** is international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society.

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Others again may choose to pursue the Ageless Wisdom teachings which help place day to day suffering in a broader and saner context.

The question might be asked: What does the TS have to offer which will help ameliorate the human condition? Let us explore a selection of deeply humanitarian elements, both of the Theosophical Society as an institution, and those teachings of which it is a steward.

The TS — its Humanitarian Dimensions

The Unity principle underpins the Society's First Object. It is a big stretch for the analytic aspect of our mind to really grasp the teaching that the universe is One, conscious, Thing. Geoffrey Farthing once explained that this One is not an entity within cosmos; rather, it *is* cosmos itself. It follows, therefore, that *we* are cosmos.

The humanitarian element of our essential work is quite striking. It includes of course, among other things, our first and primary Object. This Object is predicated on the principle of Unity. It is easy to gloss over it, simply acknowledging that it creates a fine ideal. But Brotherhood irrespective of distinctions is the heart of the Society's work and therefore is, or should be, its core energizing force. We can regard it as the *fohat* of the TS, that principle which both welds its members together and propels it forward. Brotherhood is as effective as the seriousness of intent of its members to actually fan it into life.

It is beneficial to revisit *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* and remind ourselves about the vision of the Society which was held by the spiritual Teachers who were behind its formation. The Englishman, Mr Alfred Percy Sinnett, did not give a high priority to brotherhood, which we can think of as the humanitarian core of the Society's work. One of the Mahatmas responded: 'you have ever . . . put down the idea of a universal Brotherhood, questioned its usefulness, and advised to remodel the TS on the principle of a college for the special study of occultism. This, my respected and esteemed friend and Brother — will never do!' Here we have an unequivocal statement.

Another important figure in the early days of the TS was Damodar Mavalankar. He wrote a letter to A. P. Sinnett in 1881, which appears in *The Mahatma Letters*, correcting Mr Sinnett's personal favoured emphasis in relation to the Society's work, by emphasizing the 'broad Humanitarian principle of Universal Brotherhood' (we can note the word 'humanitarian' here) and mentioning that the world was not prepared to hear the truth about sacred occult knowledge. A little later in the same letter to Mr Sinnett, Damodar added: 'We need men of principle and serious purpose.' A principled individual will allow the precepts governing his or her life to work actively and swiftly when required. There is a close relationship between being principled and being a humanitarian. We can reasonably infer that a person of 'serious purpose' tends to

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eschew a life of worldly selfishness and is likely to have a very real concern with the wider world.

One of the often quoted passages to Mr Sinnett from one of the Mahatmas reinforces strongly the humanitarian heart of our work:

. . . men who join the Society with the one selfish object of reaching power, making occult science their only or even chief aim may as well not join it — they are doomed to disappointment . . . It is just because they preach too much ‘the Brothers’ and too little if at all *Brotherhood* that they fail. . . . [and further] It is he alone who has the love of humanity at heart, who is capable of grasping thoroughly the idea of a regenerating practical Brotherhood who is entitled to the possession of our secrets. . . . A man who places not the good of mankind above his own good is not worthy of becoming our *chela* — he is not worthy of becoming higher in knowledge than his neighbour. (Letter No. 33)

This statement isolates a real understanding of humanitarianism, couched in terms of a regenerating practical Brotherhood, as *the* key to the possession of Their secrets. It does not get much clearer than this. Such understanding is the progeny of a selfless heart and a religious mind.

In addition to the First Object, we can also consider certain humanitarian dimensions of the Third Object of the Theosophical Society: ‘to investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the

powers latent in the human being’. Probing investigation, in an unselfish spirit, will sooner or later help us realize certain powers within ourselves. But rather than being unknown or even secret, some of these powers may actually have some degree of familiarity to us, with distinctly humanitarian overtones. Various latent powers may be synonymous with certain qualities of our inner nature. For example, the Buddhic aspect of our consciousness may manifest through the powers of compassion; spiritual discernment, which helps us know how to act in humane ways; and conscience. Further, the humanitarian dimension of our Ātmic nature may manifest through universal will which expresses itself through actions intentionally directed towards the Good; and silence, which allows deep communion with others.

Humanitarianism in Theosophical Teachings

We now come to Theosophical teachings and some of their humanitarian dimensions.

Firstly, a distinction is made at times between primary and secondary Theosophy. Primary Theosophy may be thought of as a living, transformative, even electric state, something to which we might aspire, which draws us inexorably towards it and which cannot be limited by terminology. On the other hand, secondary Theosophy is a term applied at times to Theosophical teachings. In his book *To Form a Nucleus*, Dr Hugh Shearman

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reaffirmed this and commented that ‘it is of little merit if there does not breathe through . . . [the teachings] something of the spirit of primary Theosophy, the living wisdom, immemorially ancient and yet ever new’. In those who are deeply wise, he commented, Theosophy will show itself mainly in ‘the beauty of their entire lives, the perfect clarity of their purpose, the utter rightness of their relationship with every other being’. Therefore the Wisdom teachings help point the way to the inner flowering of our humanity, manifesting as right relationship under all circumstances.

It has been said that understanding can be thrown on the problems of life, if examined in the light of the Three Fundamental Propositions which we find in *The Secret Doctrine*. The Propositions deal respectively with Unity, periodicity, and our identity with — and return to — our Source. We can pose various questions in order to draw out the implications of these Propositions. For example, what light do they throw on relationships, both microcosmic and macrocosmic? In what ways might they inspire us to embrace the Unity of life, to live in the most compassionate way possible?

It is well known that Madame Blavatsky equated Theosophy with altruism. In fact, perhaps all serious Theosophical students have something in common — a kind of collective ‘dharmic’ obligation, which is to bring an altruistic spirit to their actions in the world. Theosophical teachings suggest that our human actions at subtler levels are far more potent than physical actions. The potential

for altruism therefore ranges through all fields of our being — through our speech, actions, thought, and our highest aspirations.

It is said that the process of evolution of a human being is of epic proportions, spanning a breathtakingly long period and numerous lives. Those teachings dealing with evolution invite us to consider the vast panorama of our own humanity, spanning the unfoldment of various developmental stages. A genuine appreciation of the fact that evolution is slow, and a better understanding of the extent of the full process which is to unfold during the human journey, may help to make us significantly more tolerant of others.

In relation to the human condition as diagnosed by the Buddha, Geoffrey Farthing observed that suffering inevitably follows for an individual or a group *when we act contrary to natural law or against the inmost law of our own nature*. On closer examination, this statement is profoundly humanitarian, but in a way which adds something further to humanitarianism as commonly understood. Why? Because it emphasizes that our ultimate well-being is not dependent upon the benevolence of some outside agency. When we act in ways which are out of harmony with our dharma or essential nature, then suffering inevitably results. But when we act harmoniously then we do not cause suffering, either to ourselves or to others. It follows that we can cure our own suffering — the antidote is within us!

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Society Today and the Humanitarian Ideal

In the wider world today, the forces which are working against humanitarianism are many and varied. For example, the personal self is glorified in mainstream global culture. Our sense of a personal self is grown, and indeed vigorously cultivated, by the mind. As Madame Blavatsky wrote in *The Secret Doctrine*:

Great intellect and too much knowledge are a two-edged weapon in life, and instruments for evil as well as for good. When combined with Selfishness, they will make of the whole of Humanity a footstool for the elevation of him who possesses them, and a means for the attainment of his objects; while, applied to altruistic humanitarian purposes, they may become the means of the salvation of many. (SD II, StanzaVII)

We can be imprisoned by our self-centred mind and yet be totally unaware of this fact, as expressed in this short story:

‘You are so proud of your intelligence’, said the Master to a disciple.

‘You are like the condemned man who is proud of the vastness of his prison cell.’

In a newsletter a few years ago an article was written suggesting that the human race has reached a dangerous crossroads, that we have increased our knowledge at a phenomenal rate but not our wisdom. The writer, Dr R. S. McCoy, observed that we are ‘floundering in a sea of crises, not always aware that our

world is crumbling and our humanity flickering’ — poignant words and a sobering challenge.

A psyche buffeted endlessly by worldly attractions, some worthwhile and others not, does not contain the much needed interior space through which one can open a portal to access the inner nature. Our own highest humanity cannot be unveiled if the mind is constantly filled. A mind which remains calm and untouched by the world, yet at the same time genuinely concerned with it, is a humanitarian mind.

Humanitarianism — a New Level

The humanitarian aspect of the TS, and the teachings of which it is a steward, is vividly brought out when we look at the lives of some of its outstanding members. For example, consider Dr Annie Besant. She was perhaps one of the greatest feminists the world has produced in modern times. She worked untiringly for greater freedom and justice in many areas: science, marriage, motherhood, working conditions, the law, religion, birth control, poverty, education and politics. Her efforts also resulted in the founding of the Theosophical Order of Service.

