

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. 138 NO. 9 JUNE 2017

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NOTE: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to: <editorialoffice@gmail.com>

Cover: A Rangoli, or Kolam, symbolizing an eight-petalled lotus expanding to the seventh chakra. This type of folk art is traditionally drawn and formed by women with rice flour and flowers

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

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.

Theosophy: A Spiritual Legacy for Humanity

TIM BOYD

THE idea of Theosophy as a spiritual legacy for humanity implies a tradition that has been prepared for us by others who have come before. That is the nature of tradition; it involves some kind of lineage by which knowledge and also a depth of experience are communicated to future generations. Hopefully they are communicated in ways that they can be replicated. This is the basis of *any* tradition. In the case of Theosophy, it is no different.

We are all aware that there have been, and there *are*, guides that can show us the way. This is the nature of any type of knowledge or wisdom tradition. We need to avail ourselves of those people, sources, and books. However, that is not enough, sometimes we need to be reminded that, as valuable as a guide or a tradition may be, in the absence of that longing that is within us, nothing ignites; it takes a spark to make a fire. Any wood will burn, but unless something sparks that fuel, we just have the potential for fire. Similarly, when we look to the past we can point to great people in this movement and in the spiritual movements of the world. As important as external factors are, we must always be aware that the catalyst is internal to us.

Theosophy has certain broad tenets and ideas as its foundation. Probably the most important is the “unity of all life”. Unity, oneness, brotherhood, sisterhood, or any idea that expresses the interconnection of all things is the important principle expressed through the theosophical tradition. For about forty years I have been trying to explore more deeply what might be meant by Unity, Oneness. It is so broad that we will never encompass it. But it also seems to keep growing in terms of its meaning. It is the basic focus for this spiritual movement, and for any genuinely spiritual approach to life.

Theosophy speaks about three primary avenues to a deeper understanding of this “Unity”: Religion, Philosophy, and Science. We are going to be dealing with Religion in its pure sense, which unfortunately is mostly missing from what we see in the nightly news of any country. “Religion” comes from the Latin and means to tie back or bind back. The idea that there is a connection that in some way has been loosened, that has severed a connection with the divine source, is religion. To create that tie or bond that reconnects us with spirit is the role of religion in any form. The religious approach is

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one of the ways that Theosophy focuses our capacity to comprehend this overarching unity.

When we discuss spirituality, generally it is our normal habit to think in terms of religion. In an ideal sense, that is accurate. This is because true religion is about fostering the experience of the Divine. So spirituality is about that experience, and relates to those activities and states of consciousness that move us toward a deepening experience of Unity. In theory, religion has a similar aim. But as we all know, in practice, the human capacity to distort even the most sublime things is most prominent in the realm of religion.

Religion, as practised in the world today, is one of the most divisive forces, more so than nationalism or the various forms of economic arrangements. It is the nature of religions that they require believers. We cannot participate in a religion unless we believe. It does not require, and actually does not actively seek out, people who *know*, but who have accepted certain forms of belief. By virtue of the fact that there are different beliefs, it has a divisive quality, not by intention, but just because of our limitations. We find a way to express our limitations through anything that we touch.

“Philosophy” comes from the Greek *philosophia*, or love of wisdom. In general, we are referring to an intellectual quality. The attempt to question and explore the nature of the many ways that this unity expresses through the mind and through the activities of the intellect have

been the focus of philosophy. One of the founders of the Theosophical Society (TS) gave another twist to this meaning. H. P. Blavatsky said that in its purest expression, philosophy means the “wisdom of love”. It is not just a play on words, it is much more than that.

If we really have an understanding of what wisdom is, it is not even of the same nature as knowledge. Our general view of knowledge is that if we obtain enough of it, eventually we become wise, as if there was a certain number of stacks of books, and when we have read all of them, and if we are sufficiently old, we are wise. There is an expression: “With age, comes wisdom.” The great wit, Oscar Wilde, turned that expression around by saying: “With age comes wisdom, but sometimes age comes alone.”

The “wisdom of love” means that love, by its very nature, is unifying. If we think about it in terms of our relationships, our love for our children, or pet, or partner, the effect of it is always that somehow the boundaries of an individual, separated self expand so that the unit that is “me” now includes another. So love has an expansive quality and, carried to its extremes, recognizes no separations. When we consider the great teachers who have appeared in the world, where *all* beings are encompassed by their love, then we verge into the area that could be called “wisdom”, a true comprehension or perception of reality. So the wisdom of love is generally an intellectual effort to understand the universe.

“Science” is, by its nature, the study

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of phenomena and the material world. In a sense it is trying to grasp the nature of what exists beneath the material cloak visible through the various means currently available to scientific research. We are able to describe something of the invisible worlds in terms of the laws of physics and the behaviors of the biological world. It is that kind of approach to Truth. So these are the three main avenues that Theosophy looks to as an approach to the understanding and experience of Truth.

The above are three avenues for a deeper understanding of Unity, along which we can pursue what we call “spirit”. But what I would like to discuss now is the process of spiritual unfoldment. Whether we are devotional or religious, or whether we tend to be more philosophical or scientific, the way in which we come to understand Truth depends on temperament.

There are people who explore the nature of Reality from many different angles. No one of them is correct, and all of them can lead to the same truth. As Krishna said in the *Bhagavadgītā*: “By whatever way human beings approach me, in the same way do I meet them.” By *whatever* road we make a sincere approach to an understanding and experience of Truth, on that same road we will be met and that understanding will be magnified.

When we talk about spirituality and the unfoldment of our spiritual lives, more than mere information is required. Application is needed. The process of

unfoldment of the deeper aspects of our spiritual nature seems to take place in three distinct stages. First there is an experience of *awakening*. Next is a process and period of *purification*. These two then lead to an event which can be described as *realization*.

We are familiar with the first one, awakening; we do it every morning. But what happens when we say that we have awakened? Our consciousness withdraws from the *unconscious* state of deep sleep, moves through and then withdraws from the dream state, and then we open our eyes and awaken to this world that surrounds us. This is what we describe as awakening. Coming to consciousness in the world is something that we do repeatedly.

In terms of our spiritual life, the awakening process is the same, but it is a different kind of consciousness that we withdraw from. The name “Buddha” means “the awakened one”. When he had his experience of enlightenment, there were others with whom he had been doing religious practices in the forest. He had separated from them because he realized that their way of practising was not going to take him where he needed to go. When he had his experience, he came back to the same group of people, and when they saw him coming, they could not see who he was. Because there was a brilliant light around him that was blinding them, they could not recognize him. They then asked him whether he was a god. When the Buddha said he was not, they asked him

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if he was a man, and he answered: “No, I am awake, I am Buddha.”

So, awake from what? The way that our particular sleeping and dreaming would be described in Buddhist terminology would be that we are affected by the sleep of ignorance. The way we usually interpret ignorance is as a lack of knowledge. But from the spiritual perspective, it does not mean “not knowing”; it is “wrongly knowing”. The classic example that is normally used in the Indian scriptures is that when one mistakes a rope for a snake, one’s adrenalin rises, becomes fearful, and either starts looking for a stick to fight with the snake, or a direction to run. But when one walks a bit closer one sees that, in fact, the snake is just a coiled rope. Then the fear subsides, the adrenalin drains, one drops the stick, and just walks on, seeing correctly.

This describes the state of being ignorant, when everything we look at is seen wrongly, just as if we were looking at a snake instead of a rope, and we behave accordingly. This is a bit difficult for us to accept, because we look around and see things, interpret them, and “know” we are seeing rightly, but are we? Each of us is a spiritual being. There is a soul that has associated itself with a material form. Just like sparks fly up from a flame, all of the sparks are common to the one flame. Like rays from the one sun, every one of the spiritual sparks is common to the one source we all share. Yet we are seated on our chairs, with our different backgrounds and experiences, feeling completely separate from one

another. If I move my hand, you do not move yours; it is confirmed by everything that we do, that we are separate and apart, so we behave accordingly.

When we look at the condition of the world, we see large portions of it with people who barely have food to eat, and very small groups within that world who have the possibility and wealth to do just about anything they wish to do. There are groups of souls in bodies going over to other countries, or just across the border, fighting and killing other groups of souls in other bodies. Seen from the perspective of our higher nature, we understand why it is said that we are fundamentally ignorant and asleep.

The experience of awakening is really that of coming into a state when we become aware that there *is* a soul within us. This awakening is symbolized in the spiritual literature of the world. In the Bible there is a story where Jesus and his disciples get into a boat and Jesus falls asleep. As they are going across the water a huge storm comes up. The disciples are afraid that they are going to drown and die, so they wake up the Master. As a result of the crisis, the highest spirit, or Christ consciousness, asleep within the boat (the body), awakens and commands the wind and the waves (the thoughts and emotions) to be still. We remain unaware of this highest presence that slumbers within us because we do not provide an opportunity for it to awaken. But there are memorable moments in our lives when the sleeping soul finds an avenue of expression. Those moments

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are unforgettable because it is when we feel most whole, complete, and connected.

