



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover Picture: Passion flowers adorn the Adyar garden — Dr T. P. Alaganantham

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

The Mind is the Slayer of the Real

Let us observe the mind at work. It is one thing to hear a statement and vaguely believe it, and another thing to discover its meaning for oneself. But there must be complete objectivity and honesty, without prevarication of any kind.

There is a sort of mirroring in the impure mind of activities of the cosmic mind, which has two aspects. One is concealment of what truly is, and the other is incompleteness. Manifestation is a sort of revelation of the truth, and at the same time an incomplete or imperfect revelation, which obscures the totality of the truth.

At lower levels of existence the veil over consciousness is thicker because consciousness functions through various kinds of matter, subtle and less subtle. The other aspect is the throwing up of images which gives a false picture of what is. It is like the mind imagining a picture of a snake when the eyes see only a rope. We cover up the aspects of existence which we do not want to see, because of personal likes and dislikes, prejudices, and other previous conditions of our mind, which become thoughts. It is very important to perceive for ourselves that in almost all our judgements, conclusions and opinions this is happening. That is why the wise

advise: 'Do not judge', because we do not know. Our conclusions about anybody or anything are bound to be false. They represent our mental projection of what is. When we say such and such a person is like this, it is just a sort of imagination, or fancy. But the mind's nature is such that it wants to assert the validity of its own projections and images, its personal evaluation of things.

We all have the idea that our opinion represents the fact, or even the truth; that when we make a judgement our mind is truly assessing the nature of things. That is a very strong feeling in the mind and is perhaps the nature of the mind; but we deceive ourselves by believing this. This is why the teaching given, at least from time to time, upon the attitude, 'I do not know'. I think I know but I do not know. I do not know what my close friend is really like, although I see the outer appearance. I come to some conclusions and judgements on the basis of certain experiences, but the whole thing amounts to nothing. It does not correspond to what is deeply within that individual. As Krishnaji often said, the image we have created is in our own mind, created by the imagination, the picture-making capacity of the mind. It is constantly 'slaying the

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real'. We should grasp this, not mentally, but actually. If at least to some extent we can realize this, it is a good beginning. It is different from what we call thinking which is generally what somebody else has said.

We may know how a motor car works, or how to invest our money in the stock market; all that has nothing to do with the inner life, the spiritual unfoldment which has to take place. So we need not count that as knowledge at all. But if we think of knowledge which is worthwhile from the point of view of the Path, we really do not know a thing. When the mind has an attitude of recognizing its own limitations, it qualifies to receive knowledge; as long as it thinks it knows, it is erecting a wall through which truth cannot get reflected.

This is also very well known from Socrates and Indian sages: the man who realizes he does not know is the one who knows. He who thinks he knows is the ignorant person. So we must have an open mind. When we say 'a clean life, an open mind' we must be aware that the mind needs to be open at various levels, not just at the mental or intellectual level. It must be open to the inner nature of things. A person may have contact with us every day of our lives, but we do not know what that person is in reality. That is so in regard to almost everything of which we can think.

The Mind and Its Habits

The mind believes only in what comes to it through the body. It becomes entangled with the sensory perceptions of

the body. In Theosophical books it has been pointed out that even in regard to the physical world we know very little because we see very little of it. This seems an astounding thing but it is a fact. We see solids and liquids, but we cannot see existence in a gaseous form except occasionally. We see vapour, we see perhaps some fumes of a gas occasionally; but there are gases all around us, and our instruments of perception are quite unaware. We accept their existence, because there are certain effects which are caused by their presence, and therefore we say they exist. But according to the esoteric philosophy there are other subtle levels of the physical world.

Forms are first created according to the person's karma, or in the shape of plants, flowers, or whatever it is, by the devas who are given the duty of moulding forms. The etheric body is called the etheric double, because the baby's form exists first at the etheric level and then comes into existence at the lower physical levels, where we are able to perceive it. All the time, that subtler counterpart of the physical existence is associated with what we perceive with our senses. A few people always talk about it, but most materialists (and the world is largely made up of materialists) do not accept it. They cannot explain what energy comes from, and how it keeps the body in health and in a living state.

All energy is the one energy, the energy of the Reality or the sun which is not the physical sun. It passes into the physical body only through that counterpart which

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is called the etheric body. It is the channel through which *prāna* flows, but we do not see it. When going to graveyards, the more sensitive people see a ghost or two hanging around. That is because the etheric body takes a little more time to disintegrate after the physical body. Sometimes it happens that when a person dies, a daughter, or somebody who has been close to the dead person, sees that person from a great distance. He or she appears alive, and there are many cases of these sightings. I remember one of our members who lived in Agra, and when her mother died in Benares, she saw her mother and telephoned to ask. She saw the etheric double and presumed that something had happened to her mother. So occasionally we see what exists at that level.

A large part of the physical world is unknown, but we think we know the physical world. This is much more true of the vast field of subtle existence, which increases in subtlety the further consciousness is able to penetrate. The habit of thinking that physical existence is the only thing that matters, and what we see of the physical is the most important element is one way in which perception of what is real is impeded. Then there are other characteristics of this lower mind, for example the feeling of pride.

There are people who have to do a work to which they are unaccustomed. A man retires (this is an imaginary case, but it could be real), and comes to an organization like the Theosophical Society and says he would like to offer

his services. He asks: 'What can I do?' He is told that we do not have need of his capacity now, but if he is prepared to do something else, then he could come along. That something else may be something about which he does not know anything. This has actually happened, that the person is not prepared to stay and learn. When anyone told this particular person anything, he used to immediately say: 'Yes we already know that, we are already doing that.' So he did not allow the other person to say any more. That becomes our attitude even in regard to teaching of a spiritual nature.

It was the case of poor Sinnett, who was really deeply devoted to the Master KH. But in certain fields, Sinnett was convinced that he knew better. As an Englishman, in his eyes he was one who could know about these things. How could the Master, an Indian, whatever may have been his accomplishments, know about these things. That is the natural reaction of the lower mind. Pride does not allow a person to say, 'let me learn'. This attitude of learning is absolutely essential for the spiritual life, from the beginning to the end. That is why HPB says: These are the Golden Stairs, up the steps of which the *learner* may tread the path. An open mind is the basis for learning. The open mind is willing always to see what it has not seen before, anywhere.

A Learner's Mind

There are people who talk about subjects of which they know nothing as if

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they know everything. This is always egoic pride, the feeling of importance which is characteristic of the lower mind. The mind is the slayer of the real. Therefore we have to watch out to see whether that attitude exists in us or not.

The restlessness of the mind which leads to distraction, this running about here and there, is also due to egoism. It is very difficult to listen, because the mind has the habit of escaping from where it is to something else. This is a problem for everyone of us — the mind refusing to be quiet. It has created this notional being which we call the ‘self’ and it wants to maintain that fiction by being active, running about, connecting everything that it finds, inwardly or outwardly to the fictitious centre which is the self. It looks at everything from that centre: ‘How does it affect me! What will it do to me, will it please me or displease me.’

Suppose there is no distraction for a few minutes, the mind is absolutely quiet without a thought (thought is only the energy of the mind moving about). At this time, even at the subconscious level, the existence of the notional self is not strong. It may even appear not to exist at that time, but the mind looks and wants the self to exist because it has identified the self with existence. This has also been called death.

When there is no self it is death, and

we do not want to die from that point of view. But we want our own notion of existing as a separate individual, with virtues and qualities as attributes which give a great feeling of satisfaction. Wanting it to exist is at the crux of the Buddhist teaching of Vipassanā or deep perception. It is not only the observing of how the body and emotions act, but that penetration to the inner nature which sees that there is emptiness and not self. When the self is, there is division; when there is emptiness there is no division. This is also the desire for possession, attachment, clinging to existence, the desire to get something, out of anywhere. The mind moves like that, because it has separated the self from others. ‘The real Sufi is one who possesses nothing and is possessed by nothing.’ The acquisitiveness of the mind is the source of a variety of problems, and it is continually active.

Through sustained reflection we must see how the mind slays the real, what it is that obscures our perception of things as they are. Seeing things as they are is liberation, liberation from the prison-house from which our senses do not free us; it is the pollution created by limitation. All the undesirable feelings and emotions arise out of it. We have to examine this question and try to understand, without becoming more self-centred. ✧

**Scatter abroad what you have already amassed rather than
pile up new wealth.**

’Ali

The Spiritual Path and the Phoenix Mystery

LINDA OLIVEIRA

ON 13 October 2010 a gripping drama unfolded, after the world had watched for over two months the lives of thirty-three men trapped underground. For many who watched their story unfold in the media, this was a story of human suffering, solidarity and, ultimately, of triumph.

