

SCIENCE FOR HEALTH AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Abhaya Srisrimal Jain

(Summary of Theosophy-Science Lecture delivered on 3.1.2020)

Let us explore the interconnectedness between various apparently different categories and levels of existence and understanding. To the layman today, science and spirituality, the physical and the mental, man and the world are distinct and disconnected from each other. Both Rationalists and Empiricists would concur that their natures point to contrasting realms of operation. Any attempt to understand them on a common platform would seem remote.

However, there is strong evidence in the erstwhile 'oriental traditions' that the universe works as a whole, wherein all elements are in harmony. The discord outside is a reflection of that within. Once the unique yet holistic nature of the world is understood, the assimilation within the inner self would be achievable as well. While scientific research has begun to prove it with reference to Nature, Indian spirituality has already established it with reference to the Self.

The attempt, then here, is to trace

the meeting points of science, health and consciousness through the prism of my life experiences in the different, diverse fields I have worked in. It hopes to also touch upon some commonalities with Theosophy, whereby both become mutually meaningful. Having been taught, right from childhood, the pitfalls of an egoistic approach, the use of the first person is only for convenience.

Hailing from a traditional Jaina family, with an academic engineering background, my life's trajectory has been an evolution of both the scientific and the spiritual. Growing up with an insatiable curiosity for knowledge, no question seemed unanswerable, no problem unworthy of a solution! The focus was both on the cultivation of the body through physical fitness and cultivation of the mind through mental discipline.

The demands of scientific rigour became necessary for building a logical, foolproof system of research into hitherto uncharted territories of medicine, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. The

entry of the Shasun group into chemicals & pharmaceuticals marked a major milestone in this direction. Fast-changing lifestyles precipitated unknown diseases, demanding newer drugs and treatment methods. Pioneering work into stem cell research became a necessity, while introduction of nanotechnology ensured keeping pace with an accelerating technological advancement. Yet, the fundamental tenets of a deeply ingrained religious faith could not be compromised for mere novelty and commerce. Innovation had to come hand-in-hand with ethics. The struggle was deep and tiresome but the balance was paramount for a sustainable future. For, good health and happy living are non-negotiable.

Each business venture proved to be an opportunity, not so much for profit but to provide people with possibilities for progress and prosperity. The end user being society at large, the building blocks had to be the young minds waiting to be trained. Thus education became a prime mover in the sequence of events, bringing in its wake the Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women. Realising a dream of empowering women through education, there were no full stops to 'Go Beyond' as the motto. While preparing young women for academic degrees is the basic purpose of a collegiate education, skilling them for the emerging job roles gained priority. The recognition

as a partner institution from National Skill Development Council, New Delhi came after rigorous upgradation of facility and faculty. Digitisation, the new mantra of technological application percolated into even routine tasks of the college campus, resulting in efficiency and transparency.

These seemed the right steps for scientific progress, intellectual and physical health. Where was Consciousness in the scheme of things? Back to basic beliefs! The Jaina doctrine, which shares so many similarities with Theosophy came to the rescue. The fundamental tenets of Anekanta-vada, Syadvada, Karma, Tattvas, Triguna, Prakrti, detachment, ahimsa (coupled with a unique form of vegetarianism and regular fasting), and other innumerable aspects completed the connect with consciousness. Satsanga with Jain *munis* (realized souls) reinforced the notion that all living beings are connected in this universe, explained in material terms by science but experienced in spiritual states by evolved souls.

These so-called parallel paths of science and spirituality coalesced in a deeper understanding of consciousness, making life both useful and harmonious. This has given me the courage and desire to share these rather personal but transformational experiences from my life, hoping to reach out to some of you here in a better and fuller way.



