

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

VOL. 137 NO. 5 FEBRUARY 2016

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NOTE: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to the Editorial Office.

Cover: The Buddhist Shrine in Adyar – Richard Dvorak

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

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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.

Reversing the Flow: A Conscious Choice

TIM BOYD

ALL of us are aware of the universal, basic, and obvious idea that we participate in cycles. We witness this in every aspect of life. It is one of the Propositions within our theosophical canon — such simple things as day and night, each breath that flows in and out, and the change of seasons. In our theosophical understanding we also think in terms of manvantara and pralaya — the out-breathing and inbreathing of universes. There are many large cycles, but I would like to speak about one that is specific to the journey of unfoldment in which we are all engaged.

The fundamental cycle of the soul's unfoldment is rooted in our literature and study — the journey of outgoing and return, the journey outward into manifestation and the return. The outgoing portion is depicted in stories around the world. Every spiritual tradition has stories of these cycles, as they relate to grand things and as they relate to us individually. A typical description of these stories would involve a character depicting the soul leaving its home or kingdom and going to some far land. In that land

it has experiences, sometimes it forgets the glories of its own kingdom, living as the people live in that distant land. But then there comes a time when the soul remembers, and this begins a completely new aspect of the cycle.

A story that depicts this quite vividly is the *Mahabharata*, where the Pandava clan loses their heredity and has to wander, and fight, and travel until their eventual victory in battle. We also see it depicted in the lives of great people. The Buddha left his kingdom, his princely life, to make this journey towards enlightenment. H. P. Blavatsky left home at the age of seventeen, as a single woman in search of a deeper wisdom that took her travelling around the world for the remaining forty-three years of her life.

A spiritual story embedded in the Western tradition, the one about the Prodigal Son, is an excellent depiction of the same outgoing and return. It is the story of a great man whose son one day decides he is going to leave home because he wants to travel. He requests and receives all of his riches, which he then takes

Public lecture delivered at the international Convention, Adyar, 4 January 2016.

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with him on a journey to a far land. Along the way the riches he has been given gradually fall away from him. He squanders them in the journey into the far land of material involvement in matter. At a certain point he is far from home, having to live the difficult life of the people in that land, taking the lowest form of employment to be able to even eat. In that particular culture the lowest employment possible was feeding the swine, and that was the job that the son of the great one was doing.

In that story a famine comes upon the land. The son is starving, lacking in spiritual nutrition. He is so hungry that he will eat the food that he is feeding the swine. This is the depiction of the soul's deepest descent. This is the critical point in the story, and for us as well. What happens in the story depicts the process that we are engaged in *now*. At this desperate moment the son remembers his previous state, that he is the child of divinity, and the way that he is living and conducting himself is completely apart from his true nature. This is the critical point because this is where the journey of return begins.

In the theosophical writings, the Three Fundamental Propositions, the cycle of outgoing and return is addressed. In the third Proposition it is said that there is an obligatory pilgrimage for every soul. Each soul must make this journey. The outgoing journey is dictated by what is said in that third Proposition — that individuality is acquired first through natural impulse, that is, on the outgoing

portion of the journey it is the impelling force of Nature that drives us. It is not a matter of conscious choice, but of reacting to the effects and drives of Nature.

During this part of the journey we are impelled by Nature, dividing the world in certain ways that we are familiar with: into that which is pleasurable to us, and that which causes us pain, and the rest is neutral. The way the consciousness functions, we grab the pleasurable and resist what causes pain. This habit of mind prevents us from any genuine experience of the world, because the mind divides the world into the false categories of what we like and what we do not, what we reach for and what we push away.

The key issue for the individual is that there is an all-important point of awakening at which we eventually arrive. To give an example of this process think of what happens if someone were to shoot an arrow into the air. The arrow is launched with a certain force that drives it. On the outward journey that force diminishes, the arrow slows down, stops, and then it begins its journey back to the ground from where it came.

The occult teachings speak of a time in our unfoldment when we have the potential to hasten the journey home. The point at which this hastening takes place is the one at which we as a human family find ourselves now. Certainly, there are always those who are ahead of the curve. This propulsive motion launches us ever more deeply into an association with materiality. But as this motion begins to slow, for the very first time we have

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the opportunity for genuine choice — not mere reaction to the impulses of Nature. We have the chance to consciously make choices. In that third of the Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*, when this point is reached we guide our unfoldment through ‘self-induced and self-devised efforts.’ We take control and exercise the consciousness that has grown within us during the course of the long flight into material existence, now to determine the best and most expeditious way for not only ourselves, but for all beings to make the journey home. This is where we find ourselves now.

If this was not the level of our unfoldment, something like Theosophy would be meaningless to us. The moment where the journey of return commences is the critical moment in this entire story. On this journey homeward, the one thing that we are involved in is that we are continually choosing to ‘Know thyself.’ The process becomes one of knowing ourselves ever more deeply. The self, removed from the greater reality in which it exists, is meaningless and illusory. The only self that has meaning is the one that is linked inextricably to the greater life within which all things live, move, and have their being.

Oneness can be experienced in a number of ways. An example I use these days is that of the human body. Within it there are multiple trillions of individual lives, or cells, that comprise the body. Somehow we call this whole community of lives ‘I’. But if we take the example of

any one cell and ask ourselves what is it that motivates this single organism during the course of its day-to-day living. Probably it would not care a great deal about what is being said at a Convention for the Theosophical Society, or would not have much regard for the bills that we must pay or the books that we choose to read. The basic requirement for this individual cell would be that it has a climate that is hospitable, that the acid balance around it is correct, that it has sufficient nutrition, and that it is able to reproduce.

In our imaginations we can suppose that among these trillions of cells one of them gets the idea that something bigger is going on here. Suppose that the cell gets the idea that it wants to know more about the greater life within which it lives and moves. This would be an example of a spiritualized cell. It has no possibility of comprehending the enormity of the body in which it resides. It is too vast. This is similar to our condition. We are wondering about this Greater Life and having vague experiences related to it. At a certain point we commit ourselves to deepening our knowledge and trying to bring others in that direction.

When asked to describe what is a human being, HPB’s response was it is highest spirit and lowest matter linked by mind. In the Secret Doctrine the human project is the result of the coming together of three evolutionary streams — the spiritual, the intellectual, and the physical. These things sound simple enough because we tend to relate

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everything to ourselves: highest spirit is 'within me', lowest matter is 'my body'. But she was talking about something much more than that. Not only are these streams active within us, but there is a spectrum of intelligences that take part in this project. Each one of us is the product of the participatory presence of the highest Dhyani Chohans as well as the lowest sorts of elementals. We are complex beings. The unity that we seek to explain is not without its own complexity.

So, for us as humans, the understanding of this complexity is what is involved in the human project. In *Light on the Path* we are advised to 'inquire of the earth, the air, and the water of the secrets they hold' for us, to look within, to examine the various streams, and to ask about what are those secrets that the various high intelligences that are operating within this human project have for us. 'Inquire of the Holy Ones of the earth of the secrets they hold' for us. 'Inquire of the inmost, the One, of its final secret', which has always been held for us. This is the process that we engage in when we reach the stage where we can finally choose, consciously.

To give another example, in 1980 there was a major cataclysmic event that took place on the west coast of the United States. It was a massive eruption of a volcano in the state of Washington, Mount Saint Helens. It was unusual because scientists well in advance knew that this volcano was preparing to blow up. They had seen the side of the north slope of the volcano bulging out and earthquakes

had begun occurring with regularity underneath it. All of this let them know that some activity was about to happen, and it did in May. An earthquake caused part of the face of the mountain to drop away, exposing the red-hot lava underneath, causing it to explode. It was remarkable, all captured in film, but it devastated the entire surroundings. No living thing survived; for miles and miles around everything died.

About three or four years after the earthquake happened, I was on a plane going to the Northwest and the pilot flew us over the same mountain. I had a window seat. When I looked down I had never seen anything like it. It was as if I was looking down on the face of the moon. There was no sign of life anywhere; everything was covered in grey or black ash. Before the earthquake, there was a forest of eighty-foot pine trees all around the volcano. From the force of the blast, every one of those trees was laid down with its roots pointing towards the source of the blast. These huge fallen trees all looked as if a child had thrown toothpicks. It was the most incredible display of natural power and its ability to devastate.

About ten years later I was aboard another plane going over the same mountain. With the memory of what I had seen earlier, I looked down to see what the sight would hold for me this time. What I saw was something vastly different. Although one could still see the lines of some of these fallen trees underneath, the ground below had sprung to

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life. Everywhere you looked it was verdant, lush green life. Animals were able to come back in ways they had never been able to before; they were flourishing. The ground that had been regenerated with volcanic ash was more productive than it had ever been. Out of the wasteland, utter devastation, new life was springing up abundantly. It was a remarkable sight but it also made me know something.