The activity on that particular day centred on a relatively narrow device which came to be known as the 'Phoenix 2 capsule'. Seemingly against the odds, equipment and expertise were marshalled, and the capsule did its work flawlessly. Within the space of one day the miners emerged, one by one, from their shackled bonds within the device, into the glare of Chilean daylight, and most likely into a life which had been somehow changed forever. This particular drama has become part of the global narrative of our time, yet it has deeper correspondences in relation to the human journey.

The Phoenix

The choice of name of the capsule was interesting, to say the least. The word 'phoenix' was borrowed from the phoenix bird, found in the mythologies of various

cultures. 'Phoenix' means 'bright coloured'. A bird of gorgeous plumage, it had a peculiar mode of reproduction described by Geoffrey Barboroka as follows:

Gathering twigs from spice-trees the bird fashioned a nest, upon which it sat and thus concluded its cycle of existence. As the phoenix died, the nest burst into flames, thus consuming the body of the bird. Then, from the ashes a young phoenix sprang into life, and when strong enough flew to Heliopolis [the 'city of the sun' in Greek] with what remained of the nest, dropping it upon the altar of the sun . . .

The French author Voltaire described this bird as being the size of an eagle, yet with eyes which were mild and tender. Some believed that it lived for five hundred years. Others, such as Tacitus, suggested that it lived for one thousand, four hundred and sixty-one years; others again, more than twenty-five thousand years. The existence and life cycle of this fabled bird may therefore validly be subject to different symbolic interpretations. At one level it has been interpreted as the human personality which ceases

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after one life. From its ashes a new personality eventually springs into being, as the *skandha-s* reignite as it were, and the new personality is born in a subsequent incarnation. Madame Blavatsky actually viewed the phoenix as a generic symbol for several kinds of cycles.

HPB described the Garuda as the Indian phoenix. Chief of the feathered race (birds), the Garuda is depicted as half-man and half-bird, the *vāhana* or vehicle on which Vishnu is said to ride. Garuda was praised by the gods as the highest being and had a brilliant lustre. In one interpretation of the Hindu *trimurti*, Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva are understood as will, wisdom and activity. To relate this to human existence, if we take Vishnu as wisdom, then the Garuda becomes the vehicle of Wisdom. In this sense the Garuda can be thought of as an individual in whom the *buddhic* principle has awakened, through which Divine Wisdom may be expressed. The symbology of the phoenix may therefore also be applied to the profound changes which an individual undergoes on the Spiritual Path. There is an inner phoenix in all of us waiting patiently to be born not just once, but a number of times.

The Spiritual Path

Regarding our other main theme, the Spiritual Path, we may ask two important questions. Firstly, what does a path suggest in a general sense? It is a way to a destination in the outer world, providing a focus for a journey, giving direction and a sense of purpose. Also, some effort and

awareness are required in order to remain upon a path and reach its destination.

Secondly, what is the Spiritual Path? This orientates us in the opposite direction, being internal. With its own geography, it is perceived only when our inner senses are awake. Its terrain may often seem obscure. One sometimes hears people claim that they are on this Path! But in reality, they may be on one of the many approaches to it.

At the Feet of the Master provides a map, a clear set of qualifications, to help orientate the aspirant in the direction of the Path. These include discrimination, which is a rendering of the Sanskrit *viveka*; desirelessness, derived from *vairāgya*; good conduct (expressed as six points, known elsewhere as *shatsampatti* or six jewels of the mind); and love, which is the translation used for *mumukshutva*. The qualifications are preliminary and this stage may last for a number of lives.

Yet some things may hold back even an (apparently) earnest individual from entering that Path.

What Prevents us from Entering the Path?

Firstly, preparation normally takes a number of lifetimes. The qualifications briefly mentioned before can be realized only through a high level of attention and one-pointedness. Let us consider just one example. Desirelessness was mentioned as a qualification, being one translation of *vairāgya*. It is instructive to watch how the desire nature works. We may want something very much, which sooner or

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later comes to us. This is followed by a very brief, perhaps momentary, period of satisfaction. A feeling of emptiness or dullness follows, because the glamour and excitement have worn off. There is staleness. Then a new desire of some sort is fuelled, and so on.

Madame Blavatsky wrote:

When desire is for the purely abstract — when it has lost all trace or tinge of ‘self’ — then it has become pure.

The first step towards this purity is to kill out the desire for the things of matter, since these *can* only be enjoyed by the separated personality.

The second is to cease from desiring for oneself even such abstractions as power, knowledge, love, happiness, or fame; for they are but selfishness after all.

How difficult is the challenge to ‘kill out’ the desire for the things of matter, for they play upon our consciousness so much of the time in everyday life! We may try to overcome these desires in the physical world in various ways. And if people thought less about wanting an abstraction such as power, and far more about their responsibility in their own sphere of life, then the human world and its many institutions would be markedly different!

A second factor which prevents us from entering the Path is half-heartedness. The Spiritual Path may be an unrealized ideal simply because intensity and seriousness of purpose on our part are lacking. At the end of the day other things often take the

greatest priority, and we may make merely sporadic attempts to compensate for our many activities with some sort of intermittent spiritual practice.

One of the Spiritual Teachers behind the formation of the Theosophical Society wrote: ‘Selfishness and the want of self-sacrifice are the greatest impediments on the path of adeptship.’ The Adept has overcome these and risen, phoenix-like, into the freedom of Divine spheres about which we know very little.

What is the Spiritual Path?

What is the nature of the Spiritual Path?

In certain modern Theosophical texts we read of a period of probation, followed by a number of stages on the Path expressed in terms of Initiations, new beginnings. The Path might seem to be external to ourselves. For example, a place may become powerfully symbolic of our spiritual journey. However, in reality *we* create this Path within our consciousness, and eventually merge with it. The making of the Path becomes our inner phoenix.

Furthermore, while the Path lies within us, paradoxically its very nature consists of progressive movement *outwards*. Why? Because we become increasingly sensitive to life and the consciousness expands. Unlike a physical path, the Spiritual Path is not linear. It is multidimensional, pertaining to our various vehicles.

Brother Sri Ram wrote:

One aspect of what the Path means is the regaining of the fundamental unity of one’s being, which is not in evidence at present

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because of the contradictions in [our] mind and emotions.

We live a bit like computers, in small bytes. Many little units of memory may alternate with thoughts of anticipation. We may think about things we have done, people we have seen or, on the other hand, future things such as places we would like to go to, or whom we would like to meet. These are small things. But perhaps we do not perceive our smallness. The mind, left to its own devices, is very active and is small. It hardly knows how to be still.

It is a relatively rare individual who can enter into a wider, more synthetic consciousness, and actually sustain this for a good portion of the day. If we do not have a real sense of fundamental unity, it is because our internal divisions both dwarf and obscure our deeper nature.

There is an interesting description of biological levels of organization by Prof. Charles Birch, a former Challis Professor of Biology at the University of Sydney, which has certain correspondences in relation to the Spiritual Path. He wrote:

As one moves up levels of organization — quarks, electrons, atoms, molecules, cells, tissues and organs — the properties of each larger whole are given not merely by the units of which it is composed but also by the new relations between these units. It is not simply that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The parts themselves are redefined and recreated in the process of evolution from one level to another.

Similarly, in the case of a human being who has entered the Spiritual Path, it is not simply a case of the whole of the individual being greater than the various smaller aspects of his or her consciousness. Rather, these aspects are actually redefined and recreated as evolution proceeds. Furthermore, a new relationship of real harmony develops between them.

The Phoenix Mystery

The regenerative principle in Nature is clear enough. In human nature, this principle is depicted mythologically by the phoenix, which also has its counterparts in other traditions.

But what *is* this phoenix mystery? It has several facets. We only really know the outer shell of ourselves. Who we will become over long ages is part of the mystery of our repeated awakenings into progressively higher spheres of consciousness, beauty and freedom. The phoenix mystery is also the silent way in which the everyday self-centred personality eventually becomes transmuted and regenerated like the phoenix bird into something new and beautiful, allowing what is highest and noblest within to emerge. But perhaps the greatest facet of the mystery of the phoenix is this: we do not know just when episodes of this interior alchemy will occur. For Nature is not totally predictable.