Just as there is a distinction between ordinary ecology and deep ecology today, we can also think in terms of ordinary humanitarianism and *extraordinary* humanitarianism. The seed of the latter lies deep within us, and cannot be absorbed from any external agent through some kind of osmosis. In its highest form it manifests as an exquisite sensitivity to humanity; a sensitivity which is born of

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ahimsā, a noble mind, and selfless love.

Many humanitarians have had far-reaching effects on human physical welfare and such work is still sorely needed. But unquestionably the greatest humanitarians throughout history have gone further, by actively practising non-violence in *all* fields of their consciousness, in the process helping ‘poor orphan humanity’ to reconnect with its spiritual bloodline. This is because when the mind and the emotions are not violent, a natural and subtle illumination is present which can help to elevate others. Rare individuals have helped light the way for those who are receptive. The founders of

the TS, and many of our leaders down the years, stand tall among them.

Let us conclude with a poignant statement by one of the Mahatmas, when commenting on his Brother who was on retreat. This statement captures the soul of humanitarianism. It is a heartfelt entreaty that *no* violence be done towards the other. The world would be utterly revolutionized if each human being had such an attitude to others. The beautiful statement concerned, which appears in *The Mahatma Letters*, reads as follows in a few simple words: ‘I would not have even the desert wind listen to a word said at low breath against him.’ ✧

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Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hebrews, 13:1

The Practice of Universal Brotherhood

GRAZIELLA RICCI

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi said: 'We must be the change we desire to see in the world.' Gandhi's words are modern, more than ever, with regard to the events we live with on our planet; events that warrant an urgent transformation of the human mind.

Human beings, who are obliged to interact with the world to proceed with evolution, have developed an extremely complex brain; but we have not utilized it in an efficient and ecological way, so at present we must face a world-situation produced by our egocentric and irresponsible acts. In this critical context, speaking of universal brotherhood is imperative, but not enough unless we can understand what is the real meaning of 'to act as brothers'.

However, in a Theosophical context, the term 'brotherhood' hints at something deep: that is, finding and activating what we already are in the spiritual dimension,

in order to show this essence daily, and to act from the nucleus of it and not from the periphery. But are we really conscious of the implications of this acceptance when we address another member of the TS as 'brother'?

Nosce te ipsum

Our present level of knowledge indicates that we are living in a constantly transforming universe, either in its static aspect (in the forms becoming more and more complex), or in its dynamic aspect, in its rhythmic and cyclic movements produced by forms and events towards the aim of the One Life. This aim could be summed up in becoming more and more aware of ourselves in the process of a progressive development of all sentient beings. However, even if we members of the TS are aware of this fact, our perception is influenced by several cultural and individual filters that reduce our view

Prof. Graziella Ricci is Professor of Spanish Linguistics and Literature, University of Macerata, Italy, and a member in Milan. Talk given at the World Congress, Rome, 2010.

when we react to the demands of our life.

This condition of distraction and oblivion involves not only the events and creatures in the world but, above all, us ourselves. If we are not aware of our being distracted because of our occupations and the mass media, we cannot practise either discernment (*viveka*) or detachment (*vairāgya*), both basic elements of practising real brotherhood. In fact, how could we practise the second Christian commandment if we do not know really the meaning of loving ourselves? Thus, the famous statement of the Delphic temple, *nosce te ipsum*, comes to mind. In ancient Greece, and still earlier in the East, this knowledge was imperative. Man finds it difficult to change because it is easier to live in the well known, and especially nowadays, he is too distracted to remember the deep meaning of the Delphic statement. This fact influences drastically the practice of brotherhood.

The present does not help either. We live in a more and more chaotic and changing millennium where the demands on time accelerate too intensely as against the modifications of our brain which still react according to the old schemes of fight and flight. Furthermore, the economic, multicultural and migratory problems that involve all democratic societies, strain the practice of brotherhood all over the world. But we, as Theosophists, should have a greater sensibility, and so we must ponder over what we neglect when we believe we behave fraternally, while we are actually strongly and quietly keeping our usual positions.

The Character Shield

Theosophy says that we are a soul dwelling for a short time in a physical body. So we could suppose that the most important thing is to pay more attention to the soul processes than to the physical ones. But perhaps this is not the right approach because soul and body are a unique systemic whole, closely linked through the emotional and mental movements. They are different aspects of the One Life, so we cannot pay attention to one aspect without the other one. Besides, the communication between body and mind seems to be interrupted by the rigidity of our character shield, formed through childhood experiences and now it contracts our muscles with unconscious tensions.

Some healing schools describe this process very well. For instance, according to bioenergetics each of us lives in a sort of open-eyed dream fed by a consensual, collective and hypnotic reality, and unconsciously plays a script written in the past. So people rarely experience the 'here and now' but twist the new situations and adjust them to their old childish schemes which have produced a character shield due to conflicts or lack of affection experienced in the past. This shield creates different patterns according to the phase of the block and to the different answers created to protect oneself from the world. The character shield, like a caterpillar, is tiered and divided into segments covering the whole body according to the different types of problems, and shows the fossilized history captured in the process

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of growth of the human being.

Bioenergetics also says that the individual has three main layers that unfold themselves through the muscles and the character: the nucleus, the middle layer and the surface. We must explore the middle layer to contact the nucleus or the deep Self, but a lot of people often take it for the real Self, and hide themselves under an apparently harmonic and socially accepted self-image. The middle layer is the shield we must break to know the real identity hidden under the stratifications. Many people do not want to change and grow, because they are afraid of what they could find if their Ego loses control and allows the shield to become thinner.

Instead, to revive the old feelings, it is necessary to free the energy captured in childhood, energy that binds body and mind in a schematic and compelling behaviour, because where there is contraction there is no sensation and without sensations there are no emotions, so we do not contact the reality of our being in the world. This 'creative archeology' moves from the premise that human beings are made of positive energy and that loving skill (frustrated and repressed during development), is the basis of a healthy individual. When a conflict is surmounted, the energy grows and the human being may express his creativity better. Not easy, indeed, and as A. Lowen says: 'this society is not tuned on the values and the rhythms of the living body but of the machines and the material productivity. We must conclude that the

forces inhibiting self-expression, and reducing our energy, spring from this culture and belong to it'.

Besides, nowadays, a large number of human beings have problems concerning the emotional and physical domains and, what is worse, are distracted and confused, so they cannot distinguish the truth from the lie. The media immerse the user into a vulgar illusion and into minimalist information, which like a mirror, wipes out the limits between reality and fiction; therefore the need to stop false news becomes more and more unimportant: the need of discerning truth from false information is dying out. All these problems exist because the human being moves in a centrifugal way caused by the energy blocks that make contact with the deep Self difficult. The real relationship within the body-mind system depends on the movement of energy. Indeed, from the point of view of energy, the whole body could be considered a single cell inside which energy vibrations can freely circulate everywhere or to specific directions. Every human being is a community of about fifty trillion cells that develop a strategy of cooperation for mutual existence; all the functions of our organs are used by cells. The cooperative activity of every cell is fundamental: Every cell has enough intelligence to survive by itself and has been provided with the capacity for intent and aim, as well as skill in learning from experience; all these skills are recorded and transmitted to the daughter cells.

We should follow the cooperative

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spirit of the cells in our behaviour. As we are systemic beings and love is related to the energy flux, it is important to be aware of our communication channels to be able to reach the heart: that means mouth, throat, hands, arms, and also the diaphragm and the pelvis; the whole muscular system of the chest linked with the head, the abdomen, and the feet. Love is physically expressed through the interaction of the whole body. Even our sight, our way of communication with other people is very important because through our eyes we express our emotional attitude.

If you observe the faces of people while travelling on a train or bus, you may note that they rarely smile. The expressions are often stale, gloomy and severe. Many passengers look as if they are covered by a cloud of thoughts without *joie de vivre*, which is an essential aspect of the One Life. But joy cannot be forced; it springs from an attentive heart and, above all, a heart opened to the spiritual dimension. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to speak of this dimension to a world hard-pressed by stress and hyperactivity. Some researchers of the Ben Gurion University of Negev, Israel, found that during those rare moments in which doctors smiled because they were not stressed, medicine and analysis prescriptions decreased.

This concept may be extended to all scientific research to improve it harmoniously: not only instruments such as microscopes and telescopes are important, but also mental clarity, a deep insight and a pure and joyous conscience.

Only through light may the positive forces of the soul be attracted. Even knowledge is related to ethics and to the purification of bodies, intentions and behaviour. It is written in *Light on the Path* that we must grow as the flower opening to eternity, but it should be towards eternity and not the desire for the growth of human development.