Sometimes we are faced with certain situations in our lives as individuals and as a human family. Now, as always, there are choices that we can make if we are sufficiently present, conscious, and willing to dare to make those choices. In the occult life there is this saying that dictates our behaviour: we must know, will, dare, and be silent, with being silent, of course, the hardest of them all. At a certain point, we know; we have knowledge. Nobody has to tell us that at this point in the history of humanity, our behaviour as a human family is affecting the planet in serious ways. Four weeks ago at Adyar, when flooding was everywhere, electricity was gone, and all of the trappings of modern, civilized, wonderful, elevated human progress slipped away, we knew.

These situations are self-created. Whether on a personal level or the whole of humanity, whenever we experience times of devastation, somehow there is a response that takes place; not a reaction, but a response. From all of the millions of lives that were lost in World War II, all of the expressions of not only

inequality, but hatred of other human beings and groups of human beings, we emerged from the cataclysm with a devastated world. Out of that came the beautiful document that has become the standard that nations must stand by: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a wonderful document whose initial language is almost identical to the first Object of the Theosophical Society. Distinctions, discriminations, and hatreds based on race, religion, gender, caste, sexual preference are artificial, and counterproductive to human unfoldment.

In the Ageless Wisdom tradition, there is the concept of *upādhi*, or a vehicle. It is a vehicle that enables the expression of something of a higher level. So mind is the vehicle for spiritual inspiration, or *buddhi*. Substance is the *upādhi* for spirit. Compassion, which is the Law of laws, the nature of our being, which is connected to this experience of oneness also requires its vehicle. What is the vehicle of compassion in this world? Why are we compassionate? The more important question is, 'Why are we not compassionate?'

The vehicle for compassion is that mind, or consciousness, which is responsible, that is, which is able to respond. Responsibility is the flowering of all of the work that we have done in this life and past lives that bring us to the capacity to respond. Only when we come to that point in our unfoldment when we become fully capable of conscious choice can we be said to be 'response-able' — truly able to respond.

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In quantum physics there is the concept of quantum leap. It seems like an idea that is purely scientific, but it is something that we witness in life regularly. The idea being that for the electron that circles the nucleus of an atom, a certain amount of energy is invested in that electron, and very suddenly it moves to a completely new orbit. It does not pass between the ground that separates it from the new orbit, it moves suddenly, utterly, and completely to a new orbit. We witness this, not under an electron microscope, but with such things as the Arab Spring, the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, our own sudden experience of a new level of vision, or the fall of the Berlin Wall. One day people went to sleep and the Wall was there. The next day people woke up and the Wall was coming down.

The inner work of the focused consciousness has far-reaching effects. Every one of these cycles that we have spoken of has its time. When its time arises, it becomes an irresistible force. The role for us is to responsibly choose to hasten its arrival. This will happen in many ways.

Where I come from in the United States, at this time of year there is snow on the ground, but every winter, without fail, the winter turns to spring. When that moment arrives, whether there be snow on the ground and a nip of frost in the air or not, you will find flowers making their way up through the snow. It is irresistible when the time for that phase of the cycle arrives. We participate in those cycles

inwardly. If we have been doing our work in the proper way, we sense the turning of a time. This time is moving into another, subtly at first, but then suddenly and completely.

I travel the world quite a bit these days, and wherever I go I find people like us, who feel that there is value in the cultivation of consciousness. All around the world people like us are labouring in these fields wondering when and how long, and feeling somewhat separate and alone. This is not information that appears in the popular media. What does not get reported in the news is the movement of consciousness that is taking place in the world today, where small groups of people are finding their way to other small groups of people. The linkage is taking place. It is already done, in fact. When will be the time that this network arises as our new model? Hopefully it will be in our time. Definitely it will be soon.

These are the patterns I ask you to look towards and the things that I ask you to lend your attention to. Compassion and universal responsibility — everyone is in a position at this stage of development to be responsible, to choose, and to choose wisely. Let us link ourselves with that compassion which is our genuine nature. We do not have enemies that are defined by nationalities. There is no nationality that is our enemy, but we do have enemies. Our most intractable enemies are inside of us — those selfish thoughts that wall us off from the experience of the free flow of love and compassion. That is the

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enemy, because it imprisons us. It is also one that we have complete control over if we ever come to believe that we have control. If we can convince ourselves of that, the rest is easy.

Madame Blavatsky once said that there are two voices that she listens to and obeys without question: the voice of her own higher self, to which she was sufficiently connected to be able to know when it spoke; and the second was the voice of her Master. Her access to those voices was not unique. It is ours if we would ask for it, if we would listen, if we would hear and know what is said, if we would shape ourselves in such

a way that we would will to do what it is that we know. If we would dare to move in this world contrary to the flow of conventional behaviour. This is the flow that we are here to reverse. It is difficult at first; it takes enormous effort to become effortless, but once established, it is effortless behaviour for us. Know it, make it a part of your will, dare to take that step, and also know that you are not stepping alone. You may not see them around you, but you are not stepping alone; and be silent.

Be silent and know what it is that is continually whispering within you, waiting to be heard. ✧

BE COURAGEOUS!

Do not forget that the earth is the refining furnace of the Ego, that the limitations of the physical, the inequalities of evolution and, in consequence, the impossibility of the majority of people realizing, even for a moment, their unity with the Universal Self, is the reason for so much sorrow and so many personal grievances. . . .

The Scriptures of all Religions show us that it is only through suffering that we can attain perfection, so no matter if you do feel at times too weak to go on, be comforted; no matter if the whole world seems to forsake you, be courageous! Know that at such times your strength is being tested, and if you hold fast to your ideals and are true to your own Higher Nature, you are not alone, but sheltered by the Divine arms of Truth that will bring you all in good time to the joy and peace that passeth all understanding.

H. S. Olcott

Compassion in Different Spiritual Traditions

CHITTARANJAN SATAPATHY

COMPASSION is a virtue in every major tradition and is also central to each religion. Compassion implies a feeling of oneness with the other, not merely feeling pity for somebody. In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, compassion is equated with *karuna*. A different expression *daya* is used to imply mercy, kindness and sometimes pity. Some of these expressions are often used interchangeably due to lack of clarity and deeper understanding. Theosophical teachings greatly value the virtue of compassion for spiritual growth and enlightenment. In *The Voice of the Silence*, which is a great and final gift of HPB to all of us, it is said that Compassion is no attribute and cannot be destroyed. Compassion is the Law of laws — eternal Harmony — the law of love eternal. In the *Laws of the Higher Life*, Dr Besant says: ‘Every scripture declares that the Heart of the Divine Life is Infinite Compassion. Compassionate, then, must be the spiritual man.’ In view of the importance accorded to compassion, we are examining the same in the context of different traditions and religions.

Hinduism

In classical Hindu literature, compassion is recognized as a great virtue and is expressed in different terms, the most common ones being *karuna*, *daya* and *anukampa*. *Karuna* particularly implies an effort to understand others from their perspective. Words like *karuna sindhu* (ocean of compassion) and *karuna nidhana* (abode of compassion) are the names given to the important Hindu deities Krishna and Rama. Buddha came to be recognized subsequently as one of the ten avatars (incarnations) of the Hindu deity Vishnu. The *Daśāvatāra Stotra* (hymn to ten avatars) eulogises his compassion and the steps he took to stop animal sacrifice. These examples amply demonstrate that *karuna* as a virtue is given the highest importance in Hinduism. The vedic texts enjoin extending compassion not only to human beings but to every living being.

Compassion is a state in which one sees all living beings as part of one’s own self and every one’s suffering is seen as one’s own suffering. It is extended to all,

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including those who are strangers and even those who may be inimical. *Daya* (mercy) is defined in the *Padma Purana* as the virtuous desire to mitigate sorrow and difficulties of others by putting forth whatever efforts are necessary. *Anukampa*, a similar expression, refers to one's state after one has observed and understood the pain and suffering in others.

Therefore, compassion is not pity (*kripa*) as the former implies feeling of oneness with the sufferer whereas pity may suggest merely feeling sorry for him accompanied by condescension. One may feel compassion too!

An ancient Hindu Tamil text, *Thirukkural* which is very popular in south India says:

‘Find and follow the good path and be ruled by compassion.

For if the various ways are examined, compassion will prove the means to liberation.’ (*Thirukkural* 25:241-242)

Patañjali in his *Yogasutras* highlights the importance of compassion (*karuna*) along with the other three virtues namely *maitri*, *mudita* and *upeksha*.

Sikhism

Sikhism equally considers compassion to be a great virtue. Guru Granth Sahib goes on to say:

‘You have no compassion; the Lord's Light does not shine in you.

You are drowned, drowned in worldly entanglements.’

A Sikh is enjoined to feel the pain and suffering of other people involved in any

tragedy and compassion is considered to be a divine quality. In the Sikh scripture, God is called *mahadaial* (super compassionate), *daiapati* (lord of compassion), and *daial dev* (merciful god).