The awakening experience happens in a variety of ways. For some it happens because they meet someone special. Each of us is like a bubble in the ocean. There is a very thin membrane that separates us from the greater body of water. We float around engrossed in our own individuality, feeling separate from one another. But from time to time the membrane, at least temporarily, dissolves and we experience something of our greater potential. Sometimes these awakening experiences are the result of something that we could describe as “enough is enough”. In the American Civil Rights Movement there was a very active woman named Fannie Lou Hamer. She had been suffering through all of the racial discrimination and prejudices that were typical in the south of the United States. But at a certain point, she became exceedingly active in the Civil Rights Movement. When somebody asked her why she had changed and become a firebrand for civil rights, she said: “You know, there just came a point where I got sick and tired of being sick and tired!”

That is the experience for us. Enough repetition of non-productive circumstances, and eventually that little bubble wears down and this moment occurs. Awakening is a moment, an event, but it leads to a process of purification. Once we are awake, we attempt to intelligently engage with the environment in which we find ourselves — something we could not do when we were sleeping. In that

purification process we recognize that there are certain things that we need to let go.

But what is purity? Very often people think of purity in terms of behaviors. We tend to describe pure persons by their actions, the foods they eat, their dress, where they shop, and so on. We apply many categories to their behaviors in our judgement, but behaviors may or may not indicate purity. They are deceptive. It is worth noting that Adolph Hitler was a devout vegetarian, non-smoker, and did not drink alcohol. He had a reputation of dining with his generals and soldiers, and if they were eating meat, he would talk to them about the terrible nature of animal cruelty that brought this food to their plate. Perhaps behaviors do not necessarily indicate a deeper purity.

So what is purity? We are all aware of the qualities of gold. Pure gold is 24 karats. Other metals are mixed in with 14-karat gold to make it hard, less expensive, and still keep the golden glow. We find that when it is *only* gold, it has certain potentials. The third Object of the Theosophical Society (TS) speaks of “the powers latent” in humankind. Likewise, in its purity, certain latent powers in gold are capable of expression, or revealed, as the alloys and other additives are removed: it can be thinned by beating it from the size of a coin to that of a ten-by-ten-foot room, it conducts electricity marvelously, it can be stretched, it does not tarnish, and so on. All these qualities are possible only in gold’s purified state. As a result, it is spoken of as a “precious

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metal”. One could say this also represents a higher consciousness even in the mineral kingdom, in the sense that gold is more responsive to a wider range of activities. Purity is the state of being unalloyed — a singleness of nature.

For us as spiritual practitioners, then what we are looking at is an arrival at a stage that is unalloyed. This is a bit difficult for us to think about because of the fact that, being human, we are multidimensional. Each of us functions on many different levels. The most obvious is the physical body and its sensations, but we also have emotional and mental natures, and all of these are different. So how do we purify them? The answer is: all of these activities are linked together.

There are people who have determined to change their diet to detoxify their physical bodies. So they go on diets that actually start to change the components of their physical body. Perhaps their health improves and they become more radiant, but there are also *other* things that happen. Very often people have changed their diets in appropriate ways and find that they become less fearful, less anxious; they are able to better focus their attention. So the mind and the emotions are affected by an intentional choice of what foods we eat. This is interrelationship. All things affect each other. It works from the bottom up, and also from the top down. “You are what you eat”, whether we are eating cornflakes, or thinking angry thoughts, all of them build into the nature that *we*

create for ourselves. Purification does have consequences.

In one of the Buddha’s discourses he gave a profound, but simple advice. He said three things: (1) do no harm; (2) do good; and (3) purify your mind. Directly across the river from our Theosophical Society’s Adyar headquarters, along the northern bank of the Adyar River, there is a fifty-seven-acre place called Adyar Eco Park. This area used to have a little creek that flowed into it from the Adyar River. As the city grew to its current seven million people, the creek became polluted with sewage and other human wastes. The land became a dumping ground for the local community and was completely devoid of vegetation. Some concerned people came up with the idea that “this has to change, we want some pure water in this area”.

These people began by stopping the inflow of sewage and the dumping of garbage (do no harm). Next they started to remove the trash (do good). The process took two full years of truckload after truckload to clean the fifty-seven acres. Then they planted native species of trees and flowers, and built earthen dams blocking the direct inflow of the polluted Adyar River water. The polluted water that was coming into the protected ecosystem had to soak through the dams and would come out clean on the other side (purify); all the impurities were captured in the soil and sand. They also built other systems of purification and catch tanks to collect the rain water.

From being a toxic dumping ground,

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today this place is thriving. The native species of vegetation have taken over, birds not seen for years are now nesting there, one can hardly hear oneself think at night because of all the frogs that come out and have found a home there, and they are still surrounded by seven million people! From the simple activity focused on purification of a small patch of land in Chennai, the broader community has been affected. “Do no harm, do good, purify” — these steps have consequences. Purification leads to certain results.

In terms of our own inner life, what are those states of consciousness that lead toward purity? What are the activities we engage in to purify the mind? It does not take a PhD in Indology or some spiritual practice to know that when our mind is reflective of kindness toward others, there is a certain enlargement of spirit within. When it is expressive of gratitude and thankfulness for whatever it is we have found that sustains life, friendships, connections, we find that our mind has an influence.

In the field of neuroplasticity of the brain, a research study was done on the effect of metta meditation. It is a meditation focused on unconditional love for all beings: “May all beings be secure, happy, free from suffering.” It was observed that for people who engage in that practice with some regularity,

measurable changes in the structure of their brain take place in a short time. Now this meditation practice is utilized in cancer therapy, because the body tends to mobilize toward health out of this mental practice. These steps have consequences. Ultimately, all of this is pointed toward some form of realization, which is to say, we have awakened, we have done the work to purify; then what?

From our own experience we have an intimation of what lies ahead — a dim awareness of what realization might involve. If we think about those moments in our lives when we have felt happiness, peace, joy, there is a quality that they all seem to share. For whatever reason those were moments when we had lost our constant preoccupation with ourselves; when the membrane of our little isolated bubble of self had dissolved. The joy and freedom of experiencing some degree of expansion and freedom from the weight of our habitual, self-imposed limitations gives us a sense of what realization might mean. In the lovely words of *The Light of Asia*, Sir Edwin Arnold describes the Buddha’s experience of enlightenment as that moment when “the Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea”. It is a beautiful expression for the potential that awaits each of us as we make the commitment to reconnect and remember the purified state of our minds and hearts. ✧

It is not by studying Occultism for selfish ends . . . that one can ever reach the true goal of helping suffering mankind.

H. P. Blavatsky
The Key to Theosophy

The Power of Awareness

VICENTE HAO CHIN, JR

THERE is perhaps nothing more powerful than awareness as a key element in human growth and the nurturing of the spiritual life. Without it, growth is basically mechanical, biological or instinctive. With it, new possibilities are unveiled. The capacity for conscious transcendence emerges and new untapped levels of consciousness can then be scaled.

Human Needs. Human life has two basic preoccupations: the first is the ending of pain and sorrow, and the second is the pursuit of one's highest potential.

The cessation of pain and sorrow covers perhaps more than 90% of the preoccupations of the average person. We work and earn a living to avert poverty, economic deprivation or physical discomfort. We are driven, consciously or subconsciously, to protect ourselves from hurt, defeat, failure, rejection, humiliation, criticism, stress, distress, fear and a hundred other forms of vexations. A major world religion, Buddhism, in fact, is rooted in this basic issue of resolving the problem of human sorrow.

After one has attained a certain degree of stability in the balance between the

pressures of living and the presence of inner equanimity, one innately begins the pursuit of one's higher potentials — what Abraham Maslow called the drive towards self-actualization and, eventually, self-transcendence. It is a natural tendency because there is an intrinsic drive within us to realize our highest potential. Maslow calls this a B-need or a Being-Need, as opposed to a D-need or Deficiency Need, which refers to meeting the needs of human life to avert distress or discomfort.

The Role of Awareness. In facing distress, pain or sorrow, one can either apply palliatives to ease the distress — which usually means dealing with the symptoms only — or go to the roots of the issue and resolve it permanently. Awareness plays an essential function in dealing with the root causes of distress, because the latter is ultimately a psychological reaction or state that can be resolved by a transformation of the consciousness rather than a change in the external circumstances.

It is important to know the difference between *being aware* of something and *knowing* something. I may know that

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I am afraid, but I may not be aware of my fear. *Knowing* that I fear snakes makes me run away from snakes. Being *aware* of my fear makes me become conscious of my muscle tension, hardness of breathing, weakening of legs, butterflies in the stomach, and so on. The awareness of these states is a key to the dissipating of these symptoms of fear, leading to a state of relaxation and equanimity. Knowing does not result in such a calm state.

Unlike opinions and knowledge, awareness is non-judgmental and non-analytical. It neither likes nor dislikes, accepts or rejects. It is simply aware. But this state of uncommitted state of consciousness has such a power that it is the single most important element in human transformation.