LEAP BOUNDARY BREAKERS

The LEAP Boundary Breakers choir comprises students from Bala Vidya Mandir Adyar, Sprouts Montessori and Sishya all from Chennai. Under the direction of their Artistic Director Srinivas Krishnan (Srini), the choir has been invited to locations including Kalaghoda Festival, Columbia University, MIT, IIT Madras, as well as to the Theosophical Society on several occasions. The choir stands out by virtue of the fact that children across ages are part of the team and break all the boundaries when it comes

to repertoire (Concert on 1 & 2 Jan. 2020) since their performances include North Indian Classical, Sufi, Western Pop, American Musical, folk and devotional music as well as classic hits from various films across decades. The project trains the students on a weekly basis, focusing on enhancing attention span, teamwork, sensitivity to details and eventually, leadership. The project is mentored by two time Academy Award winner Dr A. R. Rahman with whom Srini has enjoyed collaborating for two decades.



THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

(Summary of Talk delivered on 3.1.2020)

‘How to Plant a Garden’

— Nancy Secest

People have asked me, ‘How do I get started in service work? What should I do?’ I tell them: ‘Grow where you are planted.’ By this I mean look at where you are at, and start there. Gardens grow by planting seeds: seeds that grow into tall, strong trees with many leaves. Or, seeds that grow into vines that twist and turn reaching out farther and farther. Or, seeds that grow into plants that produce food to nourish us or

flowers to provide beauty in our lives. Working in the TOS is like this. We start small. We plant seeds, and depending on the type of seeds we have planted, we serve our families, our communities, our countries or even the entire planet. While we focus on humanitarian activities, service given with a consciousness of the divine within and a purity of heart also plants seeds of divinity. This talk explores how to plant a garden that feeds both the body and the soul.

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‘Seeds of Thought — the bond of Unity’ Susan Bayliss

Whilst we are anchored on this earthly plane, our physical body is our boat on the sea of life, but all too often

we mistake it for ourselves. Through examining our place in the world, we gain insight into what we are and what we are not; and we can change our lives and learn to bring healing into

the world. The power of thought is one such tool. As dynamic as the wind, it shapes our world in ways we may never have imagined. Like any seed, the human child possesses the potential to develop into a noble being and we can

awaken our inner Spirit to begin the Work of the Soul — if we open the door to allow it to shine through. This talk will explore some of these issues and what the esoteric teachings have to say about it.

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LIVING INTELLIGENTLY

Narendra Shah

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 4.1.2020)

The Divine Spirit descended into matter almost 13.8 billion years ago. Subsequently, we have spent millions of years in the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms, before evolving into the human kingdom.

In our evolutionary journey through the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms, Nature was in control and we were evolving as group souls. However, in the human kingdom, we evolve individually, not as a group. As humans, we have been gifted with the capacity to think and can drive forward the process of evolution.

Should we hasten this evolutionary process? Why not let Nature take its own time to grow and evolve? All religions and philosophies point out that, left on our own, we will take countless incarnations to reach perfection and to become one with the Divine Spirit.

For most of humanity, our lives are full of trials and tribulations, strife and struggle, pain and misery. Our lives are generally devoid of peace and happiness. It seems to be a meaningless rat race to nowhere. Why are our lives so difficult, so miserable and so full of struggle?

Why is there no peace or happiness? Perhaps, we are looking for peace and happiness in the wrong place?

We feel that having more wealth and power will give us peace and happiness. We feel that satisfying the five senses will give us pleasure and joy in life. Obviously, experience tells us the complete opposite and we are more miserable.

Gifted with the capacity to think, is it not logical, to live intelligently? First, our *attitude* to Life must change. Presently, most of us live our life blindly and without a clear understanding of our goal. As a result, we sink deeper and deeper into the insignificant things of life. We need to go within and start ‘nurturing the Divine Spirit’.

If we genuinely understand the ‘Oneness of Life’, does it not call for respect for all forms of life — the same respect as we give to a Divine Being? Intelligent living would mean living a life that has a meaning and purpose, a life that has a well-defined goal, a life full of care and concern, respect and freedom, courtesy and consideration, kindness and compassion, for *all* forms

of life and a wonderful coexistence in peace and harmony.

