

LEARNINGS OF LIFE

Amb. C. Rajasekhar

(Summary of Besant Lecture delivered on 31.12.2016)

The Theosophical Society (TS) has, among other things, helped to promote a better understanding about India's spiritual traditions to the world by focusing on an anthropocentric discussion from a theocentric approach.

The president of the TS, Mr Tim Boyd, gave a recent address in New Delhi, which contributed to connecting with contemporary circles, including, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) and the India International Centre (IIC). A positive outcome was ICCR's offer to publish the full collection of Annie Besant's works, which would help to cement the bonds between the TS and India's official mainstream.

Prof. Lokesh Chandra, president of ICCR, during the interaction with President Boyd, made an insightful observation that the TS has also sowed the seeds for patriotic nationalism in the modern sense of nation states. This should create a ready bond with the

current ruling establishment in India and there would be a warm reception to further research/discussions/conferences on this theme from ICPR/ICCR/and Delhi University (DU).

As the TS perceives, communicates, and builds on the basis of the timeless wisdom, it is pertinent to note that although modern knowledge, per se, is expanding by leaps and bounds, knowledge without wisdom and compassion is not only inadequate, but it can be potentially degenerating and dangerous.

There may be a notion that the spiritual pursuit is about the other world or the next life and can be deferred for the later part of life. Perhaps, the Indian concept of the four stages (ashramas) of an ideal life reinforces this view. I would like to differ and say that spirit, or consciousness, is the essence of our being. The physical manifestation is but a pale shadow, a small fraction of this essence. The former triggers the thought process,

which individually translates further as our speech, action, and behavioural pattern, and collectively as our culture/traditions. Hence, it is important, effective, and essential to address elevating our consciousness and placing it on the right track, so that we can fully realize our true potential. This is also necessary to promote harmony.

Illustrations abound. The mapping of the human genome has firmly established the unity of humanity and the unreal nature of apparent differences between races. Spiritual realization or even pursuit in that direction enhances clarity/vision and overall human accomplishment. What is the largest number that one can form with two digits? Is it 00 or 99? It can also be 9 to the power of 9 (nine multiplied by itself nine times). Higher consciousness helps throw up innovative solutions to the seemingly intractable problems that plague us.

The story narrated by our Defence Minister of the watermelon breeder in his village is instructive of the *here-and-now* real benefits of clarity of thought. That is, we all can live in peace and harmony, we all can win, and there is no reason for strife, discord, violence and destruction.

The tale of Androcles (a slave who is saved by the requited mercy of a lion) from the Middle Ages is a reminder that even wildlife is capable of higher consciousness, and surely humanity is much better placed, much more evolved to miss out on this. Similar to IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ (Emotional Quotient), we may call this CQ, Consciousness Quotient, and strive to promote it for its patent benefits and our collective well-being.

Unsurprisingly, the pursuit of higher consciousness seamlessly converges in the fields of health, modern management, psychology, and so on. In medicine the new fashionable term is “mindfulness”. In management, it is recognized as intuition, to evolve from data, information, knowledge, and wisdom. A rose by any other name is still a rose.

The TS has been a pioneer in flagging India’s and the world’s attention to this subject, and it shall continue to strive to connect like-minded individuals and institutions. I am grateful for this opportunity to share my humble thoughts/reflections with this august gathering and for the kind attention given to me.



LIVING FROM THE STILL CENTRE

Linda Oliveira

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 1.1.2017)

We do not normally inhabit this moment. So many of us tend to live, act, and function as if we were on the circumference of a large circle, oblivious to the depths

of consciousness within that circle which are yet to be revealed. For within the circle of our lives lies the mystery of who we really are. Most of the time

we remain comfortably on the very edge of this. We are “somewhere else” rather than present, deeply, in this moment. We may have occasional moments of wholeness, while mostly perceiving ourselves as separate.

The microbiologist Darryl Reaney observed that “Each moment is an undiscovered country.” What an eloquent observation! It implies that we do not live fully in the present moment. This particular moment is undiscovered because we do not allow it to reveal itself to us. The mind may move almost randomly between past and future. Yet it is only in this moment that there is harmony, depth and joy. Each of these qualities is diminished to the extent that the mind loses focus, moving either backwards or forwards in time. This process is similar to turning the dial of a radio. It is only when the dial is centred on the correct frequency that there is real clarity.