Let us look into specific examples on how the presence of awareness can bring about fundamental transformation in the life of an individual not only in relieving oneself of distress but in the pursuit of the transcendent or spiritual life. We will see that awareness plays a pivotal role in all human levels of consciousness: physical, etheric, emotional, lower mental, higher mental, and spiritual.

Body Pain. Body pain and discomfort brings about psychological distress and unhappiness. Such pain can be alleviated or removed by medical means which is temporary and may also have side effects, unless one resorts to the cutting of nerves which may create its own problems (because pain is a protective warning sign necessary for our survival

and long-term comfort). We will appreciate the value of pain when we witness what happens to children who are born without the sense of pain. But the ultimate solution to the distress caused by biological pain is awareness. In awareness, we don't remove or avoid the pain. When it is unavoidable, we are able to go through it without feeling miserable. Try inflicting a safe kind of pain in yourself (such as pinching yourself in the inside of your upper forearm), first, quickly, and second, with awareness, where you feel the gradual intensification of the pain sensation with full awareness. You will note that while the body feels the "pain" and the consciousness perceives it, within the consciousness there is no suffering or misery. When there is no awareness, one's consciousness (or sense of self) automatically identifies with the physical pain and then one says or feels "I am in pain" (not just the body being in pain, but also the "I").

Many people may recall the self-immolation of a Buddhist monk prior to the Vietnam War, where he maintained equanimity of body in a lotus posture while his body was burning. He did not move or utter a sound. This is possible when one is in a state of awareness.

Stress. Stress is the result of a complex combination of psychological pressure and physiological tension, resulting in strain, distress, and unhappiness. When there is no awareness, stress accumulates and becomes chronic, leading to more severe disorders, both psychological and physical.

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When awareness is introduced into one's daily life, however, something important happens. Tension or distress does not become chronic. Awareness of a tension leads to the subsiding of the tension. In the Self-Transformation Seminars that we conduct, participants are taught how to scan the body for such tensions and discomforts. With awareness and deep breathing, the hardened body part softens, the congealed energy flows naturally, and the person attains a state of relaxation. The capacity to be aware on a moment-to-moment basis is a powerful antidote to stress and psychological strain.

Emotional Distress. These are emotions that bring about sorrow and unhappiness, such as fear, depression, resentment, anger, hurt, aversion, or guilt. The factor that makes these distressful is the psychophysical stress mentioned above that is associated with these feelings. Without them, there is no unhappiness or misery. Such stressful reactions to situations (public speaking) or objects (snakes) dissipate when one is aware of these states.

Awareness is an extremely potent solution to the problem of human unhappiness because unhappiness is basically caused by such push-button reactions that have become automatic and subconscious. These reaction patterns have been built or created through years of conditionings and traumas. They are essentially congealed psychic energy that has not been allowed to flow naturally during the experience and have become templates

for future reactions to similar situations. Awareness allows these bottled-up energies to be released and one goes back to the normal unconditioned state so far as that reaction pattern is concerned.

Control of the Mind. Now we come to the problem of the undisciplined and conditioned mind. From childhood to the present moment, our minds have been conditioned to think according to certain patterns and we may find ourselves unable to control them. For example, when focusing on a certain task, the mind may keep on going elsewhere such that we are doing our work ineffectively. Or in the evening, we may be unable to sleep because disturbing thoughts keep on intruding into our consciousness against our will.

Our mind basically determines our destiny. We are what we think. Our actions are dictated by the most dominant thoughts in our mind. When these are habitually linked up with desire and bodily state, then we are virtually imprisoned by the conditioned pattern of our thoughts and habits *unless we become consciously aware of the situation* and deliberately institute changes within ourselves.

The basic technique of bringing back control over the mind constitutes the taming part of meditational practice. There are two stages in meditational practice. The first stage is the "taming" part, and the second is the awareness stage. This is because the mind has a dual nature: a gross part that produces images or words (called *rupa-manas* or mind of forms) and the subtle part that produces form-

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less ideas (called *arupa-manas* or mind of no forms), including abstract ideas, concepts or intentions. Before one goes into the second one, the first stage must first be mastered.

The taming stage involves awareness of the activities of the mind, but at the same time makes use of techniques that will instill in the grosser mind a new habit of thinking that is responsive to the inner will. Whereas previously the thoughts of the person may jump wildly like a monkey, they will eventually be brought into line after a certain period of meditative practice. Standard meditational practices may involve the use of a mantra or of counting, in keeping the mind focused on a single activity.

Awareness of Ideas and Intentions. In a theater play, we see the actors and actresses performing on the stage but we do not see the directors, scriptwriters, choreographers, and other people who tell the actors what to say, emote or do. They are in a sense more important and influential in determining the outcome of the play than the actors and actresses.

In our minds, we have the equivalent of these invisible directors and coaches. Behind our gross thoughts, there are subtle thoughts that determine what kind of thoughts will be produced. These are our prejudgments, ideas, intentions, and other subtle thoughts that have no form or size. Yet they are there, powerful and influential. The only way to take charge of them is through awareness. This is the second stage of meditational practice. It is a constant state of awareness that

sees the fleeting nature of things in the world and dwells more and more on the boundless and the objectless. This is the type of meditation that was taught by H. P. Blavatsky as outlined in her “Diagram of Meditation”.

Rationality and Impersonality. Only after having gained mastery over what has been discussed above, can we truly become rational and impersonal. By then we would have been aware of sub-conscious or subliminal influences that will tend to warp our perception and judgment, and we would be in a position to see their undue influence in our views and decisions.

It is upon reaching this level that we begin to step into the portals of wisdom, where we see things as they are, undistorted by desires of the emotions or by prejudices of the mind.

Spirituality. In these ethereal levels of the consciousness, awareness opens up a new dimension in human life. It is the spiritual or mystical life. Its emergence is not like a sudden, blazing opening of the heavens but like the gentle creeping of the soft light of early dawn. This light of spiritual consciousness shines upon and influences the mind, such that the mind now becomes more responsive to intuition. Blavatsky calls this the *manas taijasi*, or the Radiant Mind. Life and the world are now seen in a vastly different manner. In Hindu and Buddhist spirituality, this intuitive faculty is *prajñā*.

Awareness has made possible the quieting of the worldly mind. It is needed to sustain the link with the transcendent

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and to deepen one's realization. *The Yoga Sutras* of Patañjali speak of seven stages of this transcendent wisdom.

Transcendence of the Ego. The final bastion that prevents the consciousness from fully realizing spiritual reality is the ego — the self-center that has been necessary in the evolutionary growth of the human being. There will come a time when this center must let go of itself and meditative awareness needs to include seeing the very nature of the meditator itself, not just the objects of the space of consciousness. This, so far as we know, is the last stage of meditation. It requires that the previous stages of non-attachment have been attained. The sage Ramana

Maharshi recommended a meditation approach called *vichāra* that keeps on inquiring “Who am I?”

The presence of awareness is crucial in pivotal stages of human growth. In the spiritual life, it is the beginning and the end. J. Krishnamurti calls it “the first and last freedom”. It is the key to the mastery over our personal (or “lower”) nature, as well as our mind. Whatever meditational approach we use, it is essential that awareness should be present. When a technique is mechanical and we lose awareness, such as in a trance, then we must beware of it. Awareness is in fact the best assurance that we are adopting the right meditational approach. ✧

Can consciousness become aware of itself? Not being asked to be aware, as that then becomes a pressure, but to naturally become aware, choicelessly, of your consciousness. Which means also, can thought, your thinking, become aware of itself . . . can there be an awareness of the thought arising?

J. Krishnamurti

A Call to Unity

S. SUNDARAM

THE very theme of this talk suggests the existing condition of the world and society in general. In spite of all the intelligence and intellectual faculties that human beings are endowed with, they have failed to bring about peace and harmony in life; to live in harmony with Nature; to live in righteousness and brotherhood. Our limited, narrow outlook and selfish attitude have blurred our vision, preventing us from having an unveiled perception of life in its totality, resulting in discordance, discontent, and disharmony. This is perhaps because we have failed to channel our creative energies and various faculties in the right direction. On such a journey the distance covered is not very significant. The important thing is the direction in which we are moving, the direction in which we are utilizing our inherent mental and physical capabilities.

In order to deal with such a situation one will have to seriously think and ponder over the positive factors and forces which can help and guide to frame, formulate, and systematically work out and plan our “law of life”. The unity has

to be seen, not as an ideal to be achieved, but as a reality in Nature, an expression of the unity which pervades all life at every level.

What can be done to improve the existing situation? The vital question is not only a structural change, it is one of relationships and of our minds. What humanistic frame of mind shall produce such an ethical environment? This is a task which cannot be the sole responsibility of selected individuals only. It constitutes a challenge for all humankind.