Jainism

Jainism emphasizes observance of verbal and mental compassion in addition to compassion for all living beings. Lord Mahavira adopted supreme compassion in his life even towards poisonous snakes. The Jain tenet, *ahimsa paramo dharma*, stems from compassion for all, which enjoins living beings to render service to one and another.

Christianity

The Hebrew and Greek words translated as ‘compassion’ in the Bible mean sympathy, mercy and pity. The Bible describes God as compassionate and gracious, abounding in love, and his compassion is described as unfailing, infinite and eternal. Compassion is said to arise within us when we are confronted with those who suffer and it produces action to alleviate their suffering. In Christian literature, being compassionate is also equated with being tender-hearted and acting kindly. God's compassion is given freely and tenderly like the mother's compassion for a child. God's compassion is characterized by acts of kindness and concern for human suffering. Duty towards God in Christian literature includes compassionate care for people including neighbours. Christ is considered to be the Father of Compassion

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characterized by notions of tenderness and affection, and the believers are required to be imitators of Christ to live a life of love and care for others.

Islam

Islam is much misunderstood today because of the horrendous acts of terrorism by some. Many people, both non-Muslims as well as Muslims, wrongly think that the concept of jihad is central to Islam. However, this is not true. Firstly, jihad literally means striving to serve the purposes of God. It is understood that jihad encompasses religious duties to maintain the religion as well as inner spiritual struggle, the latter being more important.

Secondly, it is compassion which represents the true spirit of Islam as in the case of other spiritual traditions. In the Islamic tradition Allah is referred to as the Merciful and the Compassionate. In the Arabic language in which the Quran is written, the words used are *Rahman* and *Rahim*. One hundred and thirteen chapters of the Quran out of one hundred and fourteen begin with the verse 'In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful'. The Muslims are urged in their scriptures to show compassion towards everyone including the poor, the widows, the orphans and even the captives. They pay *zakat* (mandatory giving as against *sadaqa* — voluntary giving) which goes to help the poor and the needy. When they fast during the month of Ramadan, it helps them to empathize with the hunger pangs of the less fortunate and it enhances their sensitivity to the suffering

of others. Prophet Mohammad is referred to as the 'Mercy of the World'. He is quoted as saying, 'God is more loving and kind than a mother to her dear child'. As in the case of other traditions, in the Islamic tradition also, compassion which implies suffering with others, is considered to be a virtue. It is said in the Quran that God has created man in his image and amongst all his divine qualities, compassion and mercy are considered the highest. Therefore for a Muslim, compassion and mercy become the highest ideals to be realized. There is no doubt that compassion occupies a central place in Islam along with the virtues of loving, caring and showing mercy towards everyone in God's creation. The Quran particularly emphasizes compassion to parents, children, spouse, relatives, orphans, sick and suffering, neighbours and wayfarers. The Sufis lay great importance on compassion and their very fundamental doctrine is called 'Sulh-i-kul', that is peace with all, which in other words means no violence and no aggressiveness.

Judaism

In the Jewish tradition, God is invoked as the Father of Compassion and hence is referred to as compassionate (*Rahmana*). The Rabbis speak of the thirteen attributes of compassion. The conception of compassion is likened to a feeling of the parent for the child. The word *Rihim* comes from the Hebrew word *Rehem*, the mother. In Judaism compassion includes sorrow and pity for one

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in distress, creating a desire to relieve, and lack of compassion is characterized as cruelty. Judaism uses words like compassion, empathy, altruism and love interchangeably. However an indepth examination makes it clear that compassion is more than simply a human emotion. Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition puts it this way: 'Kindness gives to another. Compassion knows no other.' It is also said that compassion is the basis of love.

Buddhism

Compassion or *karuna* is at the very heart of Buddha's teachings. When he was asked by Ananda as to whether cultivation of loving kindness and compassion is a part of our practice, Buddha replied in the negative. He said cultivation of loving kindness and compassion is not part of our practice but is *all* of our practice. It is said that the ultimate wish of the Buddha was to relieve the suffering of all living beings everywhere. The Dalai Lama says, 'If you want others to be happy practise compassion. If you want to be happy, practise compassion'. In Buddhism, loving kindness (*metta / maitri*) and compassion are complementary virtues — the former has the characteristic of wishing for the happiness and welfare of others whereas compassion has the characteristic of wishing others to be free from suffering which is extended to all living beings.

Conclusion

In most traditions, compassion is dif-

ferentiated from pity. While pity may be condescending, compassion arises from a sense of equality and interconnectedness of life. Compassion presupposes respect for dignity of life — ours as well as others. As such, compassion has little to do with sentimentality or mere pity. Pity, which springs from emotion and sentimentality, alone cannot relieve suffering and bring joy. On the other hand compassion belongs to a higher spiritual level which arises from *prajñā* or wisdom. In fact wisdom and compassion go together and you cannot have one without the other. It is through wisdom, *prajñā* that one understands the suffering of others and through compassion one helps to remove that suffering. The enlightened ones remain with us as teachers and liberators because of their immense compassion, *karuna*. The Great Ones can truly be described as compassion embodied.

We are told that the quickest way to spiritual growth is the path of compassion. And the reason why this is so is not difficult to guess. Through compassion we put to use our noblest and loftiest and most divine faculties, we assume responsibility towards one and all, universal responsibility if you wish, and that leads to end of separateness. A state of non-separateness, identification with all, is a sure indication of wisdom. Compassion, universal responsibility, non-separateness and wisdom are multiple facets of spiritual life. That is why, Theosophy, as also spiritual traditions without exception, enjoin us to be compassionate. ✧

A Path That Cannot Be Sought

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

THE word 'spirituality' today means different things to different people. Some interpret it as belief, others as a certain lifestyle and some others as a path of self-discovery. Very often one can hear the expression: 'I have chosen a path that agrees with me.' Such an approach, apparently, does not seem to necessarily invite change and transformation into one's life. The so-called 'path' becomes part of the 'furniture' of one's life without in fact challenging the perception of who we are. Such a 'path' is bound to become another form of entertainment.

T. Subba Row was a prominent Theosophist of the early days of the Theosophical Society in India, who had direct contact with the principal co-Founders of the Society, Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky. One of the Mahatmas stated that he was 'an initiated Brahmin and holding to the *Brahmanical* esoteric teaching'. He approaches the subject of the spiritual path from the deeper point of view of the Occult Philosophy (*gupta-vidyā*). He speaks of two paths: one which follows the normal evolutionary way and leads to steady progress; and another one which presents

the student with an arduous journey of direct self-confrontation and its attendant dangers. As we shall see, it seems worthwhile to listen to him.

In a discussion at the Adyar Library, on 1 December 1888, on the subject of 'The Occultism of Southern India', which was later published as an article in *The Theosophist* (January 1889 issue), Subba Row shared his insights on a deeper view of spirituality:

This philosophy recognises two paths, both having the same end, a glorified immortality. The one is the steady natural path of progress through moral effort, and practice of the virtues. A natural, coherent, and sure growth of the soul is the result, a position of firm equilibrium is reached and maintained, which cannot be overthrown or shaken by any unexpected assault. It is the normal method followed by the vast mass of humanity, and this is the course Śankarāchārya recommended to all his sannyasis and successors. The other road is the precipitous path of occultism, through a series of initiations. Only a few specially organized and peculiar natures are fit for this path.¹

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In *The Voice of the Silence*, Fragment II, Madame Blavatsky also makes reference to two Paths: ‘The path is one, disciple, yet in the end, twofold. Marked are its stages by four and seven Portals. At one end — bliss immediate, and at the other — bliss deferred. . . . The Open path leads to the changeless change — Nirvāna, the glorious state of Absoluteness, the Bliss past human thought. Thus, the first Path is liberation. But Path the Second is — renunciation, and therefore called the “Path of Woe”.’

Progress on the first path, Subba Row suggests, is ‘through moral effort, and the practice of virtues’. It is character building, possibly through many lives. When virtues are meditated upon and assimilated they naturally shape the future character of the individual. For example, if one meditates on the nature of compassion in a sustained way it becomes much more difficult to inflict pain on another sentient being. The mind thus acquires a strong sense of balance and stability, which makes it easier for it to go through the complex process of experience without becoming agitated or dejected. A virtuous life generates a profound sense of resilience and inner strength, and also equipoise. The other path is the ‘Path of Woe’.

Occult progress, growth along this path, is effected by the adept directing through the chela various occult forces, which enable him to obtain prematurely, so to speak, a knowledge of his spiritual nature: and to obtain powers to which he is not

morally entitled by degree of his progress. Under these circumstances it may happen that the chela loses his moral balance, and falls into the *dugpa* path. From this it must not be concluded that the Southern Indian school of occultism regards adeptship and initiation as a mistake, as a violent and dangerous usurpation of Nature’s functions.