It is possible to live, and function, from a consciousness which tends at all times towards unity. Unitive consciousness is a very clear and focused state of awareness. If this becomes a constant background, then it is possible to meet every situation without prejudice, as if it is completely new.

In stillness there is no striving, no worry, and no wasted energy. One just *is*. And there is at times an unexpected by-product of stillness, known to meditators: bursts of fresh new energy enter the system, as if from nowhere. This energy wells up through the still point within.

In the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine*

there is a description of a white disc with a dot in the centre, from which the whole manifested universe emanates. This point-like unity is known as “*bindu*” in Sanskrit. “*Mahabindu*” refers to the Great Cosmic Centre of the macrocosm; *bindu* denotes the centre of consciousness of the individual or the microcosm.

Dr Taimni described the *bindu* as a symbol of all-inclusive unity. There is sound reasoning behind this, for the point is the basis of space. If we extend a point in any direction it becomes a line. In turn, a line moves to become a surface or plane. Then the plane moves at right angles to itself to form a solid. And so space continues to develop out of a point.

Conversely, an infinite number of planes can meet at a point. An infinite number of lines can also meet at a point. Recall the analogy of the circle. Each of the lines extending inwards to a point, from the circumference of a circle, remains *present* in that interior point. In other words, the centre point can contain an infinite number of points, where each particular line reaches the point of intersection. This is a physical fact. By correspondence, esoterically speaking, both the one *and* the many coexist at this central point.

Now imagine that our consciousness is at this central point. From here it is possible to look out from the centre and know the nature of any line that leads to and from it—to know any aspect of the many, when required. This is the mode of consciousness of an Adept.

In the *Bhagavadgita* Krishna demonstrated to Arjuna that it was possible to become fully harmonized: “As a lamp in a windless place flickereth not, to such is likened the yogi of subdued thought, absorbed in the yoga of the SELF.” (6:19)

Here we can take SELF to mean Atman, the universal spirit within, the still centre. This Self-born insight or

state of being is the ultimate key to the regenerated individual, for whom the circumference of the circle no longer exists. That boundary is dissolved permanently. This is what it means to be fully harmonious and integrated, to be a Holy One, with heart and mind fused. The circle has disappeared, the centre is everywhere, and the circumference is nowhere.



“LIGHT, MORE LIGHT”

R. C. Tampi

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 1.1.2017)

Every man’s life of any worth is a continual allegory. The life of Dr Annie Besant is a true allegory of a voyage through storm to peace and light. When she was asked to contribute to the *National Reformer*, she signed her articles using the pseudonym “Ajax”. The name was suggested to her by the famous statue of “Ajax Crying for Light”. Ajax was one of the greatest Greek warriors in the great Greek epic by Homer. The stupendous statue of the hero and his impassioned cry “Light, More Light” struck a sympathetic chord in Besant’s heart. Incidentally, “More Light” were the dying words of Goethe, the noted German poet and dramatist.

Light has been used for ages as a special metaphor in mysticism and self-exploratory religions by the ancient Greeks and Oriental sages. It was used as a symbol of man’s union with the Divine. In more recent times David Bohm, the much-acclaimed physicist,

viewed matter as “condensed light”. He observed: “You could say that when we come to light, we are coming to the fundamental activity, in which existence has its ground, or at least coming close to it.”

One of the oldest recorded prayers of humankind is a hymn which is still recited by millions of Hindus every day. It reads:

From the unreal
Lead me to the real;
From darkness
Lead me to light;
From death
Lead me to immortality.

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)

The names of the Highest Being in many Indo-European Languages like Deyaus, Deua, Zeus, Devs are derived from the root ‘dif’ meaning “to shine”, “to be a light”.

According to Plato, “Light is not only

an image of the true Being, but the true Being is Light. Therefore one can gain enlightenment through an ascent to Being” (Plato’s *Republic*, VII-517). Moreover, “Light and Truth are correlative. Perceiving the good means seeing the Light.”

