

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE OF TODAY TO HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS?

Dr Satish Inamdar

(Summary of Public Lecture on 27.12.2009)

Is it the dark night of the soul? Is evil blossoming? — to the extent that it will completely wither and that there will be an apparent holistic change? Have we really reached the rock-bottom, and therefore, can only rise hereafter?

These questions or statements are not new. Every day there is news, worse than that of any yesterday.

There is the deep crisis in the world, in every country, every institution, including the family. In spite of having had the Buddha's presence 2500 years ago, we still have poverty, war, disease, dementia and death. All these are expressed in our sorrow and suffering. Did the Buddha transcend it all only for himself? Or else, did the Buddha move away in an illusion of grandeur?

What is personal? What is collective? Is there any relationship? Today, India is threatened by a Taliban using a nuclear weapon. Otherwise, are Indians really concerned in resolving

fundamentalism in any religion? There is the serious crisis of Naxalites in about 200 districts in India. We want to continue to exploit the tribals and convert them to our own ways of thinking about modernity, economy and land-nation theories.

Moreover, religious beliefs seem all-important. An ancient American tribal chief is quoted in an interview as having said: 'We all got killed for we resisted becoming Christians.' There is a serious crisis in religious institutions, and in nations and tribes, and above all that, the crisis of lifestyle and consumerism is already burning our rooftops.

Are we really concerned with the trees, animals, rivers and the lakes, the sky and the soil? Or is it because the health of human beings is jeopardized that we raise a hue and cry?

Everything boils down to self-centredness. We want comfort for ever and ever.

We have created several systems — like ethics in war, ethics in treating prisoners-of-war, ethics in medical practices. We have the word amnesty! We talk of morality in social life. We want justice at all levels. We want to create systems and also wish to preserve

them for eternity. We have all these intentions. Why are we lacking in executing our intentions? We have enough information and intellectual understanding. Why then is the action lacking?

What really needs to change?

THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

Mr Kiran H. Shah was elected Chairman of the Pan African Theosophical Federation, which comprises three sections in nine countries. Its General Meeting was held in Kampala, Uganda, on 13 April 2009. Regular newsletters were issued highlighting the activities of all three Sections. The Founding Chairman, Mr Tom Davis, attended the Conventions of all the three Sections.

The East and Central African Section held its Convention in Kampala during April 2009. It was attended by members from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and South Africa. The Section has 216 members. Several programmes were conducted both in English and Gujarati. Mr C. V. K. Maithreya and his wife Dr Sunita visited the Section on a lecture tour. Kenyan postal authorities issued a special commemorative stamp to mark the centenary of the TOS in November 2008.

The West African Section held its Convention in October 2008 on the theme 'The Impact of Theosophy on World Thought'. A School of the Wisdom was also held in Accra, Ghana, in March

2009. The Section has 11 Lodges, 6 Study Centres and 241 members, and is planning to commission its headquarters building on completion, and to celebrate its 75th Anniversary next year. Theosophical literature translated into Twi was distributed to the public, as also some information leaflets.

The South African Section reports all the Lodges to be active. The Durban Lodge has been revived and saved from possible closure. The newly chartered Germiston Lodge is well supported by its members, and construction of the new Lodge premises is almost complete.

Wales reports increased attendance at Lodge meetings as also inspiring talks by younger members. The Welsh Region now has a website of its own which is used for providing information. 'A Theosophical Awareness Day' was organized at the Conwy Library. Scotland reports declining membership which now stands at 96. To attract young members a website has been created with a page for each Lodge which attracts 200 to 300 visitors every month. Limerick Lodge in Dublin closed down,

but a new Lodge called Pheonix Lodge, has been started. The fourth All Ireland Convention was held very successfully in Dublin in May 2009.

In France, Ms Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu has been elected as General Secretary. The membership is around 400. The Convention theme was 'The Music of the Universe, Harmony of the Soul' with Mr Halldor Haraldsson from Iceland as Guest of Honour. The Belgian Section has 94 members in eight Lodges. The three Lodges which are based in Brussels organize their activities in the Head-quarters which is being sold to the City of Brussels and a new Headquarters Building is being provided. The Lodge in Liege is closing down due to a lack of members.

The Dutch Section has 388 members, ten Lodges, and seven Study Centres which work in close cooperation with the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden. *Theosofia* is published bi-monthly. There are national study groups at the Headquarters which have taken up studies of *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Mahatma Letters*.