An excess of stress has brought about the inability to be amazed by nature, the arts, and the wonderful recent scientific discoveries: astonishment is one of the elements of the spring of creative wit. As members of the TS, we should be better prepared. We know that we are a soul and body system and that the meaning of existence is much more than the common personal and social goals such as a job, marriage, children, and so on. But we too have a character shield that stops our mind-body communication and endures the energy depletion of this chaotic and fast-paced period. In the light of this situation, are we really aware of the 'difference that makes the difference' between a common person and a member of the TS? When we do not like something inside the Theosophical movement, do we move on with our hearts and minds focused on the One Life, that is on the deep meaning of universal brotherhood, or do we react against these concepts?

Learning to Learn How to Know Ourselves

In theory, self-awareness has two aspects, the former cognitive and the latter experimental and interactive. However we

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do not often realize that in everyday life most of the conflicts we face do not depend on the reality of facts but on the meaning we give to facts. Therefore, even inside the TS it is easy to mistake the concept of life with life experience: 'We must keep in mind that, as we ourselves are the means by which we know ourselves, we are already contaminated and that, on knowing, we contaminate what we know.' We must humbly accept the fact that we tend unconsciously to change reality, according to the logic of self-deception: therefore, as we cannot avoid this in everyday experience, let us try to avoid it in the practice of brotherhood, as acting by mental process means to enclose infinity within a limitation of a cognitive type. The result is that by so doing, any real spiritual movement is stopped. In fact, we often make the mistake of trying to replace the experience of the One Life with a series of abstractions about universal brotherhood and about ourselves, which means to be in contact not with the reality of a spiritual dimension but with a conceptual image.

For example, if someone does or says something which irritates an interlocutor, the latter is usually affected by negative emotions which make him change his expression, tone of voice and gestures; if the negative emotions are not accepted and a person is not aware of the refusal because it disagrees with his own idealized image, some parts of his personality will fall into a struggle with other parts. If, with this feeling, this person addresses the other one as 'brother' because he knows

rationally that he is a brother, then the gap between reality and appearance will be felt slightly through the gestures and way of talking (or of keeping silent) and the other one will realize it unconsciously. This fact will cause a sense of disharmony even if everything seems to be all right. We might conclude, then, that if we fail to accept at every moment who we really are, we may generate a similar forced situation, but we must also take into consideration the logic of self-deception which interferes with our perceptions. Even on a neurological level, the gap between the different levels of verbal and non-verbal behaviour is felt because different chains in mirror neurons are activated in us according to the purpose we perceive in the person before us. Therefore, let us repeat our initial question: are we able to love our neighbour as ourselves without prejudices and preconceptions? Are we able to perceive the neighbour as a brother in the most authentic way?

Perhaps an answer may be given in the way we usually consider this matter: at first, to learn and then to act, which is the usual way we learn. Even if a Theosophist should take for granted that if we work only with theory we are not in contact with experience, we do not always realize that only by interacting with other people can we get in touch with authentic life. Neurosciences teach that, unlike what is usually believed, theory is influenced by efficient solutions and not the contrary: 'That is instead of learning in order to change, *we must change in order to learn*' (Watzlawick). This reversal shifts the level

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of learning from a linear causality to a circular action, interaction and knowledge of a problem and of its solutions; we must learn how to learn, what learning through direct action means: a solution will come from action, not merely from knowledge. Each one of us may have a personal answer to that question, but no matter which could be the solution, what is important is to pay attention to the question and repeat it every time we address someone else calling him 'brother'.

In ancient Zen Buddhism, two kinds of truths were considered: essential truth and mistaken truth. The former is very rare because the transcendent essence can be reached while living on earth only by illumination. On the contrary, the mistaken truth deals with the truths connected to our relationship with earthly things and it is regarding this truth that we can make our action better and better. In the frame of emotional intelligence, self-awareness represents the basic technique to understanding our negative response the moment it is born and to be able to overcome and defeat it. Talking about the suffering that comes from negative emotion, the Dalai Lama explains that it is important to be untouched by external circumstances and to be able to face negative emotions; which means to have no interest in pleasure, pain, fame and obscurity, praise and shame. The Dalai Lama calls this solution 'spirit of emergency', which 'implies a total detachment from Samsāra in its globality'. The spirit of emergency should, at this point, stop us from mixing negative emotions

with affinities of thought. As Krishnamurti would say, in order to start a voyage to discover the remotest corners of our mind, we must get rid of any burden and travel without any prejudices, creeds, certainties or conclusions. And so we are back to the two conditions we have already mentioned: discernment and detachment.

Conclusions

If at this point you expect some solution, you will be disappointed as no easy solution is given. However, I would like to underline that whatever degree we have reached in our awareness, we must trust the wisdom of the Spirit, as movement is the essential thing in life: decay starts if development stops. Therefore, going deeper inside our own awareness is a stimulus to go on along the difficult but fascinating journey in the unknown land that each of us has inside, once we stop needing any external help. Keeping in mind that knowing oneself allows neurons to regenerate even after sixty or seventy years of age, and that besides emotional intelligence (and rational intelligence) there exists a spiritual intelligence which is activated by meditation as well as a deep research into the essential meanings of life.

In this way, we will have enough stamina to carry on our endless journey whose destination is the discovery of the almost unknown land of the spiritual dimension, thus cooperating in the rebirth of our 'soul staminal cells', in order to let them multiply by the endless resonance in the hearts of human beings. The spirit

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of brotherhood is more necessary today than in the past, to modify the problems on the planet. This journey, like all never-ending journeys, has no end: what matters is walking. *Light on the Path* confirms this with the well-known sentence: 'You will enter the light, but you will never touch the flame.'

We must also remember that our system becomes actually brotherly only when it is steeped in the light of the Spirit. We should keep this in mind whenever a negative emotion stops our mind from reflecting the spiritual light, because, even if we are made of quanta energy, the spirit manages to illuminate the so-called 'lower bodies' of our personality only if they are flowing and open to the infinite (*The Voice of the Silence* claims that we must go beyond the three halls of ignorance, of instruction, and wisdom to be able to reach the state in which Light and Silence become a unique experience linked to our deep Self). Only when we have reached that point will we be able to call ourselves 'brothers' in the most

authentic Theosophical sense of the word.

I will end by quoting Krishnamurti, which leaves no doubt as to the direction we should follow:

The energy which we get by freedom from any kind of fear brings about a radical inner revolution . . . in that way you are alone with yourselves . . . and since you are no more asking anything or anyone for help, you are free to discover. . . . the next difficulty, which is much greater, is to reject your inner authority . . . to be free from any authority, either yours or someone else's, means dying to everything that belongs to yesterday . . . we can learn and observe only in a similar state. To do this a great awareness is necessary, a true awareness of what happens inside yourself, without trying to correct it or suggest what it should or should not be as in the moment when you correct it you establish a new authority, that is the senser.

In order to love we must be free not only from the other person but also from ourselves. ✧

One man spends seventy
years in learning
And fails to kindle the
light.
Another, all his life learns
nothing
But hears one word
And is consumed by that
word.

Ansari

Tolerance

ANNIE BESANT

INTOLERANCE has caused more human misery than any other of the many weaknesses of humanity. It would be impossible to measure or fully to estimate the bitter prejudices that have arisen, the tears that have been shed, the hearts that have been broken, the blood that has been poured out, the starvation and hatred that have been caused by religious persecution, by religious war. All over the western world, during the last two thousand years, we have seen this intolerance everywhere pursuing its baleful way. If we could win the earnest and the devoted to remember that they are safe while they affirm, but run into danger when they deny, then perhaps the course of religion would be on a smoother path, and men would find that the way to serve God is not to cause suffering to man.

Tolerance does not mean the contemptuous permission to those whom we think wrong, to go their own way to destruction without hindrance. It does not mean the proud assumption which says: 'Yes, I tolerate you, I allow you to express your views.' It means the definite recognition that each individual should be free to choose his own way

without dictation from another, without interference from another in the road that is selected. Tolerance does not claim to judge and criticize another with a view either to dictate to him the opinions he should hold, or to grant to him the permission to hold them. It understands and bows to the truth of that great Sufi saying: 'The ways to God are as many as the breaths of the children of men.' It realizes the deep meaning of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's words: 'On whatever road a man approaches me, on that road do I welcome him, for all roads are mine.' True tolerance wholly renounces any attempt to lay down a road which all must tread. It sees that wherever a human spirit is seeking after God, wherever a human intelligence is trying to rise to the Divine, wherever a human heart is thirsting for contact with its source, there a road to God is being trodden, and the treading will inevitably lead to the goal.

The ways are different because men's minds are different, because their hearts are different, because they have grown up along different lines of thinking, and have been accustomed in the immemorial past which lies behind each of us, which

Taken from a lecture given in Benares (Varanasi).