‘Occultism’ is a much-misused word nowadays. Its dictionary meaning is ‘involving or relating to mystical, supernatural, or magical powers, practices, or phenomena’. Not infrequently it is also associated with nefarious magical practices. HPB uses it as a translation of the Sanskrit word *gupta-vidyā*, ‘secret knowledge’. It is secret not because those who hold it are a bunch of spiritual elitists, but because such knowledge leads to the awakening of the hitherto dormant spiritual faculties or powers which, once misused, can cause the practitioner and those around him untold harm. When an average human being is caught in a fit of anger much damage can be done. But when a *chela* or disciple loses his or her balance the capacity for destructive action may be multiplied a hundred fold.

Treading the occult path was once compared to being turned inside out. Unless our real motives are exposed for what they are we cannot be ready to venture on the road of self-knowledge. As the late Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Mahaswamiji, the ‘Sage of Kanchi’ in India once said, ‘Self-knowledge is the longest journey to the nearest place.’

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His statement has the remarkable quality of showing that the human mind and soul tend to get lost in the process of experience, wandering into byways which are pursued out of attachment and clinging to desires that appear to be real. The abode of such attachment is always an illusory sense of self.

The *Vivekachudāmani* throws light on this matter by highlighting the nature of the danger which self-absorption involves:

For the wise there is no other danger than negligence in regard to the real form of the self. From that springs delusion, from delusion *ahamkāra*, from *ahamkāra* bondage, and from bondage pain. (323, Mohini Chatterji translation)

The Sanskrit word *ahamkāra* is sometimes translated as the 'I-making' faculty, which seems to suggest that the self in us is constantly using life's experiences to become stronger and resilient, thus imprisoning consciousness as a secondary nature. The purpose of the occult path is nothing less than to destroy this web of illusion woven by the self. Naturally, such an endeavour cannot possibly appeal to all.

What renders the occult path especially unique in the order of Nature, among other aspects, is its process of testing the *chela* or disciple. In *The Mahatma Letters* it is said that unlike ancient times:

The aspirant is now assailed entirely on the psychological side of his nature. His course

of testing — in Europe and India — is that of Raj-yog and its result is — as frequently explained — to develop every germ good and bad in him in his temperament. The rule is inflexible, and not one escapes whether he but writes to us a letter, or in the privacy of his own heart's thought formulates a strong desire for occult communication and knowledge. (*ML* 65, chronological)

Are we ready to look our pride, jealousy, sense of self-importance and arrogance in the face, seeing them for what they are — tentacles of the personal self? If we are not, then the treading of the normal path as presented by Subba Row, may be more recommended, as the energies that come into play on the occult path would certainly magnify those tendencies and lend them a power that would surely overcome the unprepared candidate. As one of the Masters stated, 'Occultism is not to be trifled with'.

Another word mentioned in Subba Row's statement previously quoted is 'initiation'. Extraordinarily superficial uses of this word are being made in the world today, almost always accompanied by self-glorification and self-aggrandizement. If you have a credit card it would be possible for you to even buy an 'initiation'! On the other hand, when one reads certain passages from the *Mahatma Letters* carefully one cannot fail to sense that real initiation may involve an entrance into the sacred dimensions of life and consciousness, which ordinary language and an ordinary mind are incapable

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to understand, let alone experience.

Brother N. Sri Ram shared with us his profound understanding of such a unique subject:

The superficial idea about Initiation is that a person goes to a certain room, somebody comes and tells him various things, he is told to put on a different robe, presented with a talisman and so forth. That would be a poor view. Initiation means that the deepest aspect of oneself moves towards the surface, and the Monad takes the vow through the Ego.

...

The word 'initiation' means 'a beginning'. We gain a definite touch with our spiritual nature at the First Initiation, first with buddhi, then atman. This beginning is really the planting of a seed. After gaining a little touch, one begins to be more and more aware of that nature. The seed will grow into the Tree of Wisdom. That is the meaning of the Sanskrit word *dvi-ja*, twice-born, a symbolical way of referring to being born out of the mother's body into the physical world, and the second birth in spirit.

(Full text can be seen at <http://austheos.org.au/articles/articles-essays/initiation/>)

Next follows another statement of T. Subba Row in the article mentioned above:

The Adept hierarchy is as strictly a product of Nature as a tree is: it has a definite and indispensable purpose and function in the development of the human race: this

function is to keep open the upward path, through which descends the light, and leading without which our race would require to make each step by the wearisome, never-ending method of trial and failure in every direction, until chance showed the right way. In fact the function of the Adept hierarchy is to provide religious teachers for the stumbling masses of mankind.

A few years ago, in Australia, a survey revealed that approximately 53% of young people in the age range between 18 and 25 declared themselves atheists. Many others also declared themselves agnostics. The attitude of young people towards religion has changed drastically in the past forty years. In many places in the world religion continues to get a bad press, whether through scandals involving priests, monks or swamis, or because of fundamentalist attitudes that lead to sectarian violence, aggression and eventually terrorism.

In spite of such trends, the ethical principles enshrined in the great world religions continue to be perennially valid as they speak of compassion, kindness and the spiritual richness that blesses a life lived beyond the narrow confines of selfishness and psychological isolation. The expression 'to keep open the upward path, through which descends the light, and leading', seems to indicate that genuine and true spiritual teachers communicate to people a sense of abiding direction — a direction which is not a totalitarian ideology nor a creed, but

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essentially a way of life that leads to the complete and irreversible regeneration of the human mind, endowing it with such a transformative insight into the un-created purpose which is the order of the universe.

Subba Rao cautions:

But this path is eminently dangerous to those who do not hold the talisman which ensures safety; this talisman is a perfectly unselfish, self-forgetting, self-annihilating devotion to the religious good of mankind, a self-abnegation, which is not temporal, but must have no end for ever, and the object of which is the religious enlightenment of the human race. Without this talisman, though the progress of the chela may be very rapid for a time, a point will come when his upward advance will be arrested when real moral worth will tell; and the man who progressed along the slow and steady path may be first to merge himself in the light of the Logos.

Although the ideal described above seems extraordinarily taxing and almost beyond human achievement, one of its central points is the need for exercising unwavering honesty in what concerns our real motives in life. It is true that while absolute unselfishness may be beyond the common experience of most people, we have at least the capacity to detect, through relentless enquiry, motives which are self-serving, which seek one's own advantage or, which is worse, aiming at exploiting or defeating others, by demeaning them, to our apparent greater glory and success.

The Buddha taught his disciples that the personal self is like a stranger that arrives in the dead of the night in a householder's home, is given hospitality and after some time kills the householder and takes over his property. Perhaps many human beings do not perceive the dangers inherent in self-centredness. It can certainly lead to a lifetime of misery — for oneself and for others — thus obliterating the opportunity for self-awareness and self-transformation. And if one attempts to approach the occult path without the talisman of a steady unselfishness of purpose, the tentacles of the personal self will only grow stronger, magnified by the path's ever-present energy which is Truth.

This school recommended as the best path for all, a devotion to virtue, a gradual withdrawal from the grosser material concerns, a withdrawal of the life forces from the outward world and its interests, and the direction of these forces to the inner life of the soul, until the man is able to withdraw himself within himself, so to speak, and then, turning round to direct himself towards the Logos and the spiritual life and away from the material plane; passing first into the astral life, and then into spiritual life, till at last the Logos is reached, and he attains Nirvana.

Important and classical texts on the spiritual life, like the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Yogasutras* of Patañjali, the *Dhammapada*, the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, the Sermon on the Mount, the poems by Jalaluddin Rumi, among many

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others, present clear and inspiring teachings about how to live a spiritual life. Such teachings have been proved safe by countless generations of practitioners around the world. And they do not involve the rigours which are required on the occult path, with devotion to virtue being one of their keynotes.

It is therefore wiser not to seek the path of chelaship; if the man is fit for it, his Karma will lead him to it imperceptibly and infallibly; for the path of occultism seeks the chela and will not fail to find him, when the fit man presents himself.

Subba Row's last advice to students again highlights the question of motive: why should one *seek* the occult path? If such seeking arises out of a personal motive the danger of derailment will certainly be there. But an equally significant advice in the same paragraph above states that 'the path of occultism seeks the chela and will not fail to find him, when the fit man presents himself'. If there is a profound resonance in our inner nature to the fundamental purpose of the occult

path — to help in the work of the regeneration of the human consciousness — then our karma may provide the necessary adjustments and the door may be opened through which progress can be made towards a self-sacrificing life aimed at bringing the light of Wisdom to humanity.

In Act II, Scene 1 of *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare may have hinted at this deeper path when he wrote:

And this our life, exempt from public
haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running
brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every-
thing.

Such an expansion of one's sensitivity in all aspects of our nature can truly make one 'a mere beneficent force in nature'. It has been said, by those who know, that the unfoldment of such beneficent force or power knows no limit.