The *Rig-Veda* contains numerous invocatory hymns. The following is an inspiring wake-up call:

The bright dawn heralds a new day,
Its rosy lances have opened
The golden gates of the Sun,
And lit up the path of action.
Awake, O man, the slumber
And darkness of the night are over.
May each dawn lead us from
triumph to triumph in
the long journey of life!

(*Rig-Veda* — I.113.16)

The Old Testament of the Bible also begins with a laudatory prayer:

“And God said, ‘Let there be Light’.
And there was Light. (Genesis, 1:3)

The New Testament quotes Jesus as saying: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

(John, 8:12)

In spite of the illuminating revelations by the great sages and teachers throughout history, man continues to be haunted by the vexatious question of discrimination between the real and the unreal. On the one hand, the whole of the manifested universe has been looked upon as impermanent and un-

real. On the other hand, almost the entire world is enamoured of the enticing pleasures of the world to the last syllable of one’s lifetime. The most perplexing situation arising from these conflicting approaches is illustrated by Plato’s analogy of the cave.

The picture of the disastrously conflicting perceptions of those who see the source of all manifestations and those who are carried away by the appearance of appearances is of perennial relevance. Those who in the clear light realize the nature of truth are transformed. Ironically, those who are the slaves of their own illusion dogmatically stick to their guns and condemn to death those who are illumined by truth. This drama continues to be reenacted everywhere at all times. In such situations even defenders of light are exposed to endless torture. This is illustrated by the fate of Prometheus, the great benefactor of humanity.

There is now a growing realization of the presence of life as a universal principle. This points to the possible freedom from the illusion of separateness. The growing recognition of the Buddhist precept “be a lamp unto thyself” is illuminating.

While the world looks out in search of spiritual illumination, the real truth that the light that lighteth man is really within must be reaffirmed. This awareness will induce more fervent cries for light. This will also mean greater freedom from illusion and realization of oneness.



OPENING OF THE CONVENTION

The 141st International Convention is being attended by about 850 delegates on the opening day.

The inauguration of the Convention took place at 8 a.m. on 31 December at the Adyar theatre. It started with the lighting of the lamp by the President Mr Tim Boyd and others, the Prayers of the Religions, the Universal Prayer led by the President, and an invocation by the students of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School. The Secretary, Ms Marja Artamaa, then read out the greetings received from the heads of countries not represented on the dais. This was followed by the General Secretary of the Indian Section conveying greetings from various members. Subsequently greetings were rendered by other General Secretaries, Organizing Secretaries, and their representatives; and Presidential Representatives, as follows:

Ms Jenny Baker, England	Ms Birgitta Skrabo, Sweden
Ms Linda Oliveira, Australia	Ms Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu, France
Mr John Vorstermans, New Zealand	Ms Lola Rumi, Spain
Mr Wim Leys, Netherlands	Mr Vic Hao Chin, Jr, Philippines
Ms Manuela Koulich, Germany	Ms Roxana Franck, Bolivia
Mr Antonio Girardi, Italy	Mr Albert Schichl, Austria
Mr Jack Hartmann, South Africa	Ms Blanka Brostnar, Slovenia
Mr Esteban Langlois, Argentina	Ms Svitlana Gavrylenko, Ukraine
Mr Marcos de Resende, Brazil	Mr Andreas Isberg, Norway
Mr John Osmond Boakye, West Africa	Ms Nancy Secrest, TOS (USA)

The International Treasurer, Mr K. Narasimha Rao gave a graphic description of the havoc imparted to the Adyar campus by the cyclone just a couple of weeks back, and praised the residents and workers for their unstinting effort to normalize things for the Convention. The President then formally welcomed the gathering and declared the Convention open. He went on to deliver the Presidential Address, describing the theme of the Convention, followed by a comprehensive report on activities of the Society throughout the world. A unique feature this year was that the report was in video form, and was received enthusiastically by the whole audience.



Number of delegates registered as on Saturday, 31 December: 856

THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

As this is my last full year as National President of the **TS in America** (TSA), we will begin with what is my last report of TSA work in this capacity. Last year the imminent closing of Quest Books publications was a sad announcement. Now it seems that last year's report was premature, because their reduction in the publication of new books per year resulted in TPH operations being profitable for the first time in more than 20 years! Online education efforts via Internet-based seminars and classes (or webinars) continued to grow. They are available through the TSA website and their YouTube channel. The information technology and audiovisual department head, with his assistant, came to Adyar to live-stream last year's international convention. Public programs are now offered every day of the week and on some days there are multiple programs. Attendance increased in every category of programming.