So let us all take charge of our life and make sincere efforts to live an intelligent life, where we tread the path

in joy and happiness, where we discover the wonders of the oneness of life. Let us feel and experience that Oneness in the Unity of all that exists. This is the essence of *living intelligently*.



THE SUBLIME SYMBOLOGY OF THE LOTUS

Linda Oliveira

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 4.1.2020)

We can learn much of consequence from the Book of Nature, including the trajectory of our spiritual destiny. HPB affirmed that since antiquity the Lotus has been held Sacred by the Aryan Hindus, Egyptians, Buddhists, and also adopted as a Christian emblem. It has been revered in Japan and China. She described the Lotus or Padma as an ancient and favourite simile for the Kosmos itself, as well as for the human being. Reasons for this include the fact that the Lotus seed contains within itself the perfect miniature of the future plant, with the spiritual prototypes of all things existing in the immaterial world before they become materialised.

The Lotus grows up through the water, with its roots in the mud which represents the material realm. The stalk which passes up through the water is related to existence in the astral world. But the flower floating on the water, and even-

tually opening its heart to the air above, is emblematic of the spiritual being.

This richly allegorical flower symbolises a variety of qualities pertaining to human spiritual unfoldment such as purity of mind, calmness, serenity and the White Tara of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition; also, beauty and non-attachment. Then again, in India the goddess Saraswati is often depicted as seated on a white lotus which symbolises light, knowledge and truth.

Even more, however, it is deeply inspirational to consider that within each of us dwells the 'Jewel in the Lotus' — Padmapani, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, or whatever name we give to our Divine Self. Indeed, our quest of many lifetimes is to become, and fully realise, our divine potential, despite the fact that this may be forgotten at times amidst the many demands of physical life in this material realm.



**CONVERSATION WITH PROF. P. KRISHNA
LED BY TIM BOYD
'Theosophy and Krishnamurti'**

On 2 January 2020 there was an interesting item in the programme: a conversation between Tim Boyd, the President of the Theosophical Society (TS), and Prof. P. Krishna, Trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation in India (KFI). Prof. Krishna, who is also a long-standing member of the TS, has written *A Jewel on a Silver Platter: Remembering Jiddu Krishnamurti*, a collection of personal accounts about this modern spiritual teacher, by those who knew him well. One of them was Dr Radha Burnier, former International President of the TS and Trustee of KFI until her passing in October 2013. (This book is available at the Indian Section bookstall in this campus.) The fact that this conversation took place during *this* Convention being held at *Varanasi* is a delightful coincidence as Krishnamurti was the protégé of Annie Besant who loved this place and made it her home before she became the President of the TS.

It is well known that Annie Besant, while she was the President of the TS, brought up Krishnamurti from childhood to become the World Teacher. Many people come into contact with Krishnamurti's teachings after joining the TS. The grooming of the World Teacher was Annie Besant's most important project and she believed in it until the very end of her life. Her vision and hope for human regeneration was in the teachings of the World Teacher, and she insisted that even though it was difficult

to understand him, we should listen to his teaching and not brush it aside. She deeply hoped that the World Teacher would help humanity to find its way home.

The conversation started with Tim Boyd saying that as an enlightened person, Krishnamurti brought a message and teaching relevant to humanity. It is an extraordinary opportunity to be able to talk and ask questions to Krishna, who was associated with Krishnamurti and has a deep grasp of the teachings. He asked him what it was like to live with Krishnamurti, the man.

Prof. P. Krishna answered that, as predicted by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Krishnamurti was the World Teacher and in the same way that the Buddha was not accepted by the Hindu tradition and Christ by the Jews, Krishnamurti was also not understood by people in the TS in his days. What Krishnamurti tried to do was to reform the Society that had developed its own rituals and beliefs. Going by the motto of the TS, 'There is no religion higher than Truth', the real work is to seek Truth. By seeing that Truth is a pathless land and ceremonies and doctrines cannot lead one to it, Krishnamurti tried to bring the Society back to its original motto. The only philosophical difference between the teachings of the TS and those of Krishnamurti is simply this: members of the Society believe that all religions are a path to Truth while

Krishnamurti maintained that Truth has no path to it.