There seems to be little doubt that the world needs a greater degree of widespread beneficence if it is to overcome its present challenges. ✧

Endnotes

1. T. Subba Row, *Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*, 'The Occultism of Southern India', Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, 2002, pp. 112-114

Within you is the light of the world — the only light that can be shed upon the path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere.

Light on the Path

New Frontiers for an Ageless Wisdom

JOY MILLS

THE concept of a 'frontier' has long influenced the thought of the western world, and in the United States particularly this concept has always had a rich meaning as a part of our historical heritage. In fact, the word itself was given a new and unique meaning by the experience of the American people in exploring a continent composed largely of wilderness areas. As one raised in the tradition of that experience, and committed to the Theosophical Society as a unique pioneer movement given physical birth in a land whose peoples, drawn together from every world culture, have focused their vision less on the achievements of yesterday than on the promises of tomorrow, I should like to attempt here a leap of the imagination. Such a leap has its physical counterpart in the historical tradition of which I speak, when entire families set forth in covered wagons and other primitive conveyances to traverse the great plains and noble upthrusts of mountains to reach a land of promise. In the history of the Theosophical Society, there is a similar

counterpart in the journey undertaken by those intrepid pioneers of our movement, the Co-Founders of the Society, H. P. Blavatsky and H. S. Olcott, when they set forth from the known beginnings of the organization in New York City to establish a home in the land where its spiritual heritage had its roots. The leap represented by those physical journeys was not without risk or hazard, but thought was given less to the numerous obstacles on the way than to the goal that might be achieved.

So we here in this time and in this place, attempting a new leap of the imagination, may be less concerned with the difficulties that confront us and more with the course we may chart by the stars whose light leads ever towards a distant horizon. For we stand today, I believe, on the threshold of new frontiers whose exploration demands the same courage and fortitude, the same patience and forbearance called for in the Founders of this Movement.

What is demanded in our time is a certain willingness of heart, a readiness

Reprint from *The Theosophist* September 1966. Ms Joy Mills was a former international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society.

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to risk all for the sake of the journey. If we expect others to carry us over the rugged terrain of the present, if we look to the Theosophical Society as an organization external to ourselves — with which we have some tenuous kind of affiliation but no identification — and expect the Society to construct for us a comfortable frame house into which we can move the antique furniture of our prejudices, the bric-a-brac of our personal desires, we shall be doomed to disappointment, and the Society will lack that vigour and strength with which its Founders infused it. We have been given a vision not of a predestined end but of the greatness of a journey. We shall be untrue to that vision if we do not accept the individual responsibility for our commitment to investigate the frontiers of truth that lie before us.

Let us move forward, then, across whatever boundaries separate yesterday from tomorrow, accepting the challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities of today. Let us explore some of the paths into the interior of that new continent of thought which lies all about us.

In venturing into the unknown, one must begin in the known. To take a step forward, one must move from the point where one is. Even a cursory examination of man's present position reveals his desperate need to understand himself. It has become fashionable in our modern world to adopt a 3-D vision of Despair, Doubt, and Dissent. Young people in more than one nation have turned from the traditional 3 R's of education to the

primitive R's of Rebellion, Riot, and Revolution. The Theosophical Society can and must, I believe, restore to the world a vision of man's essential unity, of his immortal destiny, his potential divinity.

The First Object of the Society implies that human need is colour-blind and that human aspiration knows neither class nor creed. The despair that results when artificial barriers are erected between individuals, groups, and nations is transformed into hope as men learn the meaning of brotherhood.

The Second Object of our Society removes uncertainty by the encouragement to study the universals of knowledge in their philosophical, scientific, and religious permutations. Doubt is thus replaced by confidence.

The Third Object leads us, through investigation of Nature's immutable laws and of man's immortal potential, from the dissent of rebellion against all that fragments us in the phenomenal world to that willing assent to the law of our own being which is the affirmation of our divinity. For the Third Object calls us to fall in love with human possibility.

In such a perspective, the Three Objects of the Theosophical Society are not boundaries to limit action or to circumscribe thought; they are direction signs pointing the way into new and unexplored territory, into a future with infinite prolongations.

As we accept the challenge of these direction signs, then, as we move to explore the frontiers which they so clearly

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indicate, we may pause to note that the concept of frontier has a dual meaning. It is, in one of its aspects, a boundary which divides one known land from another land, a demarcation between settled areas. In the other aspect, a frontier marks the edge of the known, the point at which the settlement ends and the wilderness begins. I am less concerned here with the first meaning, which I should like to suggest may be related in a most meaningful manner to the Second Object of the Society, for it invites us to explore religion, philosophy, and science that we may come, as already pointed out, to the universals of knowledge. The frontiers of study are clearly indicated, although distinctions separating one discipline from another — religion from philosophy or philosophy from science — may at times become blurred. However, it is more directly to the second meaning of the concept of frontier that I should like to invite attention, and probe in some measure the wilderness area of human possibility. This is the area hinted at in our Third Object, and a study in depth of that Object may lead us into the new continent of our humanness.

The crisis of alienation, so apparent in our time, is a divorce not only of man from man, but of man from himself. Man has classified himself, along with all the objects and events in the universe, as something to be observed, tested, measured, and standardized. The fundamental fear that grips man is the fear of being dehumanized, and perhaps to a large extent this is responsible for the

explosion of disquietude which we are experiencing. Something in us resists the attempt to view ourselves as a *what*, to be probed in the simple objectivity of external observation. We want to believe we are a *who*, to be realized in all the complex subjectivity of experience. Even as we rocket ourselves towards the moon, we feel we may have misfired somewhere along the line, or that the jet propulsion should have been expended in inner dimensions to discover the orbit of our own natures. In the drama of human life, we seem to be reaching the point of a sell-out performance, with standing room only available on our globe, and we debate the expendability of human units with as little concern as we would decide the number of mosquitoes a swamp might accommodate. In such a plight it is no wonder that man is daring to say 'no' to God, for he has already said 'no' to himself when he identifies himself solely with his objective and external nature. But there are those who seek to learn and long to know, who need a faith to illuminate the ill-lighted world stage, who demand an authentic identity, not an authoritarian creed, who will be satisfied with nothing less than to walk freely with dignity and hope and honour.

The Theosophical Society has an unparalleled opportunity in these closing years of the twentieth century to speak to man, to speak to the present condition of man, clearly and unequivocally calling him to know himself in his true identity and so to say 'yes' to all that is possible to him. The frontiers of human possibility:

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these are the frontiers now to be explored; not the external frontiers of outer space, but the inner realms of the spirit. The Theosophical Society may become the conscience of humanity, pricking the minds of men to an awareness of their unitary source in an immortal continuum of Reality, stirring their hearts to a recognition that brotherhood is something more than a fact in nature, for it is a way of life and a way of walking and a way of constant being. And the Theosophical Society may do this by virtue of the sacred trust reposed in it by those Adept Brothers who ever constitute the guardian wall of humanity, holding back the flood tides of divisiveness, fear and ignorance that would plunge the world into darkness. But the Theosophical Society is you and I; it is all of us together, stewards of that sacred trust who, whether we be few or many, have it in our charge to transmit to the world the knowledge that there is an ageless wisdom by which man may truly know himself, transform himself, heal himself, become wholly himself, and therefore more than himself, one with all others, humanly divine and divinely human.

In the early days of the Society, Mohini Chatterjee pointed out that the esoteric doctrine

teaches with special emphasis that there must exist at every moment of the history of human evolution a class of men in whom consciousness attains such an expansion in both depth and area as to enable them to solve the problems of being by direct perception and therefore with far more

completeness than the rest of mankind.

Such direct perception can be attained only in the immediacy of an encounter with first principles — those immortal principles of the Wisdom upon which all secondary truths must be founded. We have that privilege and responsibility to become in our time, and for the present needs, men and women who, having grappled with truth, have won through to that expansion of consciousness which permits of total vision — an expansion induced not by drugs or any external stimulus, but by our own efforts.

Every great voyager and explorer, winning his way across uncharted seas or pathless lands, has marked out his course by the stars. So too in the voyage of discovery to which we have been called — that voyage that leads inward to the expanded consciousness of an Immortal Self — we may lift our eyes to the stars of wisdom that have ever shone in the firmament of time. And the pole-star is the star of unity toward which the compass of our being must ever turn.

Taking our course from the bright star of unity, we may fearlessly set out towards the frontiers of human possibility, the frontiers of consciousness, in an effort to answer the anguished cry of modern man, alienated from his own source, estranged from his brother, fearful of his own inventions, doubtful even of his future.

To know the limits of our humanness, we must define what it is to be human. A popular folk song in the United States today asks:

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How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?