The Master Key

It is suggested that there is essentially one master key to entering into our inner nature which is implicit in all authentic

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spiritual teachings, and which is therefore also the key to the phoenix mystery. That key is unselfishness. It was mentioned by one of the Inner Founders of the Theosophical Society in this way:

. . . it is [un]selfishness alone that throws open all the doors and windows of the inner Tabernacle and leaves them unshut.

Unselfishness, in its fullest sense, releases us from our everyday consciousness into the inner sanctum of our own being. In its positive sense, we can think of it as *selflessness*. For the spiritual Path of each of us, ultimately, is to become centred on the Eternal, on the Divine, on that which lasts and is True — and to bring its fragrance into every aspect of our lives.

Conclusion

Returning to the thirty-three miners in Chile, there are both similarities and differences between the symbolism of the mythological phoenix bird when applied to the men who surfaced in the Phoenix 2 capsule, and the spiritual unfoldment of the human being. These highlight the contrast between worldly and spiritual life:

* The miners trapped in Chile entered a capsule made by an outside source. However, our spiritual evolution demands that we fashion our own phoenix within.

* The thirty-three men did not need a map to get to the surface, but the spiritual aspirant can far more easily navigate the inner terrains of consciousness with some sort of map.

* The capsule which took the miners

to the surface was powered by an external source. On the other hand, the aspirant requires self-induced and self-devised effort. No outside agency will undertake our spiritual evolution for us.

* The miners would know the temporary joy of release from imprisonment, only to meet once again life's everyday ups and downs. However, spiritual emergence entails a progressive release from the many desires and struggles of the personal self, into greater freedom and joy.

The individual who has undergone a number of mysterious transformations has become increasingly free from the grip of sentient life, entering more and more a world of freedom, purity and beauty. On the Spiritual Path proper, there is a series of phoenix-like renewals, expansions of consciousness through which that which is old in us perishes, and the freshness of our interior nature makes itself felt more and more. Described as a fire spirit, the fabled phoenix denotes in one sense this awakening of the spiritual dimension from within. Personal shortcomings of human nature are destined to eventually, inexorably, become purified through the fire of experience, allowing our luminous core to reveal itself and become known. In addition, we may recall from the mythological account given earlier that, from the ashes, a young phoenix would fly to Heliopolis, the 'city of the sun', and drop the remnants of its nest upon the 'altar of the sun'. We, too, need to travel to the 'sun' within. Our spiritual essence will become brighter and stronger within our consciousness with the passage of time,

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like a sun whose light penetrates every aspect of our life. And the existence of sages throughout history inspires us with the assurance that this blazing star within our consciousness will eventually be known in all its splendour and glory. ✧

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Just as a little drop of water mixed with a lot of wine seems entirely to lose its own identity, while it takes on the taste of wine and its colour; just as iron, heated and glowing, looks very much like fire, having divested itself of its original and characteristic appearance; and just as air flooded with the light of the sun is transformed into the same splendour of light so that it appears not so much lighted up as to be light itself; so it will inevitably happen that in saints every human affection will then in some ineffable manner melt away from self and be entirely transfused into the will of God.

St Bernard

Ethics: Bridging Freedom and Responsibility

LICIO CORREIA

Our Current World

In a general way, to speak about our current world is much the same as speaking about pride and material possessions. Pride for a certain kind of progress, aimed mainly at the development of high technologies, accompanied by a true 'cult' of success, by a concept of what is described as 'quality of life', by the praise with no bounds of the capacity for the manipulation of the life forms themselves which is expressed by the biotechnologies (genetic engineering, cloning, organ transplants and others).

Nevertheless, there is evidently a disparity between this dimension of progress and the ethical dimension which, on the evolutionary plan, should be expected at this stage.

As culture and civilization developed, building on a foundation that was centred in man (anthropocentric), man started to grow apart from Nature. He started to understand Nature as a tool for his own profit. The holistic principle that structures Theosophical thinking tells us something quite different. In fact everything is reflected in all else, with the respective consequences.

In accordance with the materialistic vision, centred in the transitory component of man — his personality or lower *quarternarium* — which is, in fact, a facet of *māyā*, all seems well and just part of the progress. But like the moon that has a bright side because it reflects the sun in the midst of the night, the material progress that renders us so proud has another, occult side, much more sinister — the chains of our ignorance which it is important to acknowledge in order to consciously surmount them. It would not be an exaggeration to conclude that ethical thought will have to ground itself in a perfect awareness of man about his nature and his role in the universe.

Let us centre ourselves in our own time, and in some of its limiting aspects. Today's 'demons' are: faceless pragmatism, selfishness, the cult of individuality and ferocious competitiveness, ignorance, war, xenophobia, fanaticism and 'commercial mysticism', fundamentalism, demagogy, spiritual emptiness, drugs, criminality, Aids, other 'civilization' diseases and so on. The ethical dimension — in the Theosophical perspective — is frequently absent.

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The young, endowed with all sorts of technological equipment (commonplace nowadays) ‘surf’ the net, communicating with the immensity of our common house, the Earth, and at the same time, they remain locked in their rooms! If we observe them closely, we shall discover they are alone, shut in the ‘*loka-s*’ — which are, on the one side, their cultural conditioning filters, and, on the other, the isolation of their own rooms. Maybe we have never been as lonely and separated as nowadays, even in the midst of a multitude. Something is missing.

Another example is of the mother, proud of the beauty of her daughter, saying: ‘My daughter is beautiful, and you have not yet seen her picture!’ Can one find a better image to understand the strength of the attractive, but virtual, world of *māyā*? It manifests through stereotypes that are characteristic of mass and consumption societies, where to *have* and to *seem* (the faces of materialism) are, with the amplifying support of the new technologies and knowledge, more important than *being* itself. It is a time where, on the one hand, there is incredible development in the field of material progress and on the other, there is an apparent global devaluation in perennial ethical and spiritual values, thus provoking a disparity between new events and karmic adjustments.

The money-oriented idea of ‘it’s only business’ corrupts true quality in commercial interests. Distorted principles of ethics and morality are presented — principles on which the ultimate meaning

of existence should be established, principles which it is tantamount to emphasize, to defend the real Ethics.

No doubt, the ethical dimension is, in this context, not only a theoretical need, or a mere rhetoric for circumstantial reasons, but rather, and more and more so, a tool and fundamental support to a full human realization, in the long and complex way of human existence.

The ‘Cult’ of the here and now — limitations of space and time

One of the characteristics of today’s multitudes is the tendency to divinize the ‘here and now’, ‘there is only one life and we have to live it intensely’, with all the means being accepted as legitimate when aimed at getting material profits. These material strategies are formulated for the short time of one human life without any consideration of its future consequences, which in this material perspective are of little interest, given the fact that it is common belief that ‘we will be here no longer’ when the consequences of our acts come to pass.

This is another point for reflection, considering ethics as interpreted by Theosophists. There are no ‘circumstantial ethics’ for one life only, or merely for the historical time of a given culture. In this sense, it is important to make a distinction between Ethics written with a capital ‘E’ and the different ‘ethics’ as applied to different cultural fields.

A culture can be understood in the measure that it identifies itself with a collective karma. To each culture

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corresponds its own ethical sense that helps us to characterize it. Nevertheless, in the Theosophical perspective, Ethics has a transcendental dimension — as such, it is quite beyond the limited dimension of a given life or culture, because it is rooted in the eternity of man's higher, divine nature.

The future awaits us in the boundless expanse of time. We can see ethics as our goal and the guiding sextant for our self-realization. Therefore, it has another dimension, a transcendental one that will free us from the limits of *māyā*, limits that we should be aware of and learn to overcome.

If we are in no condition to change the past (whose lessons one should assume and understand), the truth is that, somehow, as Theosophists, we must — through the wise use of free will (freedom) — responsibly help to build the future. Not just our future, but the future for the whole of Humanity, whose part we are. A Theosophist must be a Lord of Time, rather than its slave, guided by the lighthouse of ethical dimension, which illuminates our way.

Despair, rage and frustration, with the amplifying effects of selfishness, frequently glorified by the media (after all, just another insidious form of ignorance), invade the thoughts of most people. All these are characteristic reactions by the less evolved and defenceless egos, living in the obsession of 'here and now' and being, therefore, the cause of inappropriate behaviour, impulsive, primitive

and violent, naturally outside of any ethical sense.