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stretches backwards into the dawn of time, to a variety of religious beliefs, a variety of standpoints and of views. They are useful, and not mischievous. For truth is so many-faced, truth may be seen from so many points of view, that each new vision of it is an addition and not a hindrance, and to study the views of one different from ourselves, to patiently try to learn from this standpoint and to see as he sees, that is the developing in us of the vision which shall ultimately see the whole of truth and not only a fragment of it. The more we study, the more we realize the unity while studying the diversity, the more, the better, we know its greatness.

The men who would have only one religion, one philosophy, one view of life, they are like men who would demand that as the light of the sun is white, therefore there should be no colours in the world. For colours do not grow out of the light, but out of the different constitutions of the bodies on which the one white light is ever falling. The varieties of constitutions, the ways in which flowers and grass and animals are made up, it is those differences that give us different colours although the light is one: Each takes out of the white light that which it requires, and throws back out of the white light that which it does not want, and we speak of the colour of the flower, of the animal, of the sky.

So also the great white Sun of Truth shining on the differently constituted minds of men, gives to each of them what it wants for its nutriment, and its unused portions are ever flowing back as colours to the eyes of others. Unless you want a

white universe of matter, a white universe of thought, why not rejoice in the difference of constitutions that paints the world of thought with many colours as it paints the world of matter with innumerable hues? Looking then at all the different views around us, we see the value of their variety in the added richness and beauty of our views of truth.

But there is another reason why we should be tolerant, and that is because each fragment of Deity that we speak of as the human Spirit, alone knows his own necessities, alone can comprehend his own love of research. The Egyptian saying goes when the Self is spoken of: 'He who makes his own road according to the Word.' It is the sound which is given out by the individual Spirit, which shows out his quality and his nature, and only the Spirit knows the road by which he can best express himself. Only the Spirit can judge of the rightness of the path, which he selects in order to find his source. And to interfere with that choice of the Spirit, to dictate to another fragment of Divinity how he shall make his way to God, that is insolence unwarrantable, that is verily blasphemy against individuality. The very thing that we have to become manifested in order that we may learn is multiplicity in unity, and in order to understand the value of this variety, we study the religions of the world.

To study without sympathy is to see the blemishes; to study with sympathy is to see the lovelinesses. And you can never understand the beauty of a faith and its hold upon the minds of its adherents, until

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you study it with the eyes of love and sympathy, and feel in yourself the vibrations which it arouses in those to whom it appeals. Hence if you would be a true lover of the Divine Wisdom, rise above the intolerance that would dictate to another in that liberty of the Spirit in which alone truth is found. Study what you do not agree with more than that with which you agree. Day by day familiarize yourself with the standpoint of others, rather than ever keeping your eyes fixed on an object from exactly the same spot. Learn from those with whom you disagree more than from those with whom you agree; and in that way you shall become many-sided as the many aspects of the truth itself. Finally when you rise to the magnificence of perfect knowledge, you shall find that every fragment has its place

in the perfect whole, and that every religion that man has followed is one note in the mighty chord which speaks of God to man.

I would only ask you to carry it out in life as well as to admire it in theory, to try to correct the natural intolerance of mankind by looking in every person and in every opinion for the good, rather than for the bad. Let your first impression of a book be the favourable one rather than the hostile; let the first impression of a man be of his virtues, rather than of his vices. For the better he seems to you, the more you are seeing of the Self that is trying to manifest through his mind and body, and the errors are only the clouds that shut out the sun; as the sun rises higher it becomes clearer, and, as it shines, the cloud shall vanish and the true Self be seen. ✧

We are put in training for a love which knows not sex, nor person, nor partiality, but which seeks virtue and wisdom everywhere, to the end of increasing virtue and wisdom. We are by nature observers, and thereby learners.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

I ONCE asked the Bishop of Geneva what one must do to attain perfection. ‘You must love God with all your heart’, he answered, ‘and your neighbour as yourself.’

‘I did not ask wherein perfection lies’, I rejoined, ‘but how to attain it.’

But again he answered, ‘We must love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves . . . The best way, the shortest and easiest way of loving God with all one’s heart is to love him wholly and heartily!’

He would give no other answer. At last, however, the Bishop said, ‘There are many besides you who want me to tell them of methods and systems and secret ways of becoming perfect, and I can only tell them that the whole secret is a hearty love of God, and the only way of attaining that love is by loving. You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working; and just so you learn to love God and man by loving. All those who think to learn in any other way deceive themselves. If you want to love God, go on loving him more and more. Begin as a mere apprentice, and the very power of love will lead you on to become a master in the art. Those who have made most progress will continually press on, never believing themselves to have reached their end; for charity should go on increasing until we draw our last breath.’

Jean Pierre Camus

The Concept of Salvation

DINESH SINGH

THE concept of salvation has been dealt with, in some way or the other, in almost every religion of the world. The word 'salvation' has been derived from the Latin *salvare*, which means 'to save'. Equivalent words carrying the same meaning used in some of the Eastern religions are *moksha* or *mukti* (liberation) and 'redemption'.

As we venture deeper into the analysis of this concept, we are faced with a potent question: salvation or liberation from what? Christianity has dealt with this question most thoroughly and has come to the conclusion that it is the 'original sin' of Adam and Eve that all subsequent generations have inherited from their ancestors before birth. The biblical story about the 'original sin' runs as follows:

God created Adam and Eve and permitted them to reside in the Garden of Eden and enjoy its produce as they pleased, assured of bountiful supplies and comfort. But they were warned not to approach a particular tree as its fruit was poisonous. Satan, in the form of a snake, convinced Eve that God had lied to her and her partner Adam concerning the *Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil*. It intrigued Eve to eat the fruit

of the tree so that they would become as gods. Adam later followed suit. By this act sin entered the world for the first time. With it, death also entered the world. In rage, for disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve, God cursed them, the snake and even the earth itself and expelled them from the Garden.

The sin of Adam and Eve becomes imputed to all of the descendants of the original couple, i.e. the entire human race to the present day. This is often described as the 'fall of humanity'. Christianity has historically taught that most people will spend eternity in hell after they die because of this 'original sin' committed by Adam and Eve. Salvation from it can be achieved by:

- (a) Having faith in Jesus as the Son of God and confession of him as the Lord Saviour;
- (b) Believing in Jesus' resurrection;
- (c) Undergoing Baptism.

Christian belief is that since every sin qualifying a punishment requires atonement, the 'original sin' qualifying permanent punishment for the human race requires the highest atonement. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was meant to atone

Mr Dinesh Singh is a member of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society.

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for the whole of humanity and its salvation from 'original sin'. One of the most cited verses in the Bible, John 3:16, states:

'For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

Let us find out how this concept of 'original sin' is viewed in other Western religions. Interestingly, neither Judaism, which pre-dated Christianity and served as the edifice on which the foundations of the New Testament were laid, nor Islam which followed it chronologically, subscribe to the view of Christianity regarding so-called 'original sin'. As the modern Jewish scholars claim, the term 'original sin' is unknown to Jewish scriptures and the Church's teachings on this doctrine are antithetical to the core principles of the *Torah* and its prophets. This well-known Church doctrine presumes that, as a consequence of the 'original sin' of Adam and Eve, man is hopelessly lost in a state of sin in which he has been held captive since his 'fall'. As a result, he is powerless to follow the path of obedience and righteousness by his own free will. Rather, missionaries contend, because all are born with an innate lust for sin, humanity can do nothing to merit its own salvation. In essence, man is totally depraved and true free will is far beyond his grasp. 'Totally depraved' may seem to be a harsh way for a Christian doctrine to depict mankind's dire condition, yet this is precisely the term used by the Church to describe man's desperate, sinful

predicament. It is only through faith in Jesus, Christendom concludes, that hopeless man can be saved.

There seems to be good reason for the Church's uncompromising stand on this cherished doctrine. The founders of Christianity understood that if man could save himself from eternal damnation through his own initiative and obedience to God, the church would have very little to offer the human race. Moreover, if righteousness can be achieved through submission to the 'commandments' outlined in the *Torah*, what possible benefit could Jesus' death on the cross provide for humankind? Despite the zealous positions missionaries take as they defend it, the Christian doctrine of 'original sin' is profoundly hostile to the central teachings of the Jewish scriptures. Over and over again the *Torah* loudly dismisses the notion that man has lost his divinely endowed capacity to freely choose good over evil, life over death. There is no ambiguity about it in the Jewish scriptures. On the contrary, it is proclaimed in virtually every teaching that Moses directs to his children of Israel.

In fact, in an extraordinary sermon delivered by Moses in the last days of his life, the prophet stands before the entire nation and condemns the notion that man's condition is utterly hopeless. Throughout this uplifting exhortation, Moses declares that it is man alone who can and must merit his own salvation. Moreover, as he unhesitatingly speaks in the name of God, the lawgiver thoroughly rejects the notion that obedience to the Almighty is 'too

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difficult or far off' and declares to the children of Israel that righteousness, and thereby salvation, have been placed by God within their reach.