The Theosophical vision of man encompasses all the roads of experience that have led to this moment and points beyond man's actual self to his possible self. It is a vision that defines the human not in terms of what man has been, not in terms of the animal within him, but always in terms of what he may be. For it is a vision that comprehends the wholeness of man — man as rooted in the permanence of spirit, in the enduring realm of universal life which is also consciousness permeated through and through with a supreme bliss. Rooted in such a realm, which may be more metaphysically described in terms familiar to the student of Theosophy as *chidākāśam*, whose nature is also *ānanda*, man turns outwards to gain the experiences of self-consciousness, and in that outward-turning he walks down the impermanent roads of existence, anchoring himself again and again to the shadowy end of spirit which we call matter. And in the here-and-now of this anchorage is played out the drama of becoming human, with all the tragedy and comedy, all the pains and struggles and joys and triumphs of learning the roles of humanness in all their diversity, that one day there may stand forth a god.

The remarkable Jesuit paleontologist-philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, spoke of his own fundamental discovery that 'we are carried along by an advancing wave of consciousness.' 'The study

of the past,' he wrote, 'has revealed to me the structure of the future.' For man, emergent from a universal realm of consciousness, possesses all the potentialities of that consciousness — potentialities that may be succinctly summarized in the well-known triplicity of Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnipresence, the powers of the enduring centre of man as *ātmā-buddhi-manas*. His task is to realize those potentialities in the lived-out roles of succeeding existences.

So it was that de Chardin wrote of a future peculiar to man, the 'ultra-human' as he called it. The Scandinavian philosopher Soren Kirkegaard, whose influence on modern western thought has been so significant, once remarked: 'He who fights the future has a dangerous enemy.' But he had the wisdom to add, 'Through the eternal, we conquer the future.' There is deep meaningfulness in these words, for the future cannot be fought — at least not successfully; not even tomorrow can be kept at bay for long. But we can meet the future, embrace the future of ourselves and of humanity, only by conceding to the eternal. The ageless wisdom, Theosophy, leads us to an encounter with the eternal — with immortal principles which abide through all the changefulness of phenomena. And out of that encounter — the grappling with truth, the search for understanding — we learn to conquer the future by drawing into the present all the possibilities of tomorrow. We can then become that group of men and

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women who, in our time, have achieved such an expansion of consciousness inward that we may be enabled to solve the problems of being by our own direct perception. For the perception will be of universals — the universals of law, the universals of truth — and all problems will be referable to those abiding principles.

It is to such a journey as this that we are called by our commitment to the Theosophical Society: the journey across the frontiers of our own being, frontiers that are ever new because each individual is unique in his expression, even as he is rooted in an immortal unity. It is the beautiful journey described long ago in one of the Upanishads:

There is a Light that shines beyond all things on earth, beyond us all, beyond the heavens, beyond the highest, the very highest heavens. This is the Light that shines in our hearts. There is a bridge between time and Eternity; and this bridge is the Spirit in man. Neither day nor night crosses that bridge, nor old age, nor death nor sorrow. . . . When this bridge has been crossed, the eyes of the blind can see, the wounds of the wounded are healed, and the sick man becomes whole from his sickness. To one who goes over that bridge, the night becomes like unto day; because in the worlds of the Spirit there is a Light which is everlasting.

Exploring fearlessly the frontiers of our own humanness, sighting the stars of immortal wisdom, making out our course by immutable laws of nature, we

may come to discover the precise latitude and longitude of the place whereon we stand at the edge of the frontiers of our own possibilities. For I suggest that we discover the longitude of our being — our own inner stature — as we learn to know what man truly is: an Immortal Spirit clothed in the raiments of mortality. In discovering our own height of being, we find too the latitude of human existence, the breadth of our relations with others, for man is truly human only in relationship. Only as the heart is wide may we grow tall; only in the recognition of our kinship with all life, most particularly with those who share the human quest, do we really and finally become man. Again to quote Teilhard de Chardin, 'There is only one contact charged with an irresistible centripetal and unifying force, and that is the contact of the whole of man with the whole of man.' For even as we explore the frontiers implied in our Third Object — the whole of man and the potentialities, or powers, of the whole of man — we are led directly, in full circle, to the ethical, moral, and humanistic frontiers indicated in our First Object, and so to the very foundation of the Theosophical Movement: the realization of that one true, free, beautiful, and divinely human relationship which is brotherhood.

Our age calls for a new kind of faith and a new kind of courage. At a time when frontiers are all too often defined by walls, barbed wire and the innumerable intangible barriers of hate, jealousy and bitterness that separate man from

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man, we are called upon for the countless small braveries of human brotherhood and human love in daily acts of heroism. When we live on the frontiers of the humanly possible, where there are no jungles of fear and anxiety for sentries to patrol, aware of the unitary source of our being because we dare to lift our eyes to the enduring stars, we greet each other no longer as abstractions, as things to be used, exploited and possessed. Then we shall learn to speak to each other in the meaningful syllables of kinship, as authentic persons, unique, important, each one here as divinely as every other. And in our journey across these frontiers, let us not mistake speed for travel; let us not mistake destination for direction and rest in the hostels of comfortable beliefs when we should be out ranging across the mountains of ideas. Above all, let us not mistake numbers, which may be but the signs of settled habitation, for that strength which may be achieved by a few alone testing their spiritual muscles against the toughness of truth itself.

Our age needs the kind of faith that perceives in every man an undying spirit winning through to its own immortal destiny. We in the Theosophical Society, however few or many we may be, have it in our power to call forth the conscience of every man to a recognition of a concern for all of life. In the days of the American western frontier, when the American Indian guided the white man across the trackless plains, it is said that the white man often feared lest he lose his way, and that many a day and night

of anxiety passed in search of a familiar landmark, a sign of camp or outpost. But when this happened, the Indian guide, standing quite still and looking upward to the stars, would say very simply: 'Wigwam lost; Indian, he never lost.' So today, we few committed to the noble dream of brotherhood may stand quite sure in a world grown anxious with fear and insecurity, and proclaim that the loss of outer possessions — even the loss of the wigwam comfort of fixed beliefs — are not losses that matter. For man — the essential man, immortal, endowed with the potentials of godhood — can never be lost, so long as he looks to the stars of truth which are not only above but also within him.

So if I began by speaking as an American, whose historical tradition is set in the rootless movement of a people toward an ever-receding frontier, let me conclude by speaking as one who shares with all students of this Ageless Wisdom a profound conviction of the infinite possibilities of the human spirit. The new frontiers that are before us lie across the trackless plains of our own inner dimensions of being; beyond the mountain upthrusts of human aspirations; over the winding rivers of compassion that may water the arid soil of human misery — here lies our path. Whether we have the fortitude, the patience, the courage, and the wisdom to chart our way across these frontiers, to establish ourselves on that new continent of thought of which the Elder Brothers of Humanity have spoken — that new

New Frontiers for an Ageless Wisdom

continent of thought where all men shall one day recognize their essential unity of spirit in a brotherhood of the free — whether we can take this longest of journeys in the service of the world depends upon the individual commit-

ment we bring to the cause of human solidarity. The challenge is there, the privilege of beginning is ours, the responsibility to walk forward has been laid upon us. Truly, there is no other way at all to go. ◇

THE BUDDHIST SHRINE

Situated in the coconut grove by the Adyar River, not far from the Headquarters building, is the Buddhist shrine. It was built in 1925 under the direction of Mr Jinarājādāsa, and enshrines a grey sandstone image of the Lord Buddha from Eastern India. This statue, given by Annie Besant, shows the Buddha as the Teacher of Dharma, turning the Wheel of the Law. Around his head is an inscription in Tibetan characters: 'He taught the cause of all things as also the means of cessation.' Directly facing the temple is a lily tank and beyond it a magnificent Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*), grown from a sapling descended from the original tree under which the Lord Gautama attained Enlightenment. Nearby stood an ancient Buddhist gong, which used to be struck in the old days at six o'clock morning and evening.

This is a place of great peace, where visitors can sit quietly on the stone benches of the precincts in quiet contemplation.

Regenerating Oneself

SHIKHAR AGNIHOTRI

WHAT I am about to discuss here, are not all my thoughts, and also not in any mystic sense, but in a very much worldly sense. We all, being readers of theosophical literature, know that ideas in the form of thoughts are floating in the cosmos and whosoever gets the mind in tune with them, receives those ideas, and then later comes the copyright labelling it 'mine' or 'yours', and the process of fighting over it starts.

I would also suggest that irrespective of whether or not any glimpse of truth is found in what is being said by someone, neither appreciation nor criticism be given, because I feel both are a waste of energy. Let us use the energy of appreciation in regenerating ourselves, or use the energy of criticism to make an effort to find a different solution for ourselves, instead of wasting our energy in either appreciation or criticism and continuing to lead our lives as before, which only delays our own regeneration.

What specific kind of change can be called regeneration? Because, in every regeneration there is a change inevitably, but not every change can be classified as regeneration. Let me give an example from

Nature, which most of us can appreciate easily. I witnessed it on television and it is about the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, or a seed into a tree.