Knowing that violence begets violence, and, in the same way, on the other end of the spectrum, Love begets Love, we can find another '*loka*' or vicious circle, which it is important to overcome, the circle of perpetual violence.

Given the 'reactivity' — which is a common biological characteristic of the most elementary organisms, it is easier for us to understand the role of the specific 'activity' of superior beings (a consequence of the capacity for abstraction, symbolic thought, memory and ethical sense). Higher beings must, then, know how, when and with which aims to act, and what sort of consequences to expect from their actions.

Nowadays, the market and its laws are like 'gods'. Almost everything is for sale, in a field where ethics is understood in the perspective of the circumstantial legislator, he himself influenced by the sort of 'values' of the society of consumption where what matters the most is to find out what people 'wish'. Knowing people's wishes, the offer of goods is adjusted to its potential market, with the aim of getting commercial success. But this has nothing to do with the Ethics we talk about here.

In spite of the knowledge and scientific erudition (sometimes, a sophisticated form of vanity and diletantism) and of the enriching match of different cultures and between East and West, through the great technological development the masses are

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further separated from the perennial side that structures all existence.

It is fundamental that we should know how to gradually free ourselves of the limitations of the successive levels of ignorance, because only the Man who Knows is free. Those who do not know are for ever slaves. Is it not true, as well, that there is no greater slavery than being one among all those who are not even aware of being slaves?

When we talk about this Knowledge we do not merely refer to scientific knowledge and erudition, which are, in themselves, subordinate to the limitations of its own 'observers' and to the limitations of their objectives, methods and scientific tools . . . All of these operate through the lower mental. We refer to Divine Wisdom or SOPHIA, which is beyond time and space and is much more than a mere 'knowledge'. SOPHIA is supported by the great Laws that frame our search throughout Life, a search for fulfilment and truth.

There is a Wisdom that, projecting itself beyond space and countless ages, renders intelligible all that used to seem vague, unjust or incoherent when seen merely through the narrow limits of one life. Ethics, in the Theosophical perspective, is a privileged tool for our guidance in the search for that Wisdom.

The basic material or scientific knowledge has manifested always two different sides: it can be used either for good, or for evil. Wisdom (SOPHIA) which illumines all knowledge, always points out the divine path of GOOD. Because, more than knowledge, it allows one to identify

oneself, voluntarily and consciously, with BEING itself. It is in this context that it is necessary to understand the difficulty and complexity of ethical behaviour.

Ethics cannot be a mere rhetoric, or a theory, no matter how illuminating. Ethical discourse cannot become as mere varnish to embellish the sorts of behaviour that have really very little to do with the real Ethics. Ethics should be appraised through action and behaviour, not always 'politically correct' and, for the limited vision of one short life, even traumatic, but always centred in the need to fulfil the Great Divine Laws which, beyond time and space, support and structure the great goals of existence and Life. The Ethical dimension for a Theosophist is not, therefore, a question of circumstance or 'fashion'. It is not centred on one lifetime, but in the search for harmony with the Great Laws and our Karmic–Evolutionary Path.

Comparison between Science and Theosophy. Bioethics.

During the evolutionary process of human forms (anthropologically known as hominid evolution), we have witnessed the process of development of higher levels of integration of sensorial stimuli and the complexity of the development of the central nervous system, as the great central command of human biological and relational activities. In this way, man's biological support was slowly but surely adjusted in order to serve as a fit physical tool for the incarnation of egos more and more evolved. Thus, in the sequence of

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spiritual evolution, integrated through new forms of behaviour, new types of humans came to pass, each with its own behaviour codes, each successive culture stressing some aspect in which — directly or indirectly — a sense of ethics was present.

The stage in which we still find ourselves started with individualization (not ‘individualism’) which allowed us to overcome animal limitations and, later, to better use our human free will. This was a path illumined by the progressive awareness of Karma and Dharma, on the way to ever new stages of existence. And all that until the moment in which the need to reincarnate will no longer be felt (through the levelling of karmic debts and subsequent freedom derived therefrom) and the biological equipment called the physical body may be left after its good service as an evolutionary tool.

In this perspective there is no place for chance. What is there is our (temporary) ignorance regarding the way we have to tread — with Will, Love and Wisdom, trying always to integrate. It is certainly not only through physical perception (as a form of *Māyā*, whose role in the Plan may be understood as illusion) but rather through the awakening of that capacity to overcome, through the eyes of the mind and thanks to the will and the light that illumines our way and is shed by the light of Divine Wisdom. This is where the behaviour that is rooted in Ethical standards becomes more necessary. To have more Freedom, one must also assume more Responsibility.

There is also a comparison between

Science and Theosophy which is important to note. Let us take as an example the basic Theosophical idea of the Unity of Life to which François Chapeville, of the University of Paris, certainly alludes when he says: ‘until today, what is most impressive is the great degree of unity of the living world’. Quantum Physics, in as much as it considers the possibility of coexistence — in the same space — of different levels or planes of existence and energy forms, is one of these references, when we consider Science and Theosophy; also the progressive admission of the possibility of reincarnation, currently looked at with attention and more and more the subject of serious study.

Let us note, also, the convergence between knowledge and religious philosophies, comprehending different cultures (in as much as these reflect different collective karma-s) but always trying to enrich their common denominators.

When, in the field of study of human mobility, one refers movement as ‘thought in action’, implicitly there is an admission of the principle of the prevalence of spirit intentionality over simple matter. These are, after all, aspects that show us a new developmental stage where the openness to new synergies and new and ever broader fields of cooperation, action and fulfilment are tantamount.

Current discussions about Bioethics cannot — for us, Theosophists — go by unnoticed. We shall not linger on this theme, but we deem it of the greatest interest and think it should constitute a concern for all Theosophists, for its

meaning and actuality.

The Imperative Need for Ethics in Our Current World

Since the glorious time of the last passage of our Founders on this physical plane, we, as Theosophists, have to continue the search for an understanding of nature and discover a meaningful way to live, as well as to continue to develop the latent capacities in Man.

Overcoming the limitations of the 'personality' and the different levels of material sensitivity; overcoming the dependency of neurotransmitters or any other type of biological equipment, we shall become capable of, in a new evolutionary stage to identify ourselves with another, deeper meaning of life.

This stage will take place when, overcoming also our karmic limitations, we will reach the status that will characterize our access to a brand new Humanity: the Humanity of Intuition. Ultimately, one can say that we are searching for a new stage to which we will arrive through the karmic process of evolutionary merit and awareness, gradually developed through different forms and over millions of years. To accomplish that, it is necessary, as a guiding tool, to recur to Ethics, in the Theosophical sense, an Ethical dimension supported by a process of illumination, work, tolerance and understanding which may aid us to reach our goals.

Meanwhile, it is important to centre our action, gradually more responsible and conscious, on the meaning of those great

principles and values that are the basis of a broad altruistic Brotherhood: in the Society, at home, in our circle of friends, professionally, socially, politically and culturally.

These principles and values, constituting an ethical or behavioural support that goes beyond circumstances and fashions, will help us develop our action as Agents of Evolution and karmic transformation in a right way, and this will reflect itself around us, as we understand the sublime greatness of Life because we will feel identified — or united — with it.

Some can claim that our action is useless. They could invoke karmic reasons to justify that we would not be able to touch others, since they would be limited by their own karma (these are individual perspectives, still imbued with a certain amount of selfishness). To these we can answer that to 'sin', even by 'omission', is still to 'sin'! History is full of such cases, in which excuses were given to do nothing. Though our efforts and thoughts for the welfare of Humanity may seem worthless, at least when viewed from the perspective of a short lifetime, it is important not to give up, but always to learn and to persist in our efforts, becoming ever better. It is the understanding of the truly Ethical sense that — under these circumstances — will give us the necessary discrimination to persevere.

If to the limited view of one incarnation our efforts may seem pointless, it is important to remember that we have another, deeper vision of time and of the notion of Life itself, which may take us

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— in every sense — to see further and better. Let us also not forget that, when we try to act in accordance with the great Universal Values — and as such, beyond the ages — we are also contributing to the sublimation of our own Karma, be it individual or collective.