Further, though Krishnamurti had occult powers he disregarded it, because when the ego is at work it can misuse any power including occult power, and to him, Truth is what really matters. There was an occasion when Prof. Krishna asked Krishnamurti about certain practices that he, Prof. Krishna, had heard about. He asked: 'Sir, is it true that you people in the esoteric section used to sit around a table talking to dead souls? Was that hallucination?' To which Krishnamurti answered: 'No those things exist, but they have nothing to do with goodness and therefore I am not interested in them. It is like we have the sun shining clear and bright outside in the open air, but we prefer to worship a candle in a closed room.'

When asked about the reasons why Krishnamurti left the TS, Prof. Krishna said that in fact Krishnamurti was asked by the then President G. S. Arundale to leave. In fact, Krishnamurti had great affection for the Society, and what he

objected to were the things that were going on in the Society in those days, and not the existence of the Society.

The capacity to attract true seekers is what will keep the TS alive, which means that we as members have to keep an open mind, in a state of not knowing, in order to be able to come upon that which is timeless and holy, which is Theosophia, a living wisdom that cannot be found in books but only within ourselves, in the sacred soil of our own inner being. An open mind, a mind that does not know, is the perfect fertilizer for nurturing the divine seed that lays dormant in each one of us. The spiritual seeking takes place inside our being, therefore we need to turn inward and navigate in the ocean of ignorance that separates us from each other. Blavatsky said that there is another way of living which is beyond the mind: the mind is the slayer of the Real and that the disciple should slay the slayer. Krishnamurti says to us: 'Let's do it, let's finish with this beastly thing.' Whether we take his hand and walk is up to us.



THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

The long-felt need of having schools with a theosophical educational approach was fulfilled this year by the formation of the **Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA)**, which commenced on 24 June 2019 with 21 students and 8 staff within the campus of the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS), in the building formerly used by the

Theosophical Publishing House and repurposed to house the new school. ATA is run by the Theosophical Education Society (TES), formed on 9 April 2019 with the four International Officers of the TS as its Ex-Officio members. I visited the school on 8 October and planted a Bodhi tree sapling which denotes wisdom. Then I addressed the parents and

invitees gathered there and spoke of my shared vision for the school and what it embodies, which endeavors to create an atmosphere that invites the deeper aspect of a human being in its complete expression.

ATA draws upon its motto of 'Learning and Growing through Transformative Education'. Led by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, Director of the Golden Links Institute in the Philippines and former National President of the TS in the Philippines, ATA aims to prepare students for life in all its dimensions, imparting wholesome education in its true sense. The school currently has 5 classes and 48 students from Pre-school to Grade II and aims to expand every year by one grade until Grade XII. Each class strength is limited to 20 students with a high teacher-student ratio to impart quality education.

Three new classrooms will be constructed by April 2020. The campus has beautiful trees, some being quite old, including a clump of Jamun trees (Indian blueberry), and is flanked by two banyan trees. The Besant Gardens grounds that surround ATA serve as an inspiration and initiation into science and discovery through Nature. Students have also gone for many field trips for practical learning. These include a museum, a

post office, a zoo, a planetarium, and the Guindy National Park.

Like-minded teachers and students were drawn to the school as it started taking shape. Most staff have some old connections with the TS which have been renewed, and likewise some of the parents. We have a devoted TS member volunteer from Colombia and look forward to more members joining from other countries. School of the Wisdom Directors, TS members visiting Adyar, as well as guests have come and interacted with staff and students on various occasions. The academy Director, Sonal Murali, worked at the TS Adyar from 1983 to 1997, and has explored alternative education based on J. Krishnamurti's educational philosophy for a decade.

ATA has a website and social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram. There is an information page on the TS Adyar website under 'Explore' that has a link to the ATA website. Targeted Facebook and Google advertisements are placed from time to time for a wider reach. Admissions are open for next year.

May you have a fruitful and inspiring experience during our Convention.

TIM BOYD



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