The Finnish Section has 456 members in 25 Lodges, two of which are in Estonia. Separate Summer Schools were held in Finland and Estonia. A Centenary Exhibition of the Theosophical Society in Finland took place in the City Library of Turku. The Theosophical Society was represented at three fairs. *Yama and Niyama* by S. S. Varma was published in Finnish.

Norway did not have any seminars this year, but the members remain in

touch through a monthly Newsletter which includes the Norwegian version of 'On the Watch-Tower'. The Organizing Secretary, Mrs Agnes Gaasemyr, is translating *Light on the Path* in Norwegian. Sweden has 162 members. A Summer School was held in July 2009 with Mr Halldor Haraldsson from Iceland as guest speaker. There were eighteen participants.

The German Section has increased its membership to 114. The Summer School was held in Lippstadt. Mr Siegfried Kuska, former General Secretary, passed away in October 2008. The report from Greece is good, they have become a larger body with an increase in the number of members. The Icelandic Society has also been active as usual. Both of these Sections have sent in their reports just as this has gone to the press.

The Italian Section membership has increased to 1098. Its financial position is sound, and its activities have increased. Mr Antonio Girardi, General Secretary, visited a large number of centres for talks and conferences. Rome will host the 2010 World Theosophical Congress. The Italian Section has been active in publishing and a number of books have been printed. The website of the Section is attracting over 3000 every month. The Section and the TOS were able to provide support to Myanmar, India (including the Olcott Memorial School), the Philippines and Latin America. It also provided 260 colourful teddy bears for use by doctors treating children in developing countries.

In Portugal, meetings and dis-

cussions were held. Every month one or two public lectures are organized in Lisbon. Fourteen members of the Portuguese Section attended the Iberia Days organized in Madrid (Spain) — the theme was ‘The Theosophical Life’, a quest for authenticity in our daily life. The Spanish Section held a meditation retreat in May in Barcelona with Miss Trâm-Thi-Kim-Diêu as director. Fernando de Torrijos, from the United

States, was the guest speaker at the Summer School held in Platja d’Aro.

The Presidential Representative of Hungary reports that there are three Lodges and forty-two members. All the Lodges are active. Theosophical camps, regular Lodge meetings, and also some public meetings were organized, and some theosophical books have been published in Hungarian. They are trying to finalize their Constitution.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES AND CONVERGING VALUES

Prof. R. C. Tampi

(Short Lecture delivered on 27.12.09)

If we cast a glance around us, we would be shaken by the sickening sights of pain and penury, war and violence — the result of our perverted perspectives. Yet, surprisingly, the United States astronauts and the Russian cosmonauts, who had a view of the earth from space, were alike struck not only by the beauty of the continents but also by their closeness to one another and their essential unity. An astronaut who saw the earth as a shining blue pearl in the surrounding vastness confessed that it was a spiritually transforming experience.

As science advances it provides man with finer and more comprehensive perspectives of the universe. They in their turn produce a corresponding sense of values. While the deeply ego-

centric and separative perception of the world characterized science up to the twentieth century, unity, wholeness and harmony mark post-modern science. Under its impact, human nature progressively tends to manifest a higher sense of values like love, goodness, beauty and sacrifice.

Modern science was born in Europe in the sixteenth century. It soon became a world movement. Francis Bacon, who was not a scientist at all, was the proponent of the scientific approach. He was a Machiavellian in outlook, who denied relevance of morality in public life and believed that craft and cunning were justified in the realization of one’s ambitious goals. Bacon’s attitude to Nature was imperious and irreverent.

Descartes and Newton were the most important figures who influenced the world view up to the end of the nineteenth century. Descartes' analytic and reductionistic method led to fragmentation in thinking. The Cartesian division of mind and matter, body and mind, and the observer and the observed, left an enduring impact on the modern mind. To Descartes and Newton the world was nothing but a machine made of replaceable parts. Though this mechanistic and materialistic model of reality was thrown overboard by twentieth century science, the entrenched notions were not easily erased. However, the twentieth century science ushered in a new world increasingly based on unity, non-materiality and organic interconnectedness. These in their turn nurtured a corresponding sense of higher values of life.

The first sign of this revolution was the substitution of the idea of fields of forces for separate forces. Moreover, the different fields of forces were unified like the electromagnetic field. Einstein's dream of a grand unified field was fulfilled in part. This changed our view of the structure of the world.