In fact, and besides all the rest, the kind of Ethical behaviour to be expected from a Theosophist is nowadays the same as during any other time, and this is because the great goals of Theosophy remain the same. The possible difference will have mainly to do with the need to act differently today, in the frame of the advanced

technological society in which we live, in which it is important to count on the technological and scientific progress and learn to use it in a more positive way.

Deep down, Ethics is supported by the timeless character of the Great Laws, leading us to act in harmony with Them — searching also, incessantly (with the help of our most experienced Brethren and the Inspiration and guidance provided by our Masters) to evolve in the search for Truth, and from an altruistic perspective, with the aim of helping to make true the fulfilment of Humanity in accordance with the Divine Plan. ✧

Be humble, be harmless,
Have no pretension,
Be upright, forbearing;
Serve your teacher in true obedience,
Keeping the mind and body clean,
Tranquil, steadfast, master of ego,
Standing apart from the things of the
senses,
Free from self;
Aware of the weakness in mortal nature.

Bhagavadgītā XIII.7–8

The Scientific Basis of Universal Brotherhood

DARA TATRAY

EXPLORING the nature of unity and the nature of undivided consciousness is perhaps an urgent matter in a heavily-armed world torn apart by entrenched views, self-interest and ignorance of other races, religions and ways of life. In itself, this exploration may be a great source of wisdom, helping us to live in harmony with nature and with each other; for such an enquiry takes one into the nature of nonlocal consciousness, which reveals the oneness of life in no uncertain terms. As the Nobel physicist Erwin Schrödinger pointed out in *What is Life?* — ‘Consciousness is a singular for which there is no plural’.¹

If we wish to cultivate harmony among the religious, spiritual and other traditions of the world, without which it is unlikely that there will be any peace on earth, it would be helpful if more of us understood that universal brotherhood is not just an ideal towards which we might strive: it is the truth about reality, at both a spiritual and a physical level. Universal brotherhood as a fact in nature is a statement that refers to our physical and spiritual oneness, and to our shared origins and

shared identity in the *ātman* or universal Self, which permeates all of matter and nature as the source of our lives and the final goal of our endeavours. Though this level or quality of consciousness is barely even glimpsed in our general awareness, it is the ultimate rationale to the brotherhood of mankind, with the potential to genuinely heal cultural, religious and social rifts. If each of us is literally made of the same stuff then there really is no ‘other’. The physicist David Bohm once remarked that the truth about reality is undivided wholeness: if we are fragmented we must blame it on ourselves.

It is highly appropriate that in the Theosophical Society stress is laid on brotherhood, and that the first Object is regarded as fundamental to the other two. Certainly the care for others implicit in a feeling of brotherhood provides something of a safety measure in any exploration of the powers latent in man. Without selflessness, compassion or brotherhood as a foundation, the development of latent powers is fraught with pitfalls. However, I would like to suggest that, although it may not be obvious, the

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first Object is dependent upon the third Object for its actualization or realization. This is because if universal brotherhood is to be something other than a utopian ideal there must be a solid foundation for it in fact and not just in myth or legend. It has to be more than just a matter of a number of Theosophists thinking it important or worthy. Rather must it be shown to derive from the facts of life; from the radical unity of the ultimate essence of all the constituent parts of nature, which unity links everything together as surely as if it were all one organism or one being. This I believe is the only sure foundation for the brotherhood of humanity, indeed, the brotherhood of all of life, not just of our own species. So while it is quite right to emphasize the first Object, it should perhaps be not overemphasized at the expense of the others. We often hear it said that Madame Blavatsky equated Theosophy with altruism. Indeed she did, in a few passages; but she devoted the vast majority of her writing to the furtherance of the third Object, and to a lesser degree the second. Of course, this is not a competition for which is the most important Object. I wish only to commend to our attention the importance of backing up the proposition that brotherhood is a fact in nature with fact and not just fancy; for it has to be admitted that even within the ranks of the TS, brotherhood at present is more like an idle dream than a reality.

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Madame Blavatsky and her teachers

pointed out that there is only one consciousness in existence expressing itself in multifarious modes; and that everything is made of the same Substance, which Spinoza called *Deus sive natura*, God or Nature, and which in *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Mahatma Letters* is sometimes referred to as Spirit-Matter. Similarly, in *Cause, Principle, and Unity*, Giordano Bruno argued that there is only one Being, existing in various forms or modes. According to Bruno: ‘every creation is an *alteration*, the substance remaining always the same’.² This is universal brotherhood writ large, with every race, creed, caste, religion and sex really being the One. The same idea is present in a key text of the Hermetic tradition, the *Emerald Tablet*. It begins with what is now rather a well-known idea: ‘That which is below is like that which is above and that which is above is like that which is below to do the miracles of one only thing.’³ There is only one thing in existence; that is, the Supreme Being. Both spirit and matter — that which is above and that which is below — reveal the glory of that One. This Being is essentially formless but it enters into every form in nature. As it says in the *Katha Upanishad*:

As fire which is one, entering this world becomes varied in shape according to the object (it burns), so also the one Self within all beings becomes varied according to whatever (it enters) and also exists outside of them all.⁴

It is of no small significance that key findings in modern science support the

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proposition that the ultimate essence of every part of nature is one undivided consciousness present alike in all. Science has now revealed what the Ancient Wisdom has long affirmed that an undivided reality lies at the heart of matter, subsuming the world of appearances. Indeed, a number of philosophers, mystics and scientists have argued that there is a unity to the world that is far more deeply real than the diversity that is readily apparent. Whilst science will never be able to seize on that which is truly universal, truly infinite, like thought, it can point towards it and highlight its significance. And that is what is currently taking place at the cutting edge of science.

In very simple terms, the trend might be summarized as follows. Borrowing from the work of William A. Tiller, we might say that for the past few hundred years science has viewed the world largely through the lens of a fairly simple reaction equation $\text{Mass} = \text{Energy}$, with each quality being convertible to the other via the well known relationship $E=mc^2$. This view of nature is giving way to a new reaction equation, in which mass, energy, and consciousness, will each be taken into account.⁵

In *Science and the Reenchantment of the Cosmos*, Ervin Laszlo argues that current findings in quantum physics, cosmology, biology, and consciousness research indicate the presence of a hitherto unrecognized field in which instant or quasi-instant connections between organisms and their environment, and within organisms themselves routinely take

place. As he put it, recent findings:

. . . suggest that there is more to the universe than matter and energy, space and time. There is also an element that connects and correlates. This element is as much a part of the universe as the electromagnetic, the gravitational, and the nuclear fields. It, too, is a field — a field that is as fundamental as electromagnetism and gravitation, and the fields of the atomic nucleus.⁶

This field appears to be of the nature of consciousness. Thus, there is now a sound scientific basis for universality, nonduality and the selflessness that is the way to it. It seems that the real basis of universal brotherhood is a universal ELEMENT — the *ātman* — which is also a universal STATE, the integrated state of pure consciousness.

Theosophy and the Science of Universal Brotherhood

Let us now take a closer look at what a number of theosophists have said on the matter of nonlocal consciousness, and how they have addressed the ills of our time, particularly those exacerbated, if not caused by, religion. In brief, some of the key ideas are as follows:

1. In *The Key to Theosophy* Madame Blavatsky proposed that Theosophy is not a religion, it is religion itself. The idea that religion itself stands over and above any and every religion would help all concerned to treat each religion as an equal but different expression of the impulse to transcendence, completion and wholeness common to all of mankind;

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2. Universal brotherhood as a fact in nature, provides the essential rationale for living in harmony with all of life, encompassing as it does not only the human being but all of existence — and finally;

3. The existence of Immutable Law as the substratum of all the things and lives and minds that make up the tangible world takes all the arbitrariness out of existence and removes the need for an external creator and an external authority.