Islam has taken a unique position on the whole issue. The Qur'an states that Adam and Eve were directed by God to reside in the Garden of Eden and enjoy its fruits as they pleased but they were warned not to approach a particular tree so that they would not run into harm. Then Satan urged them to temptation and caused them to lose their joyful state. They were expelled from the Garden and brought down to earth to live, die and be taken out again at last for the Final Judgement. Having realized what they had done, they felt shame, guilt and remorse. They prayed for God's mercy and were forgiven (Qur'an, 2:35–38; 7:19–25; 20:117–123). Thus the idea of 'original or hereditary sin' has no room in the teachings of Islam. Man, according to the Qur'an (30:30) is born in a natural state of purity and not with an inborn guilt or stigma, as taught by Christianity. Whatever becomes of man after birth is the result of external forces and intruding factors. This does not, however, deny to the individual the freedom of choice. If man is imperfect he is not helpless or deserted by God to fall victim to his shortcomings. He is empowered by revelations, supported by reason and fortified by the freedom of choice. It would be a sin if he has the ways and means of relative perfection and chooses not to seek it.

The question of assurance of salvation

is an important issue in Christianity as well as in Islam. For Muslims the question of salvation is definitely decided by God on the 'Day of Judgement'. The Muslim believer hopes to die as a true Muslim and that God in his mercy shall save him from Hell, supported by the intercession of Muhammad. This gives the normal Muslim a kind of certainty that he will go to Paradise. There are traditions in which Muhammad stated: 'No one shall enter hell, who has an atom of faith in his heart.'

Sadly enough our Christian brethren find themselves as the most isolated and the most damned in the comity of religions as regards their natural ascent to Paradise. Even the Zoroastrians who have many things in common with Christians concerning beliefs surrounding God and Satan, heaven and hell, resurrection and final judgement, do not subscribe to the Christian doctrine of 'original sin'.

Unlike the Western religions, the Eastern religions like Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism tend to be more metaphysical than ethical in their approach to the concept of salvation. Though not unfamiliar with the concept of heaven and hell, their main concern is the bondage of the soul, from which it constantly yearns for release (*mukti*). Hence, in respect of these religions, 'liberation' (*moksha*) would be a more appropriate word than 'salvation'. Ignorance is universally accepted as the cause of this bondage, which makes it finite and subject to several afflictions and sufferings. As such, liberation lies in getting to the state where ignorance

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vanishes and the soul shines in its infinitude. The ways and means of getting to this state have been differently dealt with by each of them.

According to Jainism, ignorance is the real cause of bondage. *Karma* is the link which unites the soul to the body. Ignorance of truth and four passions, namely, anger, greed, pride and delusion attract the flow of *karmic* matter towards the soul. In bondage, the *karmic* matter unites with the soul by intimate interpenetration, just as water unites with milk. By the possession and practice of right faith, knowledge and conduct, the influx of fresh *karma* is stopped. Then the already existing *karma* must be exhausted. When the last particle of *karma* has been exhausted, the link between the soul and matter is dissolved and the soul shines in its intrinsic nature of infinite faith, knowledge, bliss and power. This state is called *Moksha* or liberation. Here omniscience is attained. The liberated soul transcends *samsāra* and goes straight to *siddha-śīla* at the top of the world and dwells there in eternal knowledge and bliss.

In Buddhism, one finds a detailed logical analysis of the cause of bondage. Lord Buddha, Compassion Incarnate, was deeply concerned about the sufferings (*duhkha*) of the world. This made him ponder deeply over the cause of this suffering. Since every effect has a cause, suffering, as an effect, must also have a cause. In his enlightenment, he came out with a chain of twelve causes, which in succession produced a succession of effects, the last of which was old age

and death (*jarā-marana*). These are also called the twelve links of the Causal Wheel.

It is a marvel to see how Lord Buddha's highly analytical mind worked towards finding out the root-cause of all our sufferings. Troubled by the sight of disease, old age and death, he would ask: Why do we suffer pain and misery? Why do we suffer old age and death? Because we are born. Why are we born? Because there is a will to be born. Why should there be a will to be born? Because we cling to the objects of the world. Why do we have this clinging? Because we crave to enjoy the objects of this world. Why do we have this craving for enjoyment? Because of sense-experience. Why do we have this sense experience? Because of sense-object contact. Why do we have this contact? Because of the six sense-organs (the sixth sense being the mind). Why do we have the six sense-organs? Because of the psycho-physical organism. Why do we have this organism? Because of the initial consciousness of the embryo. Why do we have this consciousness? Because of our predispositions or impressions of *karma*. Why do we have these impressions? Because of ignorance. Hence, ignorance is the root-cause of all suffering.

If the root-cause of suffering is removed, the causal chain effecting pain and suffering will be broken. This can be done by sincerely following the 'Eight-fold path' consisting of eight steps which are:

- (1) Right faith; (2) Right resolve;

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(3) Right speech; (4) Right action;
(5) Right living; (6) Right effort;
(7) Right thought; (8) Right concentration.

Buddha's 'Eightfold path' is also called the 'middle path' as it serves as a golden mean between the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. This will lead to '*nirvāna*' (liberation), a state of positive bliss where the seeker has simply 'blown himself out' of existence by annihilating all desires and passions.

Last but not the least, we turn to Hinduism to find out what it has to offer to its followers by way of liberation. It is to be clarified at the outset that Hinduism as such, cannot be spoken of as a religion in the sense in which the foregoing religions are generally understood and practised. It would suffice to say that it is a way of life, which encompasses within its fold multitudes of thought-currents. It would be the endeavour of the present article to touch upon the most prominent ones. Like Jainism and Buddhism, Hinduism, too, believes in ignorance (*avidyā*) to be the root-cause of bondage of the soul. Ignorance causes delusion (*moha or vibhrama*) which, in consequence, breeds a false sense of 'I' and 'mine' (*ahamkāra*). This false sense binds the individual soul (*jīva*) to finitude, which is the state of bondage because it is not its real nature. It is a part of the Universal Self, God, Brahman or the Absolute, by whichever name one may like to call it, and has a yearning to be one with Him. As such, liberation (*moksha*) consists in breaking this bondage caused by delusion

and ignorance. The moment the false delusion and ignorance vanish, the individual soul begins shining in its intrinsic nature, pure and infinite existence, consciousness and bliss (*sat, chit and ānanda*).

What is the means to attain to this state of positive bliss or *moksha*? One school of thought suggests that knowledge alone can lead to this goal. True knowledge is that which leads one to liberation (*sa vidyā ya vimuktaye*). The knower (*jñāni*) comes face to face with the true nature of the Self or soul in a yogic state of meditation (*nidhidhyāsana*). Another school suggests devotion (*bhakti*) to be the easiest way to attaining this state of positive bliss. In it, the devotee throws himself to the mercy of God, not with any sense of guilt or remorse, but with an ardent desire to be one with him. By doing so, the devotee realizes a rapturous union with God, a state where all delusion and ignorance vanish. Yet, another school suggests *karma* to be the key to attaining liberation. As Arjuna did by the exhortation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, action performed in a detached manner (*nishkāma bhāva*) can ultimately lead him to a state where he will no longer be the agent (*kartā*) and, as such, devoid of all desires and passions which cause delusion and ignorance.

To a casual onlooker, the above three paths may appear to be contradictory to each other but, in fact, it is not so. Hinduism as a whole presents a unique synthesis of all the three. No path is exclusive and each one is complementary to the other. Devotion without true

The Concept of Salvation

knowledge is blind and both knowledge and devotion are empty without right conduct through *karma*. Hence, there is no contradiction.

One remarkable feature of the Eastern religions discussed above is that they exhort their followers to strive for and attain liberation in this very life. While the Western religions like Christianity and Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism hold a promise of salvation or post-mortem bliss on the 'Day of Final Judgement', in

Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism including Sikhism, deliverance from the state of bondage can be striven for and actually attained in this very life. The Jain Tirthankara-s were born as ordinary mortals but they rose to attain the state of 'omniscience' (*kaivalya*). So was the case with Buddha who was born a prince but rose to become 'The Enlightened One'. Hinduism is not lacking in such shining examples of liberated souls — Nanak, Kabir, Meera, Chaitanya and many more.

And I saw no difference between God and our Substance: but as it were all God; and yet mine understanding took that our Substance is in God: that is to say, that God is God, and our Substance is a creature in God. . . . We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Ghost. And the Father is enclosed in us, and the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Ghost is enclosed in us: Almightyness, All-Wisdom, All-Goodness: one God, one Lord.

Julian of Norwich

Questions and Answers

Q: Why was Theosophy never officially defined in the TS?