When this happens, in a manner of speaking, the caterpillar or the seed dies. But what do you think will happen if a caterpillar says, 'No, I will not build a cocoon', or a seed says, 'I will not sprout'? By doing so, they would be shutting the door on the grand expression of their potentiality of becoming a butterfly, or a big tree with thousands of similar seeds.

But a caterpillar or a seed does not have any choice. On the other hand, fortunately or unfortunately we humans do have a choice. Fortunate because we are free agents in nature and can accelerate the process, and unfortunate because using the same power of choice we can retard the process of regeneration.

So, as humans what is preventing us from undergoing such a process? Is it the fear of dying? But we are fortunate creatures of God who do not have to die physically to undergo such processes; instead we may have to die psychologically. Myself (in the words of Theosophy, my lower self) has to die.

Mr Shikhar Agnihotri is a member of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society.

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So, is it the fear of losing myself? Let us slightly peek into this self. What is my self? Is it not my family, my bank balance, my feelings, thoughts, memory, intellect, my image, or basically all my attachments cumulatively, that form my self? When any of these are under threat of being taken away from me, then fear or anger arises in me depending upon whether I am weak or strong. It is like threatening a handicapped person of taking away his crutches. But we as humans are not handicapped especially those who are reading this, and not in the physical sense anyway, as the physical body has very little to offer in regeneration because for regeneration we would have to work on the roots (the world of causes) rather than the branches (the world of effects).

So, now the question arises as to how I can get rid of my attachments? Shall I go away to a secluded place? But would I not be carrying my mental and emotional luggage and creating my world there too? So, how can I do it right here and right now?

Let us consider a practical example from our daily life. Why do we lock our house when we leave? The two most probable answers are:

1. There is something valuable inside the house.

2. The surroundings are full of thieves. Are these two reasons different from each other? Although on the surface they look different, if we go deep both of them point in the same direction, that is, our attachment to what is inside the house. The first one clearly implies it, and so

to prevent it from being stolen I put the lock on the door. The second reason apparently talks about the surroundings, but would I really bother to lock my house if it was filled with garbage, notwithstanding the surroundings? It will not then matter to me if there are thieves or saints in the surroundings. So again, it is my attachment to the things inside that makes me lock my door. Now, we are able to see the attachment.

So, what shall I do to get regenerated in this case? If I just stop locking the door the fear (due to the attachment) is still there, and moreover the other family members will become certain that I have lost my mind and will push me aside to do what they want to do. So, I am stuck again. Do I mislead myself by thinking that these poor family members of mine are on a lower rung of the ladder of evolution and I am on a higher level because I read a lot of theosophical books, or do I try to force my view on them by argument or force? Either of the above are the worst things I can do (as we all can imagine what the atmosphere of such a house will become). Instead, what if I become patient, tolerant and, most importantly, aware of why I am putting the lock? Not for the valuables inside, nor due to the thieves around, but because it pleases my teacher. And who is my teacher in this case? My very own family members whom I thought to be less developed than me a minute ago, have become my teachers because they have taught me patience, tolerance, and awareness of my thought process. I begin to realize how egoistic I am when dealing

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with my assistants whom I mistakenly call servants, and how hypocritically humble I am when with my superiors. In this light, each and every one of our relationships has something or the other to teach us, not just with humans, but with animals, plants and minerals as well. Basically the whole of existence becomes my teacher if I am willing to learn. Then we see the truth in the statement of H. P. Blavatsky, 'No one is my enemy, no one is my friend, but everyone is equally my teacher'. And also when J. Krishnamurti says that the only importance of relationships is that we learn about ourselves through them. Now imagine if such a minor action from our daily life has so much potential to teach, then how many millions of opportunities are passing us by all the time.

So, in the above case I realize the necessity of:

1. Awareness
2. Faith based on right knowledge
3. Real life examples to at least start the journey of regeneration.

Awareness, of course, is very important and we will come to that in detail later. But what role does faith have to play? Faith is required initially to overcome the element of fear inside us at the beginning of the journey. It is the same faith that I place in my swimming instructor when he asks me to plunge into the pool and seeing my fear of drowning, assures me, 'Don't worry, you will not drown. Have faith in me,' and then I plunge in. Here comes the importance of Theosophy because it gives us that knowledge,

placing our faith on which, we can take the first step. Faith in that divine law that nothing that I do not deserve can touch me, and what I have got is what I had asked for. And thus try to get myself out of my shell of security and experiment with what I read or study. A very interesting thing happens now. When I have already learnt swimming there is no need for faith to jump into the water because then swimming becomes my second nature. Similarly when with continuous experimentation (not just reading, or hearing lectures, but trying to implement those ideas) I realize the law, then I do not need to *have faith* in it because I *know* it, and then only awareness remains.

Now comes the importance of real life examples. Most of us being eager learners, know that there are ups and downs while walking the path. At least I feel frustrated and dejected when my weaknesses (*kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *mātsarya* — lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride, envy) overcome me and I realize I have made a mistake. When no logic is able to take me out of it, then I gain strength by thinking of the great ones who have done it before, reminding myself that all those warriors battled their way through what I am going through now, so there is hope, and to be better equipped next time.

Now we come to the most important part — awareness. So, how can I be aware of all my thoughts and emotions all the time or at least during the time I am awake. Krishnaji says that for this we need to gather our whole energy and be

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choicelessly aware. Now, what happens when I am aware without any choice? Can somebody else answer that for me or do I have to find it out for myself? But then let me be honest, am I recouping all the energy that is leaking out of me all the time through various activities like talking too much, watching TV, reading two or three newspapers daily, indulging in gossiping in one way or the other, and many other activities? Working in the cut-throat world of competition throughout the day with its consequences, am I left with any focused energy? If yes, then there is no better way, but if not and yet I want to progress, what shall I do?

Do I even become aware of it when I get angry, irritated, greedy, lusty, and so on? If not, then I have to get my basics right. If so, then is it possible for me to make a note of it, as also how many times during the day and even during sleep (if I remember on waking up), it happened? Is it possible and practical? I know it is. Having made this list, if I get the energy to heal myself then very good, otherwise I need to find a brother, either from our theosophical family or otherwise, whom I can trust. If that brother is one's own spouse then I cannot think of a better use for the institution of marriage, and the list can be shared with the spouse regularly, instead of mouthing platitudes about the marvellous and wonderful meditation experiences which truly do not reflect in my regular life.

So, by doing this what happens? The first thing is that I become aware of the hesitation and distance that has crept

into my relationships, and how difficult it seems to be to do this. But if I am a learner I will try my best to do it. The consequence is that our relationships get warmer, better and open. The real feeling of brotherhood starts flowing in.

The second thing that happens is that when I do this and my brother is also walking the path, he or she may also be willing to share his or her failings, and then I realize it is not just me but everyone who walks the path goes through all this. This will help me in overcoming the sudden fear that might come to the surface on seeing my weaknesses in totality that were there all the time, but I was pretending not to notice, blaming others for my actions.

We all understand how our priorities decide our line of action. So now when I start giving this priority and time to discuss myself then slowly it becomes prominent in a part of my mind. So the next time when a similar situation occurs, immediately this part of the mind gets activated and reminds me that I have to share this with my brother in the evening. And then I realize I am observing myself instead of being angry because the mind cannot do two things at the same time, and then the situation has passed.

Last but not least, or rather the most important thing that happens is, for the first time I accept myself with all my weaknesses and not only that but I am also sharing it with another, so I am freeing myself from the image that I have made in the eyes of the others. For the first time I see my wounds in their full ugliness

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and only then I realize the urgency of healing, of regeneration. In the words of Krishnamurti, when I see the house is on fire then there are no questions asked, no arguments offered, no blaming other people or circumstances, instead there is all the energy to get out of the house and try to put out the fire. ✧

ADYAR is all things to all people. If I were a great painter I would paint beautiful pictures of Adyar. If I were a poet I would write a great poem. If I were a singer I would sing continuously of Adyar, melodies of many themes and varieties. If I were a musician I would compose an oratorio or a symphony about Adyar. But I am none of these things, so let us first see what some great personages say of Adyar.

Dr Besant tells us: 'The residents in Adyar form a single body, and each person is a cell in that body. We are very different, for we belong to many different Nations. . . . To live in Adyar is as good as to visit many countries; our prejudices and conventions are chipped away, and we learn to recognize the One Life in some of its many forms.'

Dr Arundale writes: 'Adyar is a Heaven in this outer world of ours, with many of the features characteristic of the Heaven-worlds so beautifully described to us in our Theosophical literature. Adyar is a reflection of its Inner Counterpart, of which many have heard and a few know. To this Inner Counterpart ADYAR lives in perfect adjustment, receiving and sending forth that Rhythm whereby all living things move ever onwards to their splendid destiny.'