A well-known thinker of India once mentioned that every living being, whether man, animal, bird or insect, builds a small or big house, nest, snug, or shelter for protection from inclement weather. But, out of all living beings, humans are the only ones who, apart from a house to live in, build houses of worship, because we have perceived and realized that there is a Supreme Power who has created the entire universe and has his own plan. We recognize his supremacy and so we perform religious ceremonies and rituals to worship and pay respect to him. According to the great epic, *Mahābhārata*,

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Dharma is that which holds every living being as one whole. But the problem is that for most people “religion means just the ways of worship, and not the way of life”. As we all know, our spiritual life depends on our outlook towards life and the values to which we give top priority. Spiritual life depends on the direction in which we channel our time and energy. It seems that the overall degeneration in society in general has taken place not merely for want of action, but also for want of understanding.

Once a disciple of Saint Anandmayee Ma asked her: “Mother, who is a true devotee (*bhakta*)? The answer given was that a true devotee is one who is indivisible (*avibhakta*), of integrity, of moral uprightness, and one who is true to himself. We all know that throughout human history, those whom we adore and worship were true to the society in which they lived, to Nature, and to themselves.

It is pertinent that an individual’s intrinsic moral force must guide and shape his mental makeup and external activities. For this, our effort must be to observe carefully our every thought and action in its totality, and thereby understand and go beyond narrow personal considerations and outlooks. It is necessary to awaken the moral force lying within, which alone should guide thoughts and actions in the right direction. But we should be very clear about the difference between uniformity and unity.

The word “uniformity” is derived from “uniform” which means not varying, “the same in all cases at all times”, “same-

ness”; whereas “unity” means “in agreement”, “oneness”, “being formed of parts that constitute a whole”. In Nature, we find varieties of plants, trees, and flowers. Had they all been of the same type they would not have given us the great joy of their diversity and multitude of shades and colours. Variety adds to the beauty of the universe. As mentioned by former international President, Mrs Radha Burnier, “without the many elements which compose a flower, it would not be its unique self”. Besides, a huge tamarind tree or a big mango tree does not challenge the identity or autonomy of a small plant such as the rose or jasmine. They all live their independent lives and yet live in harmony without disturbing each other’s existence, and also enhance the beauty of the landscape. They are independent and also interdependent. Similarly, it is not a single note that creates music. The combination of notes and their togetherness creates melody and harmony, just as the varieties of plants and trees create a symphony in Nature. The beauty lies in their independent identity as well as their interdependency. Diversity is a necessary prerequisite for unity.

Can we learn this art of leading an independent life, and at the same time respect each other’s role, function, and dharma? The life and work of great people show that they, apart from having a sense of self-respect, greatly emphasized developing the feeling of mutual respect. The very realization of this approach and attitude towards the life

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of every living being will bring about a transformation in human relationship.

Narrow personal considerations cannot bring about unity or strengthen brotherhood. Only a broad outlook makes it possible. Generally, any kind of close association with someone who comes from a different background is often frowned upon, if not actively discouraged. Consequently, many of us go through life without forming a single meaningful relationship with someone who speaks a different native language or belongs to another religion, caste, or social class; we view the other, more often than not, through glasses coloured with prejudice — mostly negative. It is necessary to emphasize the values and virtues of citizenship without any occupational, social, or ethnic distinction.

I was associated with several research projects in the Gandhian Institute of Studies, where I worked for more than thirty years. During the field work in some villages where we stayed in connection with a research project, my colleagues and I found that they were not villages in socio-psychological terms. They were composed of a number of interests and ethnic groups, representing certain castes, religions, and economic sections. In the final analysis, we suggested that an initial step should be to create a sense of community among the people of the village. It was not a common programme to create a feeling of this kind, but a common resolve to improve the conditions of life realized through a number of different programmes serving the purpose.

The villagers were living and working in a system pushing people rather than encouraging them. Even in the colonies of big cities people are living side by side, but not together — and that hardly makes a community. People's struggle for survival is so dominant that a development-oriented outlook hardly arises in them. Development in the real sense means a sequence of continuous changes for the better, in the system, over a considerable time. It should bring about change in the inter-human relationship and the standards of conduct. It should raise people's moral and intellectual level, and elevate their mental makeup. But we find that, in general, people have taken the easy path to success. Individual interests, primarily economic as well as parochial, are pulling people apart day by day. What is required is to create a positive bend of mind, one that is free from fetters and inhibitions, not bound by narrow considerations of interests. Hence, what can be done in this regard?

In this context we will have to think and work out an action plan which can bring respect, honour, and integrity in the genuine sense of the terms; this alone can provide us with a moral code. In this regard, every value, norm, conduct, and responsibility which we require for our healthy, harmonious, and peaceful co-existence should be sought, located, and learnt. This is because a positive atmosphere can be generated only through adherence to some values. If we want to regenerate any country's cultural, moral, and spiritual values, we should first

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analyse and try to understand our own thought and actions.

The tendency to help and the feeling of compassion and cooperation are inherent in humankind, and we rise during a crisis such as an earthquake, flood, famine, war, and so forth. On such occasions we forget our petty differences and join forces to cope with the urgent situation. As mentioned in a Hindu scripture, “internal danger is more detrimental to social stability and security than external danger”. For example, during external aggression or war a society is apparently more united than before, but it again relapses into disunity as soon as the danger is over. But it is equally pertinent to channel our energy in a positive way when such emergency situations are not there. A systematic approach will have to be worked out in order to maintain the spirit and missionary zeal so that people may remain alert and *act positively even during normal days*. It would immensely help in utilizing our energy in promoting a right and noble cause, such as brotherhood and national integration.

But why do we have to wait for some untoward happenings in order to be united? Why do we wait for such critical situations to help those in misery? Why does the sense of commitment which awakens during the hour of crisis remain dormant on regular days? What prevents this spirit of collective consciousness to function and operate at normal times? After all, the maintenance of the collective consciousness is a very significant function of development and transfor-

mation. By proceeding in that direction we might be able to see and realize the beauty of performing proper collective action. Working and thinking together silently develops the feeling of togetherness, and its perpetuation leads to a state of emotional integration.

Indian culture and tradition have taught us that education liberates and intensifies our awareness, and awakens our conscience. Education which does not help the flowering of our whole being is self-defeating. In this regard, Dr Annie Besant and Mahatma Gandhi made it clear that as long as we are slaves of our baser instincts and guided by the forces which influence our lower nature, political freedom and social reform will be meaningless and will lead us nowhere.

In the present situation it is essential to discover the possibility of change in which the individual and society may be interdependent in the profound and genuine sense of the term. The factors and causes which promote inequality, fundamentalism, greed, and competition have created a great crisis. It is necessary to free the individual and also society from this crisis, and to work out the model of a social system in which freedom in the right sense prevails. An order in which morality, good conduct, co-existence, cooperation and compassion may be effective and powerful forces to reckon with. If this is to happen, each individual needs to become genuinely strong within, because only then will his good and noble qualities be able to create a positive impact on people. The road to

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peace and unity must start within ourselves — in ethical values, behaviour, and attitudes which can foster a sense of community that is today threatened.

In order to attain lasting peace, harmony, and unity one must have a clear perception of the reality of universal brotherhood and oneness of life in its immeasurable vastness and unfathomable depths. One has to have an implicit understanding of the essential unity of all life. No two things in manifestation are alike. Each one of us, as an individual, is an inseparable part of humanity at large. So human effort towards peace and unity must begin at the individual level with our own initiative — that too voluntarily and happily. What is needed is the individual's awareness towards universal responsibility, towards creating a positive and harmonious atmosphere that may inspire and motivate individuals to have concern not just for one's own good but for the welfare of all beings. In HPB's words: "Not for himself, but for the world he lives". In other words, concern for the welfare of all should always be there behind every work we take up.

Unity is not stagnation, it must mean dynamism which can change our thought and action towards greater human relationship. It must help in the flowering of our intelligence and purpose for the welfare of society. But we find that growing consumerism, the mentality to possess more and more, disturbs the peace and harmony of society. According to the UNESCO Charter, war begins in the minds of human beings. Then the question of how

to achieve peace in our mind is a significant point to consider. How can peace be established first in the human heart so that it can blossom in full in the individual and thereby in society? How can compassion, which is the basis of peace, harmony, unity, and understanding be generated? How can a compassionate attitude be developed? These and similar questions need to be explored that demand clarification and answers. Without amicable relations and concern for our fellow beings, there can be no significant development, since progress depends on unity and collective effort.

The life, work, and teachings of great people help us understand that social concern and obligation, rather than individual interests, should guide and determine our thought and action. Voluntary and self-directed action backed by social concern in the interest and well-being of all should motivate our thought, action, and work. Each of us cannot, or may not, be able to do everything that great people do, but we all have to put our effort to do *something* in that direction. The intensity and genuineness of intentions are bound to be effective and will certainly result in positive action for the betterment and welfare of society.