In the works of H. P. Blavatsky, and in *The Mahatma Letters*, Immutable Law replaces God; *universal brotherhood* is the foundation of all ethics; and the law of *karma* replaces divine retribution, heaven and hell. The basic argument against God and in favour of Law is summarized in *The Mahatma Letters* as follows:

There are some modern philosophers who would prove the existence of a Creator from motion. We say and affirm that that motion — the universal perpetual motion which never ceases, never slackens nor increases its speed, not even during the interludes between the *pralaya-s*, or ‘nights of Brahman’, but goes on like a mill set in motion whether it has anything to grind or not (for the *pralaya* means the temporary loss of every form, but by no means the destruction of cosmic matter which is eternal) — we say this perpetual motion is the only eternal and uncreated Deity we are able to recognize . . . we . . . say that it is motion that governs the laws of nature; and that it governs them as the mechanical impulse given to running water which will propel them either in a direct

line or along hundreds of side furrows they may happen to meet on their way and whether those furrows are natural grooves or channels prepared artificially by the hand of man. And we maintain that wherever there is life and being, and in however much spiritualized a form, there is no room for moral government, much less for a moral Governor . . .⁷

. . . we believe in MATTER alone, in matter as visible nature and matter in its invisibility as the invisible omnipresent omnipotent Proteus with its unceasing motion which is its life, and which nature draws from herself since she is the great whole outside of which nothing can exist . . . The existence of matter then is a fact; the existence of motion is another fact, their self-existence and eternity or indestructibility is a third fact. And the idea of pure spirit as a Being or an Existence — give it whatever name you will — is a chimera, a gigantic absurdity.⁸

The argument is that all that takes place is the result of natural law, natural law being the unconscious powers or attributes of universal mind. Fundamentally, in *The Mahatma Letters*, causation ultimately boils down to motion. But this motion, whilst involuntary and mechanical in some respects, is not devoid of spirit or soul: it is the expression and the manifestation of the Absolute; and it appears to be of the nature of Consciousness.

This model of the oneness of life, in which every apparently separate entity is part of an integrated whole, readily gives rise to the following view of karma:

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All men have spiritually and physically the same origin . . . As mankind is essentially of one and the same essence, and that essence is one — infinite, uncreate, and eternal, whether we call it God or Nature — nothing, therefore, can affect one nation or one man without affecting all other nations and all other men. This is as certain and as obvious as that a stone thrown into a pond will, sooner or later, set in motion every single drop of water therein.⁹

Evidence from Psychic Research

A somewhat neglected area in the Theosophical Society in recent years is that aspect of the third Object dealing with the powers latent in the human being. There is however a tremendous body of evidence-based research into what are now known as anomalous mental capacities — research conducted by bona fide scientists (albeit ignored by other bona fide scientists). I have no doubt that HPB would be making significant mileage out of this fact and the implications of the research, one of the most important features of which is that it clearly and unequivocally points towards the existence of nonlocal consciousness and also suggests the way to it. The significance of the research and the techniques studied might be summarized in the following remark by Russell Targ in his book on remote viewing:

. . . our experience with remote viewing shows without a doubt that we can learn to expand our unconditioned awareness through all of space and time — to directly explore the timeless existence described by the mystics.¹⁰

So there is much more to psychic capacity than fortune-telling. Targ is a physicist who worked at Lockheed Missiles and Space but now teaches remote viewing. He left his former employment with the remark: ‘I launched myself on a different path to spaciousness that didn’t require a missile.’

J. B. Rhine coined the term extra-sensory perception for various anomalous mental capacities. In 1934 he published an academic title: *Extra-Sensory Perception*, which much to his surprise became a bestseller reaching millions of readers. The vilification that also followed the success of the publication led Rhine to make the profound observation that: ‘In the history of more than one branch of research, the stone which a hasty science rejected has sometimes become the cornerstone of its later structure’.¹¹ William James once remarked on the urgent need for science to be rebuilt in a form in which ESP and the like would have a positive place.¹²

Modern Western science now affirms that there is indeed something that connects all parts of Nature’s empire, and that thoughts are things. The reference to Nature’s empire, and to the power of thought, refers to a statement in *The Mahatma Letters*:

Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy, and, there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man; thought runs swifter than the electric fluid.¹³

But still the facts are resisted by many

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scientists. In 2001 Royal Mail in Britain issued a series of stamps to commemorate the Nobel Prize centenary. The set of stamps was accompanied by a booklet containing a statement by Brian Josephson, a Nobel prize-winning physicist from Cambridge University, who is in regular correspondence with Dr Srinivasan, a well-known South Indian Theosophist and physicist. Royal Mail had requested a statement of around 130 words, from a winner of each of the six different categories of the prize, a statement which was to speculate about the future direction of research in their respective fields. The following words closed Josephson's description of Physics and the Nobel Prizes:

Quantum theory is now being fruitfully combined with theories of information and

computation. These developments may lead to an explanation of processes still not understood within conventional science such as telepathy, an area where Britain is at the forefront of research.¹⁴

Royal Mail received a number of vociferous complaints from other physicists who wish to deny all evidence for the existence of telepathy. As Josephson points out, journals such as *Nature* and *Science* blatantly censor this research. If a coherent theory with inconvenient or uncomfortable implications cannot be disproved in science then it is generally ignored; and so it has been, in the field of anomalous human capacities. This suggests that the work of the Theosophical Society is far from over and scientific materialism is far from dead. ✧

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Peace

E. M. AMERY

WHAT is Peace? A state of quiet, freedom from disturbance, freedom from war, friendliness, calm, rest, harmony, silence. So says the dictionary; but just as absence of occupation is not rest, so absence of disturbance is not peace. Peace is not inertia, still less is it laziness, mere physical ease or comfort.

Such is for men of little development, whose whole life is a round of striving for the things that perish with the using, even sometimes with the gaining, and to whom cessation of effort when they are thoroughly weary is all the peace they know or require.

A higher stage than this comes to those who, while mainly occupied in the quest for material gain, are not seeking it for its own sake, but for those who are dependent on them. To such, peace means not merely physical ease, but the cessation of mental anxiety, the assurance that their efforts have been successful, and that there is no need to fear that any serious lack will come even from a forced cessation of physical effort. The physical future of themselves and those for whom they wish to provide being assured, they can enjoy peace even though strenuous

physical effort is continued.

This suggests that peace in its higher sense is not in any way synonymous with cessation of action, even of mental action. On the contrary, just as a mind at ease from anxiety about material welfare conduces to greater activity, so a mind at ease from anxiety of any kind will conduce to the greatest mental activity. Peace, in fact, is absence of anxiety on the highest plane on which any individual is conscious, and peace on that plane, whichever it is, is productive of the maximum of energy on all lower planes, and is undisturbed by what — to anyone working on a lower plane — would seem its utter destruction.

Peace, then, would seem to be a certainty that all is well with the individual, with his surroundings, with the whole world. And this certainty must be, not a mere fatuous assumption, but a reasoned and reasonable belief; indeed to be real, it must pass beyond the realm of belief, and become knowledge, for only that which is known is unshakable and irrefutable.

It is such peace as this that is the subject of Bhagavan Das's book *The Science of Peace*, and he assumes that the last and

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highest questions that disturb the peace of the advanced human ego are questions as to his own immortality, his origin and destiny. This may at first sight seem a selfish quest, but that is only a superficial view of the matter. The ego to whom such questions are of supreme importance, has already discovered that he and all humanity are bound together inseparably, and that if he enquires concerning himself, it is only because his own consciousness is the only thing which he can investigate, and what he finds there, he finds, not for himself, but for all.

Probably most have read the book, or at least have read Dr Besant's introduction to it, and so are familiar with his line of argument, and will remember how he discusses two of the main branches of Vedānta philosophy, the Advaita and the Viśishtādvaita, and then, in a very long and difficult chapter, runs briefly over the findings of the philosophers of the West, and shows that they have reached the same conclusions by slightly different methods. Then he points out the weaknesses of all the arguments, and finally draws the conclusion that the Advaita philosophy holds the key to the mystery.

He finds that the solution, the key, is the knowledge of Brahman. Then comes a very significant sentence in which he draws a distinction between 'mere intellectual cognition' and 'realization'. The first, he says, can be arrived at by any intellectual person by careful logical reasoning, in fact by a study of his book. But the other, the realization, can only be reached if we 'ponder deeply on this

for days and weeks and months and years if necessary'. In the case of many people he might as well have added 'lives'. He says:

We will do so if we are in earnest in our search; and when we have done so, more than half the battle is won.

'Indra', he says, 'studied the Science of this Peace', this half of it, that is, 'for a hundred years and one.'

Now while all this is no doubt clear to the philosopher — who will at any rate reach the intellectual cognition, even if he fails to reach realization — there is no hope by this method for the ordinary person. Some of us have the ability, but not the time or the opportunity; many more have not the ability. And yet we too feel the need for peace, we too have our difficulties that need solution, all of us feel that underlying questioning, that anxiety, though sometimes we can hardly formulate it, hardly say what the difficulty is that prevents us from working wholeheartedly, from putting out the best that is in us, that holds us back from happiness and from peace. We are not content, we long to climb, and we fret furiously against the limitations of self or circumstance which prevent us.