CP: Possibly because they wanted to agree about the official definition of Theosophy at the lowest level? There is a much higher level. Because of this requirement, which is in the front of every issue of *The Theosophist*, that we should have a total freedom of thought; which means a total absence of any dogmatic assertions about the nature of the philosophy. That is not to say that there is not a body of teaching which represents the view of the Theosophical Society. If there was not such a body of teaching it would be impossible for any particular Lodge to know what is needed to study in order to belong to the Society. But a body of teaching which has not got any particular authority behind it is always inevitable if you have this freedom of thought and the absence of dogmas. And you all know what dogma has done in the history of the religions of the world — fighting and strife and all the things that are a total antithesis of what religion is supposed to stand for, and therefore the Society is absolutely right in taking this stand.

PO: When the Mahatmas decided to correspond with Mr Sinnett they made two statements which are very important. One is that certain terms are non-translatable. That means the esoteric teaching which is Theosophy has a source which is much older than the English language and the many known languages in the world. So there was a problem of translation. But they made another important statement — which has passed more or less unnoticed by many students — that what lies beyond the fence of words is more important than what you read. So they warned Mr Sinnett not to be caught in concepts. They used concepts but they were also drawing attention to that which is not conceptual.

So I suppose that the Founders of the Society and the subsequent leaders of the Society decided not to crystallize Theosophy in an official definition because they were honouring the original spirit of enquiry and investigation. And as already said, one of the great disasters in the history of religion is orthodoxy and dogmatism. The Society, in order to be meaningful to the world, cannot offer crystallization and dogmatic views.

Q: What meaning has the third Object if we cannot really understand it?

International Convention 2009, Adyar. RB – Radha Burnier, CP – Colin Price, PO – Pedro Oliveira.

Questions and Answers

RB: There is much meaning in the way the third Object is placed before us. It is obvious that every Object has many meanings. Take the first Object — the Brotherhood of humanity. One can practise brotherhood at an ordinary level; that is, be nice as you would to a real brother. We can do this in respect of all the peoples of the Earth whether they are superior to us in intelligence or the opposite. But the Brotherhood of humanity may mean something very much more and there may be a whole gamut of meanings on the way.

If you take the third Object, there are many people who think it refers to what may be called the inner sight or inner understanding, that is clairvoyance, clair-audience, etc. That is all they understand from the third Object. But to others it may mean something very much more and so these Objects cannot be taken only at a particular level.

What is the practical meaning of our third Object? You have to realize what is behind to know the practical meaning. If we realize that life has expressions which in our present stage we cannot understand, because we do not even know what those expressions are, we may have a different view of things. In the Hindu religion, they spoke about different kinds of beings. Do they exist? If they exist, where do they exist? What are they like? What do they do? The *gandharva-s*, it is said, spend much of their time in preoccupation with music. And there may be many features of the invisible realms which we will not

understand and which we may have to understand at some other time of our lives, perhaps not in this life. So we can understand what the practical meaning of the third Object is, only when we have full understanding of it.

CP: Well, I like the third Object: to investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man, because it reminds me of something that Madame Blavatsky said when she was asked about miracles. She said there is no such thing as a miracle.

Why did she say that there is no such thing as a miracle? Because within the occult philosophy there is a reason for everything; everything that happens in Nature, however mysterious it may look to us, is obeying some unknown fundamental law that underlies the operation of the whole of Nature. We only call it a miracle because we do not understand how it happened. Jesus said 'greater things than these ye shall do'. He did not claim that He was the only one who can do all these things. Anyone who reaches that degree of understanding of the laws of Nature can do these things. We say 'miracles' because we see them as mysterious. The man who uncovers the laws of Nature that lie behind that action shows it is no longer a miracle. Our forefathers saw many of the things we do in modern medical science as incredible miracles. But we do not. We say, 'Oh, that is medical science'; because we have reached a stage where a lot of actions of Nature are understood and defined.

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To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man is to admit that we are ignorant; and we are incredibly ignorant. Newton, walking along the beach, said we only really know the equivalent to the sand under our feet and the mystery lies right there under the ocean. We only know a tiny fraction of Nature and this object is a challenge to us all. To be humble and to realize the process which we glimpse as we go through life is a part of a vast scene of which we really have no knowledge at all!

RB: Perhaps we can have no knowledge of everything that passes on in the Universe. It may be that we have to go very far in order to learn everything about the Universe; in fact, merge ourselves with the Universe.

PO: Brother Sri Ram suggested that the third Object cannot be practised collectively; because this investigation into the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the human being is not any ordinary investigation. One has to prepare oneself to do it, and this preparation involves hard work. There are many methods of meditation being taught in the world today. They say you do not need any preparation; if you practise what we give you, you will achieve enlightenment. That is not meditation. The very notion that one has to achieve anything has to be denied.

In 2001 there was a World Congress in Sydney; Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche was there and he gave an

interview to a team of Brazilian members on Buddhist meditation. The interviewer asked him what is the first thing a meditator should expect and Rinpoche said, 'Nothing'. The very fact that we expect something is a hindrance. So it is a very deep Object and it can only be carried out in our own lives, not collectively.

Q: What attitudes on the part of members further or hinder the work of the Society?

PO: Can you imagine asking this question to Madame Blavatsky a hundred and twenty years ago? You would probably have got a very direct reply. Both she and Col. Olcott and the Mahatmas repeatedly warned the membership in their time that if there is one element in the human condition that hinders the work of the Society it is called self-importance. Because from self-importance comes self-opinionatedness. And therefore if we become entangled in opinions we cease to listen to each other.

I have been doing some reading on Nāgārjuna's philosophy recently and he has a very interesting definition of enlightenment. He says enlightenment is the cessation of all absolute views. We cling to opinions. In TS work, we will say, my method is better than yours; therefore my method or my view has to be upheld. There is no such thing. I feel so strongly that there is no other reason for us to be in the TS except to further its work, its Objects, and not use it as a form of self-promotion to expand our field of

Questions and Answers

influence and therefore become so-called power-brokers. We are in the Society to serve, so an attitude of selflessness at all times will help the work. An attitude of self-importance and self-centredness always hinders it.

CP: The important thing here, in my view, is to keep an open mind. For forty years I was totally immersed in Christian theology and in the Church. And to the amazement of my family, friends and acquaintances, when I came to Theosophy I changed my views because ultimately each of us is on a pilgrimage.

We are told in *The Voice of the Silence*, if you enter the Path you have to become the Path itself. It is a very deep and occult statement relating to the fact that each of us must be subservient to the Truth. When we see the Truth, we see that some of the things that we held as opinions in the past are inadequate in the face of the greater reality that comes before us. We have to let go. The great tragedy is, a very great many people do see a larger vision of the Truth but they cannot let go of what they already believe, and have accepted perhaps, in the decades through their lives.

I spent my early life in scientific research. You have to be open to new ways of looking at old knowledge. You have to be open to the fact that the new knowledge may disturb your ideas as to what was the nature of things. And the same attitude is absolutely vital in Theosophy. That spirit is expressed in our motto: 'There is no Religion Higher than Truth'. And that means something very direct for

each one of us. We must be prepared to let go of pre-held opinions in the face of a greater reality as it emerges and appears before us.

Q: The world of Nature with which we live partly has perhaps a meaning. How can we find out what that meaning is?

RB: The world of Nature is said to have the greatest meaning just like every part of the world, including ourselves, have the greatest meaning. To people who have insight, that is the sight of the real nature of things — the world of Nature reveals everything. They see a bit of the world of Nature and it seems as if God himself reveals his nature there because everything is part of that one thing which we call God.

We human beings regard ourselves as separate from our surroundings. The world of Nature including the plants, the earth, the sky, the animals, everything seems outside us, outside the field of our consciousness. If we begin to realize that everything that exists in Nature has a meaning within, we realize what the meaning is. But as long as we attribute meaning only to ourselves, to perhaps a few members of our family, to a few friends, etc., and the rest is outside, then we do not understand anything and we cannot see anything. It is no use somebody explaining what the meaning is. It has been said he who sees Nature properly sees everything and Nature includes human nature also. So there is no difficulty in finding out what it means;

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it means God, the creator. It means everything that exists.

PO: That is probably enough. However, just briefly, a footnote . . .

The question of meaning has occupied a number of Western philosophers for centuries. There are different schools of thought on that. Is the meaning intrinsic, is the meaning to be deducted from an object, a person, or a work of art? Sanskrit literature has a word — *svarupa* — which is the essential form of something. What we see may not be the essential form; it may be just a vesture or a clothing; the essence is not available to us.

There are in the literature of world spirituality a few passages that show such perception is possible. William Blake said all that lives is Holy. Some people may say that this is just poetry. It may not be just poetry; it may be a true perception. There is a sense of holiness and sacredness in life and many great mystics have become aware of it. A French philosopher had something to say about this — that science manipulates things and refuses to dwell in them. It manipulates the concepts of energy, matter, force — but it is incapable of defining them, probably because they are realities.