Dr Besant's Universal Prayer teaches that the Divine Life exists not only in human beings but in all sentient life forms. Gandhiji once mentioned that one should take from Nature only for our minimum basic requirements, and not exploit it for our personal benefit. Vedic seers had a positive attitude towards

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Nature. They observed and perceived the tremendous order and regularity, perfect harmony and rhythm in its vastness and functioning. Never did they exploit it. Nature helped humans to fulfil their basic needs for survival and they never used it to satisfy their greed, but were ever grateful for the blessings and grace bestowed on them by Nature. As mentioned by a TS member, the late M. G. Kanitkar, in one of the songs he composed in the 1920s, “we should learn from Nature to serve the world in a beautiful, harmonious and cooperative manner.” In Nature, mountains are as beautiful as rivers and rivulets. If we become aware of living in harmony with Nature, we will spontaneously be guided by our wisdom, conscience, and perception.

Great thinkers and sages have shed light on these aspects by their thoughts and deeds. Though they had the spiritual perception of Truth at the individual level, whatever noble thoughts and actions emerged out of it they shared them with all. They put forth their efforts to establish Truth in terms of thoughts and action so that all may benefit from it.

“Service” and “sacrifice” are also equally important components which strengthen the feeling of unity. Service means the ability to act with the strength of one’s whole being in order to fulfil one’s responsibility with dispassionate attachment. It is not mere action or relief work, or an ameliorative programme or routine work. One does service because it is one’s spontaneous expression of love, care, and concern. It

includes within its fold, goodwill, and a great sense of responsibility. Then only can one have compassion that will inspire one “to feel for others” and to do something to relieve them from their misery. The civic, moral, and spiritual character of society can be strengthened only through service, cooperation, and love.

What humanistic frame of mind can create such an ethical environment? How can we generate, promote, and strengthen the spirit of selfless service? How can one rise above narrow considerations and live a dedicated and unselfish life? How can the bonds of brotherhood be strengthened? How can we live in harmony, with a sense of oneness with all beings? Why can’t we live in the world religiously? By living religiously I mean doing everything with a sense of sanctity, sacredness, devotion, dedication, care, and concern towards any job we are engaged in. Why confine religious life within the four walls of a temple or a small shrine room only?

Asking ourselves the above and similar questions may help us to understand where we actually stand and what more requires to be done. There is a song on Dr Besant, composed by Mr Kanitkar in 1948, which covers the gist of her entire work in three stanzas. One of the lines in the song says that she saw Lord Viśwanāth in every human being and regarded work for the welfare of the public as Dharma. The life and work of Dr Besant inspires us to understand that nobody should remain satisfied with his own progress, but everybody should consider his own upliftment to depend on the

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upliftment of all. We have to enrich and enliven our lives. Do the three Objects of the TS not provide a comprehensive approach to proceed in that direction?

The Theosophical mission has been helping and encouraging its members to deepen and expand their understanding regarding the higher values of life. It has generated a process that is in complete harmony with Nature and is concerned about every living being's present, which naturally shapes the future, and, in that process, his whole life. The motto of the TS, its three Objects, and the basic principles of Theosophy help us to understand and see unity in diversity, and motivate us to discover Truth, to study and understand it, and lead a life in complete harmony with it. But to what extent have we understood and comprehended this motto, these Objects and principles, and to what extent have we contributed in promoting their cause? All these merit serious consideration and need to be pondered over and implemented by us, so that we may be able to put in all the effort, energy, and power at our command for the welfare of the Society and the upliftment of the whole world.

How the Theosophical objectives, tenets, perception, and approach can help in dealing with some of the prevailing problems should be placed before the general public from time to time.

TS members are neither cut off from the main current of society nor indifferent to the prevailing problems. People have to be convinced that we are not passive observers but are seriously concerned about certain issues. The task before the members is not so much to impose an opinion as to kindle an aspiration. We must think and work to develop respect for all human beings and all living creatures, and channel our energy in that direction with unbending devotion to truth.

It is important to realize that the factors which account for regeneration are possible to be located, and it is necessary to have the line of demarcation before intellect. This line of demarcation (*lakshmana rekhā*) should be based on the ability to discriminate and the power of wisdom. Let us keep pondering over the issue and continue the dialogue in our Theosophical Lodges. It will help us in finding out ways to awaken sensitivity, and the sense of awareness and urgency for a cause. It may help us to gather strength and courage to show our disagreement with thoughts and actions that cause social, moral and spiritual harm to an individual, group, or society, and at the same time guide us to earnestly direct our efforts to work out and present an effective alternative based on love, concern, compassion, cooperation, harmony, and unity. ✧

When individuals meet together for a common work, each releases in the other some strength and some understanding which were not manifest before.

C. Jinarajadasa

To See the Self as a Passing Guest

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

ONE of the great obstacles to human transformation, which is recognized by all great spiritual traditions, is the notion that our sense of separate self is real. The Buddhist teachings about the *skandha*-s, for example, suggest that this notion is very ancient and has been perpetuated through countless incarnations.

At the very core of such a sense of self we find not only thought and memory, but also desire. The “I”-notion has a firm basis in the thought process which is dependent on memory for its function, and is fuelled by desire, described as *tanhā* in the Buddhist tradition and manifesting as a veritable thirst for more experiences, more gratification. The craving for more is one of the hallmarks of self.

The self is behind all our activities. When we are praised it manifests as a more or less glorified sense of self-importance; when we are criticized it expresses itself as anger or withdrawal. It is not uncommon for people to feel suspicious of a person whom they have never met before, and therefore do not know, but

suspicion is another way in which the self exhibits itself. The tendency to criticize betrays an attitude based on the notion that we know better, that we know exactly how people should conduct themselves, or not, in life. When we become violent, verbally or otherwise, the sense of self is overcome with rage — an uncontrolled emotion — and we may say or do things that later on we may come to regret.

What is it that gives an apparent reality to the sense of self? A possible answer lies in the meaning of the word *ahamkāra*, the I-making faculty. Antonio Damasio, a well-known neuroscientist, while investigating the nature of the self from the point of view of neuroscience, suggested that one of the deeper layers of the self in us is what he has called the “autobiographical self”. We tend to dwell on our personal history most of the time: reminiscing about the past, trying to relive certain experiences, finding it hard to let go of hurtful memories, going back in thought to experiences that yielded pleasure, and so on.

When Mahatma KH returned from his

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retreat, what he then wrote to Mr Sinnett has profound relevance to our subject:

My Brother — I have been on a long journey after supreme knowledge, I took a long time to rest. Then, upon coming back, I had to give all my time to duty, and all my thoughts to the Great Problem. It is all over now: the New Year's festivities are at an end and I am "Self" once more. But what is Self? Only a passing guest, whose concerns are all like a mirage of the great desert. . . .

The passage seems to imply that during the period of his retreat the Mahatma experienced an order of consciousness much beyond the personal self.

Mystics have also pointed to the same abiding reality: the essential unreality of the personal self. When the inflation created by the mechanism of self-image ends, the consciousness within is liberated and comes to an awareness of its own essential nature — *svarupa*. It then experiences freedom as its own intrinsic nature and becomes a citizen of life's sacred oneness. Every expression of such consciousness becomes suffused with goodness.

Jalaluddin Rumi wrote:

What is Sufism? 'Tis to find joy in the heart
Whensoever distress and care assail it.

(*Masnavi*)

One of the paradoxes of the spiritual life seems to lie in the fact that although the personal self puts up a front of resilience and strength, it is indeed vulnerable to the many blows of experience. This

vulnerability betrays the truth that the self is just like a superstructure, which is built on a notion of a separate existence. The role of karmic onslaughts is to educate the inward soul that identification with a sense of separate and exclusive "me" is not such a good idea. Rumi's passage carries the wisdom which is found when uncaused joy becomes the real refuge in the midst of relentless experiences.

Meister Eckhart points to the spiritually rewarding realization of a life lived beyond the sense of self:

St Anselm says to the soul, "withdraw a little from the tumult of outward works". Secondly, "flee and hide from the storm of inward thoughts, which also perturb the soul". Thirdly, "man can indeed offer God nothing more precious than rest". God does not heed or require fasting, praying or any self-mortification nearly so much as rest. God wants nothing of man but a peaceful heart; then He performs within the soul such secret divine works as no creature can earn or see: even the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot look in there.

(Meister Eckhart, Sermon 45
Sermons and Treatises, vol. II)

Although the body may rest, the mind never rests, which makes the brain ceaselessly active. This excess of activity renders both listening and insight impossible. Such a mind cannot find out what real inner quiet is, with its profound sense of space and unclouded perception. Eckhart suggests that in the depths of this quiet lies the pure possibility of communion with that which is uncreated.

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Sant Kabir also shares his vision of what happens when self-centredness is left behind:

Tell me, O Swan, your ancient tale.
From what land do you come, O Swan?
To what shore will you fly?
Where would you take your rest, O Swan,
and what do you seek?
Even this morning, O Swan,
awake, arise, follow me!
There is a land where no doubt nor sorrow
have rule:
Where the terror of Death is no more.
There the woods of spring are abloom,
And the fragrant scent "He is I" is borne
on the wind:
There the bee of the heart is deeply
immersed,
And desires no other joy.