J. Krishnamurti says: 'Adyar is and always has been, a spiritual oasis to which the weary traveller looks for comfort and repose. . . . 'I have visited many a wonderful land and seen many a famous sight, but there is none to equal the extraordinary intangible something of our Adyar. There is an atmosphere there that does not exist in many a church and temple, and there is a Presence there that we expect to perceive in a sacred shrine.'

Constance Meyer
Adyar

A Dialogue of Self and Soul

I

MY SOUL. I summon to the winding ancient stair;
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
Upon the breathless starlit air,
Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
Fix every wandering thought upon
That quarter where all thought is done;
Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?

MY SELF. The consecrated blade upon my knees
Is Sato's ancient blade, still as it was,
Still razor-keen, still like a looking-glass
Unspotted by the centuries;
That flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn
From some court-lady's dress and round
The wooden scabbard bound and wound,
Can, tattered, still protect, faded adorn.

MY SOUL. Why should the imagination of a man
Long past his prime remember things that are
Emblematical of love and war?
Think of ancestral night that can,
If but imagination scorn the earth
And intellect its wandering
To this and that and t'other thing,
Deliver from the crime of death and birth.

A Dialogue of Self and Soul

MY SELF. Montashigi, third of his family, fashioned it
Five hundred years ago, about it lie
Flowers from I know not what embroidery —
Heart's purple — and all these I set
For emblems of the day against the tower
Emblematical of the night,
And claim as by a soldier's right
A charter to commit the crime once more.

MY SOUL. Such fullness in that quarter overflows
And falls into the basin of the mind
That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,
For intellect no longer knows
Is from the *Ought*, or *Knower* from the *Known* —
That is to say, ascends to Heaven;
Only the dead can be forgiven;
But when I think of that my tongue's a stone.

W. B. Yeats

When the goals of the Self are the only goals a culture makes available, spirited men and women will address them with the energy that they would have applied to the aspirations of the Soul. The result is lives that are massively frustrating and not a little ridiculous. People become heroically dedicated to middle-class ends — getting a promotion, getting a raise, taking immeasurably interesting vacations, getting their children into the right colleges, finding the best retirement spot, fattening their portfolios. Lives without courage, contemplation, compassion, and imagination are lives sapped of significant meaning. In such lives, the Self cannot transcend itself.

Mark Edmundson,
Self and Soul: A Defense of Ideals

Theosophical Work around the World

India

On the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the Indian Section, a two-day seminar on 'Looking Ahead in the Context of the Theosophical Society' was organized by the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society on 18-19 November 2015 in the Annie Besant Hall of the Society campus. Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary, Indian Section, called for an introspection by the members of the Theosophical Society about what personal transformation has occurred to them after becoming a member, so as to assess whether there is correspondence between the ideal and the action. Prof. Anand Kumar, Retired Professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, in his keynote address, said that the Society had to be committed to the freedom of others and justice to all. He emphasized that the need of the hour was to bring the Theosophical Society movement into politics to bring ethics back to politics. Dr S. K. Pandey, national lecturer of the Indian Section, Dr T. K. Nair, Secretary, Theosophical Order of Service, and a host of academicians, thinkers and intellectuals spoke in the various sessions. In the valedictory session, Mr Sundaram summed up, emphasizing that Mrs Radha Burnier's teachings, that self-preparation is an important step for the Theosophical Society's future work, need to be adhered

to, in order to to make the society at large a better place to live in.

The international Vice President Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy delivered two lectures at the Madras University on 17 December 2015, on the themes 'Ancient Wisdom in Modern Times', and 'Altruism in the Light of Different Spiritual Traditions and Theosophy'.

Russia

To mark the 140th anniversary of the Theosophical Society, the Moscow branch Anahata organized the second annual congress on 21-22 November 2015, with 50 participants, and the Kemerov branch had a meeting of 30 participants on 22 November. The lectures and discussions left a positive and inspiring imprint on all.

Adyar

The 140th International Convention of the Theosophical Society with the theme 'Compassion and Universal Responsibility' attracted about 950 delegates from 30 countries. This was the second time that the lectures and talks were webcast online, this time with the assistance of the IT team from TS in America. All the presentations are in YouTube's channel, 'Theosophy Adyar', and also on the TS Adyar website under 'Learn'.

In addition to short lectures, symposiums and cultural programs, five public

Theosophical Work around the World

lectures were given. 'Compassion as Radical Living', by Mrs Linda Oliveira (Australia) emphasized that humanity really needs to undergo a radical transformation. The Honourable Mr Justice V. Ramasubramanian (India), in his lecture 'Passion, Dispassion and Compassion', observed how the convention's theme so well fitted what became evident during the floods of Chennai just three weeks earlier, and pointed to the fact that compassion is a natural feature within people to help each other when the urgency is high. Dr José Foglia (Uruguay) elaborated on the neurophysiology between the brain and body, and the effects and importance of meditation in raising compassion. Mr Vicente Hao Chin Jr (the Philippines) was unable to travel to the Convention, but gave his lecture, 'The Power of Awareness' via the Internet. International President Tim Boyd's fresh and enlightening lecture 'Reversing the Flow: A Conscious Choice' is published in this issue.

It is worth mentioning that for the first time in the history of TS Adyar, guest speakers from other theosophical organizations were present, a gesture of openness and brotherliness from all sides. Dr Eugene Jennings (USA) is President of ITC (International Theosophy Conferences, Inc.) and also a student of the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT). Mr Herman Vermeulen (the Netherlands) is the Vice-President of ITC and also Leader of the TS Point Loma-Blavatskyhouse. In such theosophical gatherings, it does not really matter which tradition a parti-

cipant comes from, as the main thing is contributing to the theme while interacting with theosophists. The Convention unites and strengthens, realizing the Oneness. Nature is part of the Oneness and today it is more important to be conscious of how man uses the resources of Nature. This came up during the Convention with the concept of sustainability.

The heritage of Adyar with its many old buildings is an important aspect to be aware of and they need to be renovated before it is too late. To hasten this Mr Tim Boyd along with Mr Michiel Haas shared with the participants the detailed plans to improve the Estate, by launching the Adyar Renovation Project. The website <adyar-renovation.org> gives information about the project and its progress. Thus, great and necessary plans are ahead to save the paradise that is Adyar.

An international seminar was organized in the Adyar Library and Research Centre on 8 January 2016 on the theme 'Personal Identity and Environmental Challenges', in collaboration with the Vishnu Mohan Foundation. The President Mr Tim Boyd gave the inaugural address and the Vice President Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy chaired the first session. In the afternoon session, two theosophists Prof. Jacques Mahnich from France and Dr Irina Trubetskova from USA spoke, apart from several other eminent professors from India. The seminar was directed by Prof. Sreekala M. Nair, Dean of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady. ✧

Theosophical Work around the World



Opening of the international Convention held on 31 December 2015



Delegates at the Opening of the international Convention held on 31 December 2015



Mrs Joy Mills

Joy Mills and Her Years in the TS

At the opening of every International Convention of the Theosophical Society, there would invariably be a message from Joy Mills that would be profound and uplifting. In the recently concluded 2015 Annual Convention, there was also a message from Joy Mills, but by the time the message was read, she had left the physical world a day before.

Mary Joy Mills was born on 9 October 1920 in Ohio, USA. She had a Bachelor's degree in Science and a Master's degree in English Literature. In 1940 she became a member of the TS after hearing a talk by Clara Codd. She worked for the TS in America for long years and later became its President from 1966 till 1974. She was International Vice-President of the TS from 1974 to 1980. Subsequently, she also became President of the TS in Australia from 1993 to 1995. As a former International Secretary recalls, in one of the elections for the post of President of the TS, Joy Mills had the required number of 12 nominations but she declined to accept the nominations and contest for the post. For her, working in harmony and helping in the work of the Theosophical Society were more important. She was a member of the General Council, the Governing body of the Theosophical Society, for many years till

the time of her passing. She was awarded the prestigious Subba Row Medal in 2011 for her lifetime contribution to theosophical literature and understanding. She was appointed as the Head of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in 1980 until 1992 and she lived there till the end except the years when she was President of the TS in Australia.

Joy Mills was a popular speaker on Theosophy and had lectured in 50 countries. She has authored numerous articles and published several books. Her books include *100 Years of Theosophy in America*, and *Reflections on an Ageless Wisdom: A Commentary on the Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. As President of the TS in America, she was instrumental in publishing the Quest Books, which have become very popular worldwide over the last 50 years. The greatest contribution of Joy Mills perhaps lies in her work as a modern teacher of Theosophy. Her writings and lectures evince great clarity and depth which have not only benefited students of Theosophy in the past but will remain as great sources of inspiration. She will be long-remembered as a kind, loving, and compassionate theosophist and an inspiring teacher of Theosophy.

CHITTARANJAN SATAPATHY

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Published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan and Printed by Mr V. Gopalan at the Vasanta Press,
 The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai (Madras) 600 020, India, on behalf of the President, The Theosophical Society.