The National Secretary reports that the TSA, with 3,343 members in 38 Lodges remains stable, and that 58 percent of all new membership applications are received online. National speakers were scheduled at 48 different venues. The Prison Program continues to be active and to touch the lives of hundreds of prisoners. The Olcott Library and Archives director produced the first digitized book for their Theosophical Digital Collection. The Archivist continues to assist researchers, members, and staff around the world. She coordinates the online

theosophical encyclopedia, Theosophy Wiki, now available in French, Russian, Spanish, and English. Quest Book Shop added 120 titles to the Theosophy section, a number of which were newly integrated into other categories of relevance, doubling the sales of theosophical books.

The Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) in the USA publishes *The Spirit of Service* e-newsletter 3 or 4 times per year. Their healing network has 46 groups and many individuals performing regular healing meditations. Their magazine, *For the Love of Life*, is published annually. TOS funds were granted to a conference on theosophical education in Odisha, India. Emergency funds were sent to Adyar in January for Chennai flood relief; in September to the Italian TOS for earthquake relief; and to the Louisiana TOS also for flood relief. Finally, a grant was given to the TOS Annie Besant Model School in Odisha, India.

The **Brazilian** Section has 782 members and 33 Lodges. The National Council met in January in Esmeraldas during their 35th Summer School, and in July, during their Winter School, at the Institute in Brasilia. They also held the International Theosophical School at the Theosophical Institute, with visiting lecturers Fernando de Torrijos from USA, and Barend Voorham, of the TS Point Loma in the Netherlands; and the 2nd Youth International Meeting in February with my participation. The Regional Councils met once each

semester in the four different regions, giving seminars, workshops, and lectures. Their various departments are working at a fast pace. *Sophia* magazine has 636 subscribers, being sold at news stands all over the country. The TOS is active in four cities with fundraising activities and assistance to the needy.

In **Cuba** the Section membership rose from 558 to 566 in 12 Lodges. Its annual convention was celebrated in January on “The Feminine Aspect in Manifestation”. Lodge studies continued with various themes based on theosophical books, lectures, and articles. They are studying Annie Besant’s *Thought Power* and *Esoteric Christianity*, *The Hidden Side of Things* by Leadbeater, and others. All Lodges in the Section celebrated the official dates of our Society: Founders’, Adyar, and White Lotus Days. In July the Lodges in Havana organized a summer school on “Four Basic Ideas for the Study of *The Secret Doctrine*”, as a workshop for members. The Section’s online magazine, *Revista Teosofica Cubana*, continued its quarterly publication.

The **Argentinian** Section, with 328 members, held a book fair in Río Cuarto, where they distributed flyers on the work of the TS and sold a number of theosophical books. About 2,500 information brochures titled “You Are Invited” were distributed nationwide, and in Paraguay. In mid-March I gave

a public conference held in San Rafael on “The Root of All Problems”, with 250 persons attending. This was followed by the 3rd Seminar of Luso (Portuguese)-Hispanic Theosophy, jointly organized by the Inter-American Theosophical Federation (IATF) and the Argentinian Section on “The Change to Individual Transformation”, attended by myself and around 110 persons from nine different countries.

The TS in **Mexico**, with 148 members, hosted the IATF’s “First Encounter of North America” in Cholula, Puebla, in late March on “Applying the Principles of the Ageless Wisdom”, with myself as their guest of honor. It was a good event with many members and non-members attending. In mid-December they held a two-day Wisdom School on the “Katha Upanishad” at the National Headquarters, with two guests from Spain: Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig, whose presentations were well received.

In **Bolivia** the Section’s membership has increased to 122. They were visited by Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig in Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, and La Paz for three days in late May and early June, holding workshops and public conferences. Their national conferences were held in Cochabamba in mid-August on “Service, Study, and Self-knowledge” by Radha Burnier; and in La Paz in late September on “Probation and Chelaship”.