One thing we learn at last — sometimes at the very long last — that we gain nothing by striving and fretting, that in that way we only lessen our ability to do the work that must be done, even though it be that very work which prevents us from treading the path we are striving for; and when we have discovered that, we settle

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down, with more or less patience, and even in time with some degree of cheerfulness, to the inevitable round of drudgery.

After long days of patient and unremitting toil, a light begins to shine about our path that is not of our kindling, and we lift our eyes and see that the top of the mountain is in sight, nay, that we are almost, if not already, there, we look around and we look back, over the way that we have come, and find that the path of knowledge which was forbidden us was not the only way to the summit, and we hear now, if we have not heard before, a voice saying: 'If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine.'

How shall we find the first steps of this path, if we are still in the midst of the struggle and anxiety that come from uncertainty as to our end and our aim and our destiny? The answer lies in these words: 'If any man will *do* His will, he shall know.'

Then often the question arises, 'What is His will?' For the young this often takes a very insidious form; it seems to them that they must decide some important question about their future career, must come to some definite conclusion about their course of action, and that decision or that conclusion cannot be reached, because of some unknown factor. They excuse themselves for lack of decision, until indecision becomes a habit, and they say, 'How can I do His will, when I do not know what it is.' Often too, the question is complicated with questions of belief, and they think these must be settled first. I once heard a young Indian teacher discussing such problems with her class,

and was struck with the wisdom of her advice: 'We may not always know what to believe', she said, 'but we always know what to do.' That is perfectly true, if we obey the injunction of that very practical philosopher, Thomas Carlyle:

Do the duty that lies nearest to thee, that thou knowest to be a duty, thy second duty will already have become clearer.

The duty which thou knowest to be a duty, the simple, obvious, everyday duty which we are so impatient of, and so apt to forget. I will quote from a story of a little boy who was anxious to do great things, and had realized that obedience was the first step. He asks his father to set him some hard task, and is told that his task is already set: 'Think; is there nothing, great or small, you ought to go and do?' He thinks for a minute, and remembers that he has not fed his pet rabbits, but objects that that is such a small thing that it cannot matter, but his father tells him:

That is His whisper low,
That is His very word;

.

That duty's the little door,
You must open it and go in;
There is nothing else to do before,
There is nowhere else to begin.

That is the secret of beginning — the duty that lies nearest to thee — and then the next one reveals itself, and as we go on thus doing His will, we shall assuredly know of the doctrine, and the path of action will lead us to Peace as surely and as swiftly as the path of knowledge. ✧

Understanding the Invisible World

D. P. SABNIS

THERE is a similitude between war and death. War dismembers a civilization; death, a body. Men and women in their thousands do not seem to have learnt from the repeated lessons of history that wars are disintegrators of human society. The reason is obvious: the stench of the rotting corpse is recognized as signifying death, that of rotting society is not. After the death of a human being the survivors refashion their lives, and so do peoples and nations after a war. But in doing so peoples and nations do not apply the lesson of death, any more than the human survivors of a relative or a friend, most of whom do not enquire into the meaning and purpose of death. In the one case, death is death of the corpus, but who talks of the Soul of the departed? How many seek satisfying knowledge of the subject? Similarly, after a ghastly carnage, how many ask about the spiritual side of things, about what the poet 'A. E.' called the National Being, the soul of the nation?

Owing to our education, we are prepared to look only at the material and visible side of all phenomena — even psychological phenomena. Sickness is sickness of the body, death is death of the

body. In national affairs, it is economics and the visible aspects of the corporate social order which not only loom large, but are the sole basis of thought and consideration. Hygiene of the body is valued disproportionately in comparison to the hygiene of the mind, just as words are used guardedly because they are heard by others, while thoughts are allowed to create cesspools by men and women who fancy that unseen thoughts leave no aroma behind.

The invisible occupies a far greater space in the cosmos than the visible. The ocean of air is invisible but plays a vital part in human life. A hundred animalcules are invisible in a tumbler of water, but they cause life or death, health or disease, to the person who drinks that water. Electricity is invisible, but it gives light and heat; it can cure or kill. If people would only look around, they would very soon find that in their own existence the invisible plays not only a very vital part, but also a very large part — larger than that which the visible plays. In the way we see and hear, the invisible plays a greater part than the objects seen and the voices heard. Speech which brings us in contact with

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our fellow men is almost altogether an invisible process, the only visible aspect being the movement of lips and of tongue.

One of the objects of our Theosophical work is to show the importance of the invisible while demolishing the superstitions about it. For there are very stupid superstitions about the invisible, rooted in false knowledge. Spiritists play with one aspect of false knowledge about the invisible, the orthodox religious ceremonialists with another, and there are other classes who dabble in objectionable practices, fruitless or very mischievous. Absence of true knowledge plays havoc. Ignorance is bad, but false knowledge is worse.

Where shall a person begin to get correct knowledge? He should begin with himself. What is he? A body of flesh and blood only? What is his mind? What is the relationship between brain and mind? What are human emotions? Whence depression and elation, meanness and magnanimity? How can jealousy be conquered and kindness developed? As money cannot purchase peace of mind, what can purchase it? If emotional agitation drives sleep away, what can be conjured to bless the agitated to calmness and refreshment? Here are some of the aspects of the invisible which touch us to the quick, and with them a person should begin.

In the olden days, religion was not a matter of blind belief; knowledge of religion was sought and pious men taught it in a dozen different ways. Ancient religious texts clearly indicate that

priceless knowledge existed. We have to learn not only the old languages in which the books were written, but also the mould and form in which great ideas were cast. For the ancients, being nearer to the invisible nature than we of the twenty-first century are, used allegories, symbols, comparisons which look somewhat bizarre to us. One of the reasons why men and women today do not study their own religious scriptures is that the language, used to convey ideas unfamiliar to modern knowledge is not understandable by them.

Death is a universal experience and is so near to us that we take the phenomenon for granted and do not even care to ascertain whether any reliable knowledge about it as a process is available. Equally universal is the phenomenon of day-to-day living, with its pleasures and its pains, its evil and its good; between birth and death men and women laugh and weep, but they know not what precedes birth, what follows death, what laughter is and how tears are formed. 'All is mystery' say men, with a nod which they think is a nod of wisdom and humility, which most of the time is but the nod of ignorance and mental laziness.

In the Wisdom-religion of the ancients this knowledge is to be found; for the modern world it is made available through Theosophy — the scientific religion, the religious science. In its authentic text-books men and women will find reliable information about Spirit, Soul, Body, about the good in themselves and the Evil which envelops that Good; about their moods caused by hurt feelings, or

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intoxications caused by inflated egotism. But we know that in our civilization people find no time for reading and study. Men are busy making money — but they do not ask what they will do when they come to possess it; women are climbing the social ladder, some of them panting for their very breath in the process, and they, too, do not know what it will feel like when they have reached the top! The fundamental truths of genuine Soul-science alone can help on the evolution

of the real man, the inner man, and unfold his spiritual vision. Spiritual and divine powers lie dormant in every human being; and the wider the sweep of his spiritual vision, the mightier will be the god within him.

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Francis Thompson

He learns that the weariness which took all the savour out of life was due to the disappointments constantly arising from his search for satisfaction in the unreal, when only the real can content the soul; that all forms are unreal and without stability, changing ever under the impulses of life, and that nothing is real but the one Life that we seek for and love unconsciously under its many veils.

Annie Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*

THE THEOSOPHIST

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

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Books of Interest

VIVEKA-CUDĀMANI OR CREST-JEWEL OF WISDOM OF ŚRI ŚAMKARĀCHĀRYA, *Text in Devanāgarī and Translation*, by Mohini M. Chatterji, F.T.S., The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, India, 2009, pp.232.

One of the major contributions of the Theosophical Society to Indian culture was the publication of translations of important books on Indology into English. *Viveka-cudāmani* seems to have been an early attempt by Mohini M. Chatterji. As a Theosophical worker, with an intellectual grasp of Theosophical and Vedic teachings, he was deputed to help the then slender band of Theosophists in the West, with some of the Eastern teachings. As early as the 1880s, his text was published in *The Theosophist* (vol. VII, 1885–86 and vol. IX, 1887–88). The translation of Sanskrit texts definitely helped familiarize the West with the spiritual ideas of the East. At the same time, it helped Indians become aware of their own culture.