*(One Hundred Poems of Kabir,
translated by Rabindranath Tagore)*

But it is Rabindranath Tagore that conveys, in true *bhakti* language, our deepest yearning:

Let only that little be left of me whereby
I may name thee my all.
Let only that little be left of my will
whereby I may feel thee on every side,
and come to thee in everything, and
offer to thee my love every moment.
Let only that little be left of me whereby
I may never hide thee.
Let only that little of my fetters be left

whereby I am bound with thy will, and
thy purpose is carried out in my life —
and that is the fetter of thy love.

(Gitanjali, Rabindranath Tagore)

An extraordinary aspect of the mystical experience is that it also occurs outside the confines of the religious or spiritual worlds. Arthur Koestler, a British intellectual and author, went to Spain around 1936 to oppose the Fascist regime. He was eventually arrested and put in jail, where many of his colleagues were being shot dead. It was then that a profound experience came to him. While in jail, an intellectual contemplation of Euclid's theorem led him to a profound insight into beauty. At its depth the experience led him to a complete loss of the sense of self and its accompanying feeling of blessedness. He experienced a sense of abiding unity. It may be worth mentioning here that Mr Koestler was a staunch atheist.

Most of us cherish a sense of self-identity and can become rather perturbed if any remark about it tends to either challenge it or criticize it. Sometimes this leads to a feeling of personal hurt that can last for a long time. But, in the words of the Mahatma, the self in us is just a "passing guest". It is not the true Self which is eternal in its beneficent intelligence, and whose very fabric is unalloyed bliss. No guest stays forever. ✧

Be utterly humble and you shall hold to the foundation of peace.

Lao-tzu
The Way of Life

A Religious Mind for Human Regeneration

CLEMICE PETTER

IN the history of humankind on earth, God has always been something to be searched outside. The most primitive humans understood that God was related to the phenomena that occurs in Nature: thunder, sun, lightning, and so on. Moreover, God was always related to fear, something that could not be understood or controlled. After some time, when man started to understand Nature and its phenomena, we no longer believed that thunder and lightning were related to God's moods; so we started to believe in an external agent — one who is out there, somebody watching, judging, punishing, or rewarding. This was the beginning of the greatest of human tragedies — we created God — a god created out of fear, despair, and the endless search for security. It was the search for inward security that was misunderstood, that was translated by the mind into outward security; something that can be given to you, and because it is out there, we created arbitrators and mediators, those who say they have the key to heaven's kingdom. And because we are ambitious

and eager to get into heaven, we are willing to do anything to get "there".

The only thing missing in all this is that heaven, or whatever name we may give to it, is not a place out there, it is an inner state of being that cannot be given to anybody; it is a state of being that requires stillness of mind and peace of heart. And this, no one can buy or sell. It has to be worked out by each one of us no matter how much we practice the latest technique contrived by the latest guru. No technique, no practice will help us come upon peace in the heart; no amount of practice can still a mind that has been tortured by ambition, jealousy, envy, and pride. No matter who promises it, stillness of mind cannot come with practice, for the simple reason that a mind that is self-concerned can never know Love. And Love is the only force that has in it the antidote for all poisons created by our own mind. Of course, the mind can be put to sleep by the practice of techniques, but this state of anesthesia is not the kind of stillness that comes with awareness. And like any anesthesia, its

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effect has a certain period of validity; it will not last long.

In the Mahatma Letters we find:

I will point out the greatest, the chief cause of nearly two-thirds of the evils that pursue humanity — ever since that cause became a power. It is religion under whatever form and in whatsoever nation. It is the sacerdotal caste, the priesthood, and the churches; it is in those illusions that man looks upon as sacred, that he has to search out the source of that multitude of evils which is the great curse of humanity and that almost overwhelms mankind. Ignorance created gods and cunning took advantage of the opportunity. . . . It is priestly imposture that rendered these gods so terrible to man; it is religion that makes of him the selfish bigot, the fanatic that hates all mankind out of his own sect without rendering him any better or more moral for it. It is belief in God and gods that makes two-thirds of humanity the slaves of a handful of those who deceive them under the false pretence of saving them. Is not man ever ready to commit any kind of evil if told that his god or gods demand the crime — voluntary victim of an illusionary god, the abject slave of his crafty ministers? The Irish, Italian, and Slavonian peasant will starve himself and see his family starving and naked to feed and clothe his padre and pope. For two thousand years India groaned under the weight of caste, Brahmins alone feeding on the fat of the land, and today the followers of Christ and those of Muhammad are cutting each other's throats in the

names of and for the greater glory of their respective myths. Remember the sum of human misery will never be diminished unto that day when the better portion of humanity destroys in the name of Truth, morality, and universal charity, the altars of their false gods.

The above extract from Letter no. 88, chronological edition (ML-10) shows the view of those who inspired the birth of the Theosophical Society — their views about God, gods, and all the implications that are so destructive to humanity. This letter was written more than a hundred years ago, and still we can see that nothing has changed. The followers of Christ and Muhammad are still cutting each other's throats and sadly, in India, which is said to be the mother of all religions, the caste system is still in men's hearts, even though the law has banished it. But as we know, no law was, is, or will ever be capable of changing man's heart. Laws are the mirror in which man reflects his nature.

We do not intend to consider problems that have not changed or changed little; we intend to call attention to those who are serious enough to look at things as they are, to look at themselves without justifying what is going on in their mind and heart. We intend to call attention to those who have left in their heart the capacity to Love humankind, because those may be "the better portion of humanity" that is referred to in the above letter that will be capable of destroying "in the name of Truth, morality, and universal

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charity, the altars of their false gods.”

Please let us not misunderstand this, let us look at it with eyes of innocence, with eyes that can look at something without already knowing it. To destroy the altars of false gods does not mean that one should go around knocking down all churches and temples that exist on the Earth; it means that one should look inside one's own heart, and find there the root of all temples and churches built by our own ignorance, by blind acceptance of the authority of books, or the authority of the priest who “knows”. The temples erected high by our arrogance and self-importance, make us think about ourselves as privileged people, the chosen ones.

The interesting thing about this idea of the “chosen ones” is that, if one looks into the history of humanity, one will see that those who have created havoc in the world, those who have killed millions and millions throughout the history of man, they have always thought themselves to be the chosen ones. So when we realize this fact, what do we do? Can we drop this immature and childish idea of chosen ones and face the fact that we are one and the same? That we are only human beings and that there is no such thing as “better human beings”?

The fact is that no man can claim to be better than his brother. Then one may say: But the above letter refers to the “better portion of humanity” (which we immediately translate as the chosen ones). Actually it refers to those who can be called elder brothers of the human family, and this does not make them

better than the younger ones, this makes them only more responsible. In a family, it is natural, and even expected, that the elders take care of the young ones; this is just natural, and it does not make the elders special. Because the elders have more maturity and strength, it is their duty; and if they are mentally and emotionally healthy, it will be their happiness to help and take care of those who are developing their capacities in life. In the same way, those who are elder in the human family have the sacred duty to help and take care of the growth of those who are developing their human nature. No one will say that a baby is worse than its older brothers or sisters. In the same way, no one can say that those who have worked out a clearer understanding of life, are better than those who are still struggling with the mistakes made because of blurred vision.

To destroy the temples and churches created by ignorance we first need to see the absurdity of it; we need to understand the poison of authority in the inner field, in the sacred land of our sole and total responsibility. It does not matter how much we follow others' guidance, conclusions, or interpretations. Whatever we think or do is our entire responsibility, and no priest or god can help to avoid the bonds that are created by our thoughts and actions.

All religions talk about a god that will protect only those who pray, who ask, and who obey the priest, the church, or a set of rules brought about by the interpretations of people's experiences. The

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result of this kind of so-called religion has proved itself to be inefficient and terribly destructive. Religions, as we see them, are as tribal as they were when we used to live in caves. And this kind of modern tribalism has by no means helped humanity to build a good society, in the sense of one that has the right kind of education for our children, that helps those who cannot see clearly to understand their gloomy views, in which human nature is allowed to flower. Flowering of the human in man is what creates a good society. We have still to develop a society that has enough goodness in it to bring up the scale kept down from time immemorial. And this imbalance is created, if not totally, greatly by the misunderstood conceptions about religion.

The religious mind that will regenerate humankind, is a mind capable of looking at life without the burden of conclusions that become knowledge; it is a mind that is willing to explore the nature of its own thinking and feeling; a mind that can doubt and question, that is in a state of learning, that is not satisfied with other people's understanding or experiences. It does not mean that one cannot interact and share with others; on the contrary, it is only the religious mind that is capable of listening. Because it is free from accumulation and conclusions, it can listen without judging or immediately reacting to what is being said. A religious mind is free, and therefore is capable of Love. Ultimately Love is the regenerative force that will heal humanity from self-created monstrosity.