CP: The communication between each of us is very tricky. That is why as a student I always loved mathematics because if you could get along, it has a definite rightness about it. If you talked to another mathematician you understood exactly what he meant. We communicate in a very difficult way. I cannot be very sure as I speak to you now, how many of you are really taking the meaning of what I am saying, the way I mean it. We have to solve the problem about whether the other people see the world as we see it.

A philosopher said we know the colour green; however, you do not know if the person who sits next to you experiences green as you experience it. At a far more serious level is the problem of relationship. One of the examples to demonstrate communication difficulties is to ask two people to come to a counsellor to explain to the other person what the problem is and when they finish explaining it to ask the other person what they said. The other person has heard something entirely different. It is unbelievable how much trouble we cause because we do not communicate actually with each other. We attribute different meanings to the words we use; misunderstandings arise. ✧

O that we would but once learn to know ourselves!

Boehme

**ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIFTH INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

Adyar

Theme: 'Theosophical Teachings on the Path'

26 to 31 December 2010

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Saturday, 25 December

8.00 am General Council Meeting
2.00 pm General Council Meeting

Sunday, 26 December

8.00 am Prayers of the Religions
OPENING OF THE CONVENTION
3.30 pm Reception
5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
'The Spiritual Path and the Phoenix Mystery'
Mrs Linda Oliveira, *International Vice-President*
7.30 pm Ritual of the Mystic Star

Monday, 27 December

8.00 am SHORT LECTURES
'Theosophical Teachings on the Path'
Mr John Vorstermans, *President, Indo-Pacific Federation*
'The Light which Lighteth Every Man'
Mr S. Sundaram, *General Secretary, Indian Section*
9.30 am *Qualifications for the Path* (Session I of Theme)
Prof. R. C. Tampi, *Retired Professor of English, Calicut*
Mr Chong Sanne, *President, Singapore Lodge, TS*
3.00 pm INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — I
5.00 pm BESANT LECTURE
'Towards a Sustainable India'
Mr Narayana Murthy,
Founder, Chairman and Chief Mentor, Infosys, Bangalore
7.30 pm Musical Programme, Nirali Kartik and Accompanists

Tuesday, 28 December

8.00 am Devotional Meeting

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- 9.30 am *Nature and Us* (Session II of Theme)
Miss Dianne Kynaston,
Former General Secretary, Australian Section
Mr M. P. Singhal, *Former General Secretary, Indian Section*
Mrs Avantika Mehta, *President, Gujarat Federation*
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
'Buddhism: A Religion, a Philosophy or a Way of Life?'
Ven. Olande Ananda Thera,
Resident Teacher, Pagoda Meditation Centre, Sri Lanka
- 7.30 pm Slide Presentation on Adyar
Dr Geetha Jaikumar and Dr T. P. Alaganantham

Wednesday, 29 December

- 8.00 am SHORT LECTURES
'The Nature of the True Path'
Mr Colin Price, *Former General Secretary, English Section*
'The Watchful Eye that Observes',
Prof. C. A. Shinde, *National Lecturer, Indian Section*
- 9.30 am INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — II
- 3.00 pm THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE
- 5.00 pm THEOSOPHY–SCIENCE LECTURE
'Interrelationship'
Dr Lakshmi Saripalli,
Senior Scientist, Raman Research Institute, Bangalore
- 7.30 pm Dances of India by NADAM Ensemble, Bangalore

Thursday, 30 December

- 8.00 am *Without Loving Care I am Nothing* (Session III of Theme)
Mr Marcos Resende, *General Secretary, Brazilian Section*
- 9.30 am QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
'Who am I?'
Mrs Radha Burnier, *International President*
- 7.30 pm Krishnamurti Video

Friday, 31 December

- 8.00 am Prayers of the Religions
CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION
- 9.30 am Admission of New Members

Theosophical Work around the World

India

The Tamil Theosophical Federation held its 84th Annual Conference on 30 October 2010 in Salem on the theme 'The Theosophical Society — Now and in the Future'. The International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, was the Chief Guest and delivered a lecture on 'Our Future'. The subjects of other presentations included 'Theosophy and Truth', 'Universal Oneness', 'Desirelessness' and 'Theosophy for the Youth'.

The International Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, and the Head of the Editorial Office at Adyar, Mr Pedro Oliveira, visited western India from 31 October to 14 November 2010. Their starting point was Pune where on 31 October the Vice-President addressed members of Poona Lodge on 'The Future of the Theosophical Society: Keeping the Flame Alive'. Mr Oliveira spoke on 'The Purpose of the TS'. Public talks were delivered on 1 November on 'Theosophy: Hope for 21st Century Humanity' and 'The Opportunity of this Life', by the Vice-President and Mr Oliveira, respectively. In Mumbai both addressed a members' meeting on 3 November, which was followed by discussion. On the next day they visited the Theosophical Colony in Juhu and had a discussion with TS members there on the inspirational lives

of great TS leaders.

Proceeding to Gujarat, the Vice-President and Mr Oliveira delivered public talks at Bhavnagar Lodge on 8 November, speaking, respectively, on 'Human Society, Spirituality and Renewal' and 'The Origins of Theosophy'. On their way to Surat they were welcomed by the members of Reva Lodge in Baroda whom they met informally. Both Bhavnagar and Reva Lodges were established by the Founders in 1882. Mrs Oliveira gave a public talk at the Sanatana Lodge in Surat on 'Karma and Dharma: What is Their Significance in Our Lives?'

Both the Vice-President and Mr Oliveira were guests at the Annual Conference of the Gujarat Theosophical Federation which was held in Ahmedabad, from 12 to 14 November on the theme 'To Live is to Evolve'. Mrs Oliveira delivered two talks: 'The Dawning of Self-Illumination' and 'Live to Benefit Humanity', and also gave an address to new members. Mr Oliveira spoke on 'The Opportunity of This Life'. Over 260 members attended the conference which was held at the Gujarat Vidyapeeth, a university founded by Gandhiji in 1920. The enthusiasm and dedication shown by the members at the Ahmedabad Conference bodes well for the TS work in that area. ❖

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

| Date | Section | General Secretary, etc. | Address | Magazine | Email address |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 1947 | Africa, East and Central | ... Mr Navin B. Shah | ... PO Box 14804, 00800-Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya | ... <i>The Theosophical Light</i> | navinmeera@hotmail.com |
| 1909 | Africa, South | ... Mr Tom Davis | ... 22 Buffels Road, Rietondale, Pretoria, 0084 | ... <i>The South African Theosophist</i> | thosgdavis@icon.co.za |
| 1956 | Africa, West | ... Mr P. B. Kwakyi | ... PO Box 720, Accra, Ghana | ... <i>The West African Theosophist</i> | tswafrica@gmail.com |
| 1929 | America, Central * | ... Mrs Aura Elena de Martínez | ... Calle Julio Mejía Pol. E-7, Colonia Universitaria Norte, San Salvador, El Salvador | | bemapo03@hotmail.com fcormayorga@hotmail.com |
| 1920 | Argentina | ... Mrs Silvia Liliana Pastore | ... Casilla de Correo 166, 5600 San Rafael, Provincia de Mendoza | ... <i>Teosofía en Argentina</i> | stargentina@sociedad-teosofica.com.ar |
| 1990 | Asia, Southeast † | | ... The Theosophical Society Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India | | theosoc@dataone.in |
| 1895 | Australia | ... Dr Dara Tatray | ... 4th fl., 484 Kent St., Sydney, NSW 2000 | ... <i>Theosophy in Australia</i> | tshq@austheos.org.au |
| 1912 | Austria * | ... Mr Herbert Fuchs | ... Joseph Gaubyweg 7, A - 8010 Graz | ... <i>Theosophie Adyar</i> | herbert.f.fuchs@gmail.com |
| 1911 | Belgium | ... Mr Jan Jelle Keppler | ... Place des Gueux 8, B1000 Brussels | ... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i> | jan.keppler@telenet.be |
| 1965 | Bolivia † | ... Mrs Teresa W. de Nuñez | ... Casilla de Correo 3911, Cochabamba | | saidita_2945@hotmail.com |
| 1920 | Brazil | ... Mr Marcos L. B. de Resende | ... Sociedade Teosofica no Brazil, SGAS Quadra 603, N. 20, CEP 70200-630 Brasilia (DF) | ... <i>Sophia</i> | tbrazil@sociedadeteosofica.org.br |
| 1924 | Canada * | ... Mr Medardo Martinez Cruz | ... 3162 Rue de la Bastille Boisbriand QC., J7H 1K7 | ... <i>The Light Bearer</i> | MMartinez@manhattaninc.com |
| 1920 | Chile * | ... Mr Maximiliano Aguilera | ... Casilla 3603, Santiago 21 | ... <i>Revista Teosófica Chilena</i> | sociedad.teosofica@gmail.com |
| 1937 | Colombia † | ... Mrs Julia Ballesteros | ... Carrera. 6, No. 56-27 Apto. 201, Bogotá-2 | ... <i>Selección Teosófica</i> | julitaballesteros@gmail.com |
| 1997 | Costa Rica † | ... Ms Maria Orlich | ... Apartado 8-6710-1000, San José | | orlichsm@yahoo.com |
| 2007 | Croatia ▲ | ... Mrs Nada Tepeš | ... Krajiška ulica 24, 10000 Zagreb | ... <i>Teozofija</i> | z.zemlja@gmail.com |
| 1905 | Cuba | ... Mr Gaspar Torres | ... Apartado de Correos 6365, La Habana 10600 | | teocuba.sociedad@gmail.com |
| 1987 | Dominican Rep. † | ... Mrs Magaly Polanco | ... 1652 Sta. Agueda, C7 Les Chalets Court Apto. 23, San Juan, PR 00926, USA | | polanc@prtc.net |
| 1888 | England | ... Mr Eric McGough | ... 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA | ... <i>Insight</i> | office@theosoc.org.uk |
| 1907 | Finland | ... Ms Marja Artamaa | ... Teosofinen Seura, Vironkatu 7 C 2, Fin 00170, Helsinki | ... <i>Teosofi</i> | teosofinen.seura@netti.fi |
| 1899 | France | ... Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu | ... 4 Square Rapp, 75007 Paris | ... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i> | editionsadyar@wanadoo.fr |
| 1902 | Germany | ... Mrs Manuela Kaulich | ... Hauptstr. 39, 93138 Lappersdorf | ... <i>Adyar</i> | theosophie-adyar@gmx.de |
| 1928 | Greece | ... Mr Theodoros Katsifis | ... 25 Voukourestiou St., 106 71-Athens | ... <i>Ilisos</i> | info@theosophicalsociety.gr |
| 1907 | Hungary † | ... Mr Thomas Martinovich | ... Hunyadi Janos ut 17. II. 8, H-1011 Budapest | ... <i>Teozófia</i> | tshutau7@hu.inter.net |
| 1921 | Iceland | ... Ms Anna Valdimarsdóttir | ... PO Box 1257 Ingólfsstraeti 22, 121 Reykjavik | ... <i>Gangleri</i> | ts@gudspekifelagid.is |
| 1891 | India | ... Mr S. Sundaram | ... The Theosophical Society, Varanasi 221 010 | ... <i>The Indian Theosophist</i> | theosophy_vns@yahoo.com |
| 1912 | Indonesia | ... Mr Herry Ispoernomo | ... Jalan Anggrek Nelimurni A-104, Jakarta 11410, Timur | ... <i>Theosofi</i> | teosofi.indonesia@gmail.com |
| 1919 | Ireland * | ... Mrs Marie Harkness | ... 97 Mountsandel Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, UK BT52 ITA | ... <i>Insight</i> | marieharkness@yahoo.co.uk |

| | | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 1954 | Israel ▲ | ... Mr Abraham Oron | ... PO Box 4014, Ramat-Gan, Israel 52140 | ... <i>Or</i> | mail@theosophia.co.il |
| 1902 | Italy | ... Mr Antonio Girardi | ... Viale Quintino Sella, 83/E, 36100 Vicenza | ... <i>Rivista Italiana di Teosofia</i> | sti@teosofica.org |
| 1997 | Ivory Coast * | ... Mr Pierre-Magloire Kouahoh | ... Yopougon, 23 Rue Princesse B. P. 3924, Abidjan 23 | ... <i>Sophia</i> | pm_kouahoh@hotmail.com |
| 1971 | Japan ▲ | ... Mr Naotsugu Takahashi | ... 4-12-11 Nakamachi, Nishi Tokyoshi Tokyo 202 0013 | | tsjp@hte.highway.ne.jp |
| 1919 | Mexico | ... Mrs Lissette Arroyo Jiménez | ... Ignacio Mariscal 126, Col. Tabacalera Mexicana, Mexico, D.F. 06030 | | sociedadteosofica@prodigy.net.mx |
| 1897 | Netherlands, The | ... Ms Els Rijneker | ... Tolsraat 154, 1074 VM Amsterdam | ... <i>Theosofia</i> | info@theosofie.nl |
| 1896 | New Zealand | ... Mr Warwick Keys | ... 17, Belvedere Street, Epsom, Auckland 1051 | ... <i>TheoSophia</i> | hq@theosophy.org.nz |
| 1913 | Norway * | ... Mrs Agnes Gaasemyr | ... Stadionvei 9, N - 5162 Laksevaag | | post@teosofisksamfunn.no |
| 1924 | Peru † | ... Mr Julio Gerardo Pomar | ... Jr. Republica de Portugal 152, Breña, Lima 5 | ... <i>Búsqueda</i> | teosoficaperu@hotmail.com |
| 1933 | Philippines, The | ... Mr Vicente Haó Chin, Jr. | ... Corner P. Florentino and Iba Streets, Quezon City, Manila | ... <i>The Philippine Theosophist</i> | philtheos@gmail.com |
| 1921 | Portugal | ... Mr Carlos Guerra | ... Rua Passos Manoel no. 20 cave 1150 - 260 Lisboa | ... <i>Osiris</i> | geral@sociedadeteosoficadeportugal.pt |
| 1925 | Puerto Rico † | ... Dr Eladio Polanco | ... 1652 Sta. Agueda, C7 Les Chalets Court Aptdo. 23, San Juan, PR 00926, USA | ... <i>Heraldo Teosófico</i> | polancoeladio@yahoo.com |
| 1910 | Scotland * | ... Mr Stuart Trotter | ... 28 Great King Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6QH | ... <i>Circles</i> | stuarttrotter@hotmail.com |
| 1889 | Singapore ▲ | ... Mr Chong Sanne | ... 540 Sims Avenue, No 03-04 Sims Avenue Centre, Singapore 387603 | ... <i>Newsletter</i> | sanne@singaporelodge.org |
| 1992 | Slovenia * | ... Mrs Breda Žagar | ... Kunaverjeva 1 SLO-1000 Ljubljana | ... <i>Teozofska Misel</i> | zagarbreda@gmail.com |
| 1921 | Spain | ... Mrs Clarisa Elósegui | ... Arenys de Mar, n.14, Iro - Ira E - 08225 Terrassa - Barcelona | ... <i>Sophia</i> | clarisaelo@gmail.com |
| 1926 | Sri Lanka † | ... Mr S. M. Jayatilleke | ... 20/13, Race Course Road, Badulla (BD) 90000 | ... <i>The Sri Lanka Theosophist</i> | smjbadulla@gmail.com |
| 1895 | Sweden | ... Mr Pertti Spets | ... Henriksdalsringen 23, SE - 131 32 Nacka | ... <i>Tidlös Visdom</i> | teosofiska.samfundet.adyar@telia.com |
| 1910 | Switzerland † | ... Mrs Eliane Gaillard | ... 17 Chemin de la Côte, CH -1282 Dardagny, Genève | ... <i>The Lotus</i> | egaillard@bluewin.ch |
| 1997 | Togo * | ... Mr Kouma Dakey | ... S.O., A.R.T.T., BP 76, Adeta | | |
| 2007 | Ukraine ▲ | ... Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko | ... Office 3, 7-and Zhyljanska St., Kiev 01033 | | ankh@voliacable.com |
| 1886 | USA | ... Mrs Betty Bland | ... PO Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60187-0270 | ... <i>The Quest</i> | admin@theosophical.org |
| 1925 | Uruguay * | ... Mr Nelson Corrales | ... Javier Barrios Amorin 1085, Casilla de Correos 1553, Montevideo | | samadhi@internet.com.uy |
| 1922 | Wales * | ... Ms Julie Cunningham | ... Tan y fron, Red Wharf Bay, Penarth Angelsey, Gwynedd LL75 8HJ UK | ... <i>Insight</i> | j.cunningham@yahoo.co.uk |

Date refers to the date of formation * *Regional Association* † *Presidential Agency* ▲ *Lodge attached to Adyar*

The Council of the European Federation of National Societies: *Chairman:* Miss Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, 67 Rue des Pommiers, F-45000 Orleans, France. Email: **kimdieu_ts@magic.fr**
 Inter-American Theosophical Federation: *President:* Mrs Terezinha Kind, SHIS QI 28 Conjunto 1, casa 29 - Lago Sul, Brasília DFF - 71.670-210, Brazil. Email: **t.kind@terra.com.br**
 Indo-Pacific Theosophical Federation: *President:* Mr John Vorstermans, 60B Riro Street, Point Chevalier, Auckland 1022, New Zealand. Email: **john@theosophy.org.nz**
 Pan-African Theosophical Federation: *Chairman:* Mr Kiran H. Shah, 55A Third Parklands Avenue, PO Box 40149, Nairobi 00100, Kenya. Email: **kirankh33@gmail.com**

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