Viveka-cudāmani was composed more than a thousand years ago. A well-known book of Eastern philosophy, its authorship is attributed to Śankarācharya, considered as an icon of spiritual thinking.

Just as the *Bhagavadgītā* is identified with Indian philosophy in general, similarly *Vivekacudāmani* has been considered as the basic text for the Advaita School of

philosophy. *Upadeśa-sahasri*, *Vedāntasāra* and others are also widely read, but *Viveka-cudāmani*, with its 580 verses, is larger in extent and deeper in content.

The keyword in the book is *viveka* (discrimination), which is the natural corollary of Wisdom. So translators have felt free to use both ‘discrimination’ and ‘wisdom’ as translations for *viveka*.

Many English translations of this text are available, by scholars from both India and the West. John Grimes, in his Preface to *Vivekacudāmani*, refers to nine translations: one published in 1912, in the journal *Brahmavādin* 17, by Chunilal C. Bohra; a German translation by M. Chatterji, *Das Palladium der Weisheit*, Leipzig, 1895; one by Charles Johnston from New York in 1925, *The Crown Jewel of Wisdom* which does not have the text; and others.

The translation by Mohini M. Chatterji seems to be the earliest of the available translations, with footnotes by the translator and notes. These highlight similar ideas and concepts perceived in Theosophical books. Though Buddhism was the major influence on Theosophy, Advaita and other streams of Eastern wisdom were also acknowledged by Theosophists.

The unique feature of this book is its reference to Theosophy. In the translations of other scholars, the footnotes and notes provided by them refer to parallel

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ideas and sources, mainly from the Upanishad-s, the *Bhagavadgītā* and other ancient texts. But in this book, there is the added advantage of references from Theosophical books. Some of the Theosophical books mentioned in the notes are worth independent study later.

In verse 18, the four requisites (*sādhana chatuṣṭaya*) of an aspirant have been listed, and these are presented beautifully as Discrimination, Desirelessness, Good Conduct and Love, in *At the Feet of the Master* by Alcyone. In verse 172, the waking life is said to be a type of dream. C. W. Leadbeater's *Dreams* and Mr Keightley's article on the psychology of dreams, make a comprehensive study of dreams at various mental levels. *Light on the Path* has ideas similar to verse 269, where it talks about our erroneous conception about *ātman* being the body, senses, etc. J. Krishnamurti's books *Life in Freedom* and *Now* are referred to in the description of *vāsanā* or desire.

Simile and analogy are also used as powerful tools to help explain significant points. Verse 78 points out that five non-human creatures (deer, elephant, moth, fish and bee) each meet with death, because of a weakness for one particular sense — sound, touch, sight, taste and smell respectively. Śankara asks — What

then of man, bound by *all* the senses?

Translation is an indispensable bane for scholars embarking on the noble path of bridging the gap between the different language groups. In the footnote to verse 137, the translator mentions the compulsion behind using 'manifests' for translating the verb '*vilasati*' though its actual meaning, which has deep implications, is 'plays'. Similarly the word 'ignorance' has to make do for the words '*ajñāna*' and '*avidyā*' (v.139), whereas 'error' would be better. *Manas*, being the organ of doubt is taken to be the same as *avidyā* (v.171).

Śankarāchārya, besides being a philosopher, also composed many devotional pieces. So it is no surprise that in this book, philosophy has been couched in poetically beautiful phrases. Verses 400 to 403 have the same refrain — *nirviśese bhidā kutah?* (With distinction not there, whence the difference?) This is the essence of Advaita.

Verses 409 to 411, all end with '*hr̥di kalayati vidvān brahmapurnam samadhau*'. (The wise man in *Samādhi* realizes the *purna brahma* in his own heart.) Both the text and the translation are interesting and absorbing tools for the inner glow; verily a crest-jewel.

S. SIDDHARTHA

Form is emptiness and the very emptiness does not differ from form, nor does form differ from emptiness.

Hannya-shin-gyo, *The Heart Sutra*

Theosophical Work around the World

2010 International Convention

About 1,450 members attended the 135th International Convention at Adyar, which had as its theme 'Theosophical Teachings on the Path'. In her message to the delegates the International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, said that 'a Convention is a time not only for lectures, even though much can be derived from listening to lectures. With heart and mind open, one can rise to higher levels, by really listening. But apart from that, there is all of nature around us, beautiful in every way. Even the worms and little creatures play a role in keeping everything going, and we must express our gratitude to them'.

The opening session started with the Prayers of the Religions which never fail to inspire by reaffirming the essential unity present at the heart of the great perennial traditions in the world. Written greetings were read by the International Secretary, Mrs Kusum Satapathy, and by Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary of the Indian Section. A number of General Secretaries and other representatives presented the greetings on behalf of the TS in their countries.

The public lectures at the Convention included 'The Spiritual Path and the Phoenix Mystery' by the International

Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira; 'Buddhism: A Religion, a Philosophy or a Way of Life?' by Ven. Olande Ananda, Resident Teacher at the Pagoda Meditation Centre in Sri Lanka; and 'Who am I?' by the International President. The Besant Lecture was delivered by Mr N. R. Narayana Murthy, Founder, Chairman and Chief Mentor, Infosys, Bangalore, on 'Towards a Sustainable India'. The Theosophy-Science Lecture, on the subject of 'Inter-relationship', was presented by Dr Lakshmi Saripalli, Senior Scientist of Raman Research Institute, Bangalore.

Three symposia were held on the following themes: 'Qualifications for the Path', 'Nature and Us', and 'Without Loving Care, I am Nothing'. Short lectures included 'Theosophical Teachings on the Path' by Mr John Vorstermans, President of the Indo-Pacific Federation of the TS; 'The Light which Lighted Every Man' by Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary, Indian Section; 'The Nature of the True Path' by Mr Colin Price, former General Secretary of the English Section; and 'The Watchful Eye that Observes' by Prof. C. A. Shinde, National Lecturer, Indian Section. Other activities included the Ritual of the Mystic Star, a

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performance of dances of India, a musical concert, a questions and answers session and a DVD presentation of a talk by J. Krishnamurti on 'What is Supreme Intelligence?'

Vice-President's Travels

The International Vice President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, and the Officer-in-charge of the Editorial Office at Adyar, Mr Pedro Oliveira, visited Brazil and Argentina recently. Mrs Oliveira gave a public talk in Sao Paulo on 21 January 2010 on 'Human Society, Spirituality and Renewal' at Liberdade Lodge, which was well attended. On the weekend of 22–23 January the Vice-President addressed members at the Raja Theosophical Centre in the outskirts of Sao Paulo on 'Keeping the Flame Alive: the Future of the Theosophical Society'. Following her presentation both she and Mr Oliveira conducted a workshop on 'The Golden Stairs: the Eternal Path to Wisdom'.

Both the Vice-President and Mr Oliveira were guest speakers at the annual summer school of the TS in Brazil held in Bonito, centre-west of Brazil, from 25 to 30 January 2011. The theme was 'The Wisdom of the *Bhagavadgītā*', with approximately 120 members in attendance. They next visited the Theosophical

Centre of San Rafael, in the south of Argentina, where both were guest speakers at the annual summer school of the TS in Argentina, held from 31 January to 6 February, which attracted more than 80 members, including some from Chile and Paraguay. The Vice-President and Mr Oliveira presented talks on *Light on the Path*. The presence of younger and dedicated members in Argentina is very promising for the work in that country. Prior to the summer school there was a youth gathering on 'The Seven Great Laws of the Universe' and an in-depth study on 'Teachings of the *Chāndogya Upanishad*'.

Their next visit was to Rosario where Mrs Oliveira spoke to the members on 'The Significance of a Lodge of the TS' and gave a public talk on 'The Fine Art of Self-Responsibility' to a large audience. Mr Oliveira gave a public talk on 'Mysticism: Bridge to Nowhere'. In Buenos Aires the International Vice-President gave a public talk on 'Human Society, Spirituality and Renewal'. They also answered questions about the work at Adyar at a special meeting for members. A number of stalwarts of the Argentinean Section were in attendance which contributed to make the meeting a memorable one. ❖

Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself.

The Voice of the Silence

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