What we need for the regeneration of humanity is not a new set of rules from a new saviour. What is needed is the understanding of why we have handed over the responsibility for our own inner growth, and why we have accepted to live the kind of life we have been living for millennia upon millennia, without ever questioning the state of things that we are in, the absurdity of war, and why we never learned the most important lesson about wars, which is the fact that in war there are no winners. So for the process of regeneration to start, the first thing is to question without the assumption that we know the answer, because it is obvious that we do not know, otherwise things would be quite different around the world.

Humanity does not need a new religion, what we need is a new kind of understanding about our self and about life; an understanding that can dissolve this self-centred notion that all that lives, lives to benefit "me". What humanity needs is to allow the religious mind to flower, a mind without a centre.

There was a time in Western human history when we believed that the Sun and all the planets were spinning around the Earth, that the Earth was the centre of the Universe, and this understanding was final; we were sure about it. Religion was the final authority and "knew". God created man; and only man was the king to reign over the Universe. And those poor, unfortunate souls who dared to think and challenge those conclusions were excommunicated, sent to prison for

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years, without end to torture, to make them go back and say that they were wrong; and if they did not admit they were wrong, they were finally killed. This was the case of Giordano Bruno, a Dominican friar who lived in Italy during the 14th century, and whose only crime was to have a different understanding from those in power. He was a free-thinker, and freedom of thought was not tolerated by the Roman Catholic Church.

To question was a sin, and to doubt, the greatest heresy. Bruno was without money, and with the label of excommunication life was not easy for many years. He continued his studies, and one night he had a dream that revealed an infinite, limitless Universe. He wrote and travelled lecturing about his discovery, but the Church was informed that he was in Italy teaching about an infinite Universe, which was considered to be a heresy, and that was the end for him. Eight years after his martyrdom, the telescope was created and it proved Bruno to be right — the Universe is infinite. In fact, the real universe started to be explored and was shown to be much bigger than it could ever have been imagined. In his own words:

The universe is then one, infinite, immobile. It is not capable of comprehension and therefore is endless and limitless, and to that extent infinite and indeterminable, and consequently immobile.

In modern days there is a man that in the same way as Bruno, dared to challenge the well-established beliefs

of his time. Bruno challenged the beliefs about the outer world, the center of the outer universe, and Jiddu Krishnamurti challenged those about the inner universe, the spiritual world. Krishnamurti shed light on the human psyche — the little center of the inner world, the creator of the “me” and the “mine”. He challenged the idea of individual salvation and said that there is much more than this small self-centred illusion called “me”, created by a mechanical way of thinking that makes everything seem personal, self-related. Even our idea of god is personal and self-related, it has created “my god” and “your god”, the Christian god, and the Hindu god. He said that beyond this little shoddy mind, there is the open sky, which is limitless, timeless, and without a center.

Krishnamurti challenged the reality of the inner center created by the same mind that once was sure about the center of the outer Universe. Fortunately for humanity, Krishnamurti had a better fate than Giordano Bruno. His fellow brothers only expelled him. The same organization that was waiting for his teachings was unable to look at them without the certainties of yesterday. There was no space for the new, the unknown; the so-called spiritual world was already known and people were sure about it. Therefore, Krishnamurti was left to live and deliver the teachings to the world on his own; again, humanity failed to support the Teacher, the Bringer of Light.

The similarities between Giordano Bruno and J. Krishnamurti do not end

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here; there is one more thing worth mentioning, both died on 17 February, Bruno in 1600 and Krishnamurti in 1986. We can safely say that the world was never the same after Giordano's brave and courageous statements about the outer universe; it was because he challenged the established belief about the outer universe that science discovered so much about the stars and the infinite number of other universes, and it changed science forever. And, we can safely say that the world will never be the same after Krishnamurti, and the light that his teachings bring cannot be ignored. We have not yet created a world in which each one is entirely responsible for himself and his religious life, without mediators between man and his most inner being; a world in which there is no authority in the inner field, a world where people respect each other and share views and understanding, rather than impose conclusions and interpretations. We have not yet created a world in which woman is given a proper place in society, in which children learn the sacred value of life, in which cooperation is the keynote,

and human life is occupied with what is, rather than with what should be. As Krishnamurti said:

The religious mind does not belong to any group, any sect, any belief, any church, any organized circus; therefore it is capable of looking at things directly and understanding things immediately. Such is the religious mind, because it is a light to itself. Its light is not lit by another — the candle that is lit by another can be put out very quickly.

Beyond Violence, "The Religious Mind"

We have much to learn and understand about our inner world. The ancient Greeks called this understanding "self-knowledge". We can say that the religious mind is the mind that is in a state of constant learning, it does not know, therefore, is open to the unknown, to the new; it is learning, understanding about the inner universe, which is limitless and without a center. This learning will throw light into the dark corners of the mind, and this light will finally regenerate humanity, the light of clear understanding of what *is* — the light of awareness. ✧

Around you are acquaintances, friends, and associates — in and outside the TS . . . point them to the Light, lead them to the Path, teach them, be a missionary of love and charity, thus in helping others win your own salvation.

KH

Dhammapada

(Chapter I — “Twin Verses”)

Translated by

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

DURING the years 1886 to 1889 Colonel H. S. Olcott, President-Founder of the Theosophical Society, sent C. W. Leadbeater to work for the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon [now Sri Lanka] and to be the manager of the schools that were under the direction of the Buddhist Theosophical Society. Early in 1889 he organized the Buddhist English High School, which later became the large Ānanda College. In 1888 he began the publication of an eight-page weekly journal called *The Buddhist*. He wrote to his friend in London, A. P. Sinnett, to ask if he could approach Sir Edwin Arnold, the well-known author of *The Light of Asia*, for some contribution. Sir Edwin Arnold then translated from the Buddhist scriptures, which are in Pāli, the first chapter of the famous collection of verses known as *Dhammapada* (“The Footsteps of the Law”). Arnold’s translation, being poetic, comes nearer the original than any other translation published. — C. JINARĀJADĀSA.

The LORD BUDDHA says:

Thought in the mind hath made us. What we are
By thought was wrought and built. If a man’s mind
Hath evil thoughts, pain comes on him as comes
The wheel the ox behind.

All that we are is what we thought and willed;
Our thoughts shape us and frame. If one endure
In purity of thought, joy follows him
As his own shadow — sure.

“He hath defamed me, wronged me, injured me,
Abased me, beaten me!” If one should keep
Thoughts like these angry words within his breast,
Hatreds will never sleep.

Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, May 1950. C. Jinarājādāsa was the fourth international President of the Theosophical Society from 1945 to 1953.

Dhammapada

“He hath defamed me, wronged me, injured me,
Abased me, beaten me!” If one shall send
Such angry words away for pardoning thoughts,
Hatreds will have an end.

For never anywhere at any time
Did hatred cease by hatred. Always 'tis
By love that hatred ceases — only Love,
The ancient Law is this.

The many, who are foolish, have forgot —
Or never knew — how mortal wrongs pass by;
But they who know and who remember, let
Transient quarrels die.

Whoso abides, looking for joy, unschooled,
Gluttonous, weak, in idle luxuries,
Māra will overthrow him, as fierce winds
Level short-rooted trees.

Whoso abides, disowning joys, controlled,
Temperate, faithful, strong, shunning all ill,
Māra shall no more overthrow that man
Than the wind doth a hill.

Whoso *kāshya* wears — the yellow robe —
Being *anishkāshya*¹ — not sin-free¹,
Nor heeding truth and governance — unfit
To wear that dress is he.

But whoso, being *nishkāshya*, pure,
Clean from offence, doth still in virtues dwell,
Regarding temperance and truth — that man
Wearth *kāshya* well.

Whoso imagines truth in the untrue,
And in the true finds untruth — he expires
Never attaining knowledge; life is waste;
He follows vain desires.

Whoso discerns in truth the true, and sees
The false in falseness with unblinded eye,
He shall attain to knowledge; life with such,
Aims well before it die.

Dhammapada

As rain breaks through an ill-thatched roof, so break
 Passions through minds that holy thought despise;
As rain runs from a perfect thatch, so run
 Passions from off the wise.

The evil-doer mourneth in this world,
 And mourneth in the world to come; in both
He grieveth. When he sees fruits of his deeds,
 To see he will be loath.

The righteous man rejoiceth in this world
 And in the world to come; in both he takes
Pleasure. When he shall see fruit of his works,
 The good sight gladness makes.

Glad is he living, glad in dying, glad
 Having once died; glad always, glad to know
What good deeds he hath done, glad to foresee
 More good where he shall go.

The lawless man, who, not obeying LAW,
 Leaf after leaf recites,² and line by line.
No Buddhist is he, but a foolish herd
 Who counts another's kine.

The law-obeying, loving one, who knows
 Only one verse of DHARMA. but hath ceased
From envy, hatred, malice, foolishness —
 He is the Buddhist Priest.

London, May 14, 1889

EDWIN ARNOLD

1. There is a play here upon the words *kāshya*, “the yellow robe” of the Buddhist monk, and *kāshya* “impurity”.

2. In old days writing was scratched on long leaves of palm, and the letters picked out with lamp-black mixed with oil.

**If we analyse our motives we will find that they are
made either of love or of fear.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

Theosophy*

Theosophy is a practical philosophy, which —
without condemning anything —
seeks to explain everything.

It synthesizes all religions, bringing out the unifying,
fundamental truth in each.

It harmonizes religion and science, causing a
deeper understanding of both.

It reveals the laws of Nature — not only those
which rule physical, but psychic and
psychological phenomena as well.

It presents, for thoughtful consideration, occult
knowledge of the visible and invisible worlds.

It explains all problems of life and death, on
the principle of perfect, divine justice.

It teaches the brotherhood of all mankind, and
our close relation to all that lives.

It develops those qualities which make for
happiness, balance and self-mastery under
all circumstances of daily life.

It helps one to get a clear understanding of
how to progress on the path of evolution.

It shows man what and how he is, whence
he comes and whither he is going.

Anonymous

* Krotona Institute of Theosophy, Krotona, Hollywood, California, 1918, p. 32.

Theosophical Work around the World

Caribbean Basin

Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig, both from Mexico, residing in Spain, spoke in five countries in the Caribbean Basin (including three islands) from mid-March to mid-April 2017.

First, they presented a programme at the national headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS) in **Cuba** from 15 to 22 March 2017. General Secretary Ms Bárbara Fariñas received them in Havana, and the programme was coordinated by former General Secretary of the Cuban Section, Mr Gaspar Torres, and Mrs Magaly Polanco, head of the TS in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. A public conference was first held on “The Inner Child: the Potential to Fulfill Our Life”, with an attendance of 30 or so. Next, a members-only meeting was held on “How to Live Theosophy in the Modern World”, with 30 to 35 attending. Then a weekend workshop was organized, “Transforming the Control of Our Shadow over Our Lives”, enriched with the questions and interaction from the audience. The visit ended with a second public talk on “The Philosophy of Impermanence”, with some 30 persons attending.

The Cuban members were most hospitable and attentive. The whole program was an enriching experience and a source of encouragement to the members, who are somewhat isolated and in need of didactic as well as material assistance.

From 23 to 27 March Drs Jauli and Reig visited the **Dominican Republic**, where, in coordination with Mrs Polanco and Mr Miguel Saviñón, they gave two public talks: “The Divine Comedy: The Soul’s Transition from Darkness to Light”, with 25 persons attending; and “The Keys to Overcoming Fear”, with from 30 to 35 attending. The third function was a successful weekend retreat workshop at the Jesuit Centre, on “Dreams and Death: the Two Divine Twins”, allowing 35 to 40 persons to share internal study and work.

Mrs Polanco, Presidential Agent for the TS in **Puerto Rico**, received Drs Jauli and Reig on 28 March, upon their arrival in the capital of the island, San Juan, and coordinated all the functions of their visit from 28 March to 3 April. The speakers gave two public conferences at the TS headquarters building: the first was on “The Search for the Inner Master”, with 35 people attending; and the second dealt with “The Keys to Overcoming Suffering”, attended by 35 to 40. The final function was a weekend workshop on “Dreams and Death: the Divine Twins”, with 35 to 40 very interested and dynamic participants.

The same speakers travelled to **Costa Rica** (Central America), along with a group of members from Puerto Rico, including Mr Eladio Polanco and his wife Magaly. The latter, along with the

Theosophical Work around the World

Presidential Representative of Costa Rica, Ms Maria Orlich, coordinated the three functions taking place from 4 to 9 April at their headquarters. First there was a public talk on “Do I Deserve the Family I Was Born Into?”, with 25 in attendance. The second public talk had as its theme: “The Victory of Theseus over the Minotaur — The Soul’s Help for Liberation from the Personal Labyrinth”, and it was attended by 35 people. The third function consisted of two weekend workshops on “The Yoga of the Kathopanishad” and “The Divine Comedy”. In addition to participants from Costa Rica and Puerto Rico, others came from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, and USA, totalling around 45. They showed great interest in the study and dynamics of this first School of the Wisdom in Latin America, and also supported a second one for next year.

The General Secretary of the TS in **Mexico**, Mr Enrique Sánchez, and members of Lodges Alfa and HPB coordinated the visit of Drs Jauli and Reig to the city of Puebla. They first held a workshop on “There Is a Place in Your Heart for You”, with 65 attending. This was followed by a public talk for about 56 persons. Finally, a workshop was held at the TS national headquarters in Mexico City on 15 April, attended by 42 persons.

Italy

From 24 to 26 March, Monte Verità, in the Swiss town of Ascona, played host to the 2017 version of the traditional seminar organized by the European

Theosophical Federation, the TS in Switzerland, and the Italian TS Section. The topic, “Kali Yuga: The Age of Spiritual Growth”, was examined in detail during talks by Sabine Van Osta, Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, Andrea Biasca Caroni, Patrizia Moschin Calvi, Greta Biasca Caroni, Antonio Girardi and others. More than 60 people attended. The seminar was complemented by a lively question-and-answer session and “walking meditation”, as participants climbed Monte Verità.

The Charity Bazaar organized by the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) was a big success thanks to the art works by Rosanna Musetti, Rosilvia Scopesi, Gabriella Lepore, Lucia Corà, Rosella Milani, Nives Pausco, Michela Segatto, and Aldo Castelli, and the numerous other items donated by supporters of the TOS in Italy. The large amount raised was used to buy sewing machines (including two electric ones) for the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) at the Headquarters of the TS in Adyar, India. VTC helps to improve the lives of many poor girls by providing them with vocational training where they can learn a trade.

Portugal

The annual “Iberian Days” function took place in Lisbon from 13 to 16 April in the new premises of the Portuguese Section of the TS on the theme “The Practical Dimension of Theosophy”. There were over 60 members coming from several Spanish and Portuguese cities. They were rich and full days. Early in the morning there was a meditation

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Members of the Cuban Section of the TS during the visit to Havana of Drs Isaac Jauli (to the right of H.P.B.'s portrait) and Enrique Reig (front center, gray shirt) in the third week of March 2017, with their General Secretary, Ms Barbara Fariñas (front center, white blouse)



Drs Jauli and Reig with members of the TS in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, and their Presidential Representative, Mrs Magaly Polanco (seating in front), during their visit in the last week of March

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Members of the TS in Costa Rica during the visit to San José of Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig



Some participants of the session given by Dr Pablo Sender (*front row center*) at the Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre in Springbrook, Queensland, during the last week in April, with the General Secretary of the Australian Section, Mrs Linda Oliveira (*to Dr Sender's left*) and Mr Pedro Oliveira (*back row, far right*), Education Coordinator for the TS in Australia

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period followed by brief presentations from the members, and then time for reflection, when everybody had the opportunity of sharing their own vision. The “Days” were opened and closed by the General Secretaries of Portugal and Spain, who gave their own talks as well. There were also short presentations.

An afternoon was spent in a tour visiting the most iconic places and sceneries in the outskirts of Lisbon. There was an atmosphere of friendliness, fraternity, peace, and joy throughout. All felt a bright light and a strong energy.

In addition, the Portuguese Section was happy because their Spanish friends said they felt like being “at home”. These gatherings are an opportunity for all not just to strengthen the ties of mutual interests, but also for learning more about each other and from each other. An open forum was also arranged in which any doubts of the participants were clarified by the speakers. The whole programme was videotaped by a member of the Spanish Section, which can be viewed either in the website of the Portuguese or the Spanish Section.

Australia

The 25th School of Theosophy of the Australian Section was held at the Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre at Springbrook, Queensland. The guest speaker was Dr Pablo Sender, from the United States, and the theme was “The Yoga of Theosophy”. Almost 30 mem-

bers from Australia and one from New Zealand participated. Dr Sender’s talks included “Definitions and Foundations”, “Meditation”, “Spiritual Service”, “Purification”, “Self-Mastery”, and “States of Consciousness”. His presentations were very much appreciated. The natural surroundings of the Springbrook Centre were an ideal setting for this in-depth enquiry into the Yoga of Theosophy. ✧

<Theosophy.World> Resource Centre

A new online resource centre making theosophical material easily accessible is now available. It was conceived in 2014 to establish a global online resource centre for theosophical content that would be available to members and the general enquirer alike. With the powerful “Search” and “Tag Cloud” functionality embedded into the site, results are displayed quickly. Theosophy.World also provides links to other websites and libraries where sources of valuable information are stored, such as publications, books, video and audio archives, articles, quotes, archives, quick links, and more.

This website was one of the outcomes of the planning sessions following the TS General Council meetings at Adyar in 2015 and 2016. Enter into your web browser <theosophy.world> to explore! If you have anything to share with the webmasters, please send it to <content@theosophy.world>, and let us know how we can improve the site in any way at <contact@theosophy.world>. ✧

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Edited by Mr Tim Boyd, 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.

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