Exactly at the turn of the century, J. C. Bose successfully presented before the Royal Society of London experimental proof of the truth of the oneness

of life — mineral, plant, animal and human. Einstein's theories of relativity were an important step forward towards the goal of synthesis. The ideas of space-time continuum and mutual convertibility of mass and energy were his epoch-making contributions in this direction. Bohr, Schroedinger, Heisenberg and others showed the world of quantum physics as a web of dynamic interconnectedness. They also shared the idea of a unitary consciousness as the ground of all existence. The illuminating theory of Implicate and Explicate Order, put forward by David Bohm, laid stress on the wholeness principle. Rupert Sheldrake solved many mysteries of nature through his hypothesis of a morphogenetic field and morphic resonance.

All these discoveries of the post-modern science provided man with new perspectives. These changing perspectives instilled converging values of wholeness or unity, love and beauty. Thanks to the labours of these great visionaries of science, expressions like religion, God, spirituality, love and consciousness gained currency as part of the vocabulary of modern science. This is the evidence of a new science and new perspectives — all converging towards the eternal values of love, goodness and beauty.

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.

Albert Einstein

PERCEIVING THE TRUTH

Mr Hrishikesh Sharan

(Short Lecture delivered on 27 December 2009)

What does the word 'perceive' mean? According to Collins Dictionary if you perceive something you see, notice or realize it especially when it is not obvious. What is truth? Truth is something which is believed to be true in all time to come, in all places and true to all. So Truth is something which is beyond the scope of time, space, thought, place, intellect, mind, etc.

Suppose there were no books, no religions, no teachers today. What would we do? We will have no option but to look for the truth ourselves and discover it. If we have to give a lecture on some aspect of, let us say, Karma we will have to observe minutely, see what is going on around us, ponder over it, see in the fields with our own eyes that when we sow thorns we reap thorns, and when we sow corn we get only corn. Thus our perception of Karma will be based on an exact confrontation with Karma and then only shall we be speaking about Karma and our talk will be original, full of meaning, our own and not borrowed from someone else. The moment we perceive the truth with our own eyes that the principle of 'as you sow, so shall you reap' is a truthful statement and not just another statement, then after seeing and understanding the truth of the above statement there will be a change in us.

On the other hand, if we have all the knowledge, books available for us, scriptures, the sayings of saints and sages and the like then the same talk on Karma can be prepared with the help of these books and literature. The words and content of both talks may be the same but are the two talks the same? Obviously not? Why? Because the first is based on actual experience, perception and the other is based on intellectual knowledge.

CWL came to Adyar with no expectations whatever of occult advancement. He came in an attitude of true dedication, hoping to find some work to do here. I think he had the idea that probably he would have to stick stamps on envelopes or sweep the rooms. In those days Theosophists had very little money and Adyar did not have such a staff of sweepers and servants as at present. He anticipated quite a humble role as a worker here; expecting nothing, he gained all. That is a very wonderful and significant point.

N. Sri Ram

THE ATTITUDE OF THE ENQUIRER

C. W. Leadbeater

(Originally published in *The Adyar Bulletin*, February 1911)

What should be the attitude of the enquirer towards the wonderful mass of new truth which is put before him in Theosophical teaching? It should be an intelligently receptive attitude—not one of carping criticism on the one hand, nor of blind belief on the other, but of endeavour to understand the different facts as they are presented to him, and to make them his own. In Theosophy we strongly deprecate the attitude of blind belief, for we say that it has been the cause of a vast amount of the evil of the world. On this point the teaching of the Eastern Masters is emphatic, for they regard superstition as one of the fetters which it is absolutely necessary that a man should cast off before he can hope to make any progress on the occult Path. They also regard doubt as a fetter, but they say that the only way to get rid of doubt is not by blind faith, but by the acquisition of knowledge. It would be quite useless for a man to exchange blind faith in orthodox Christianity for a similar blind faith in those who happened to be writing or speaking on Theosophy. To say: ‘Thus saith Madame Blavatsky or Mrs. Besant,’ is after all only a small advance on saying: ‘Thus saith St. Paul of St. John.’

A common-sense attitude will enable us to determine whether we can know a certain thing positively, or whether it is necessary to take first what seems to be a reasonable working hypothesis, and then see how far future experience supports or weakens it. Much of the Theosophical teaching must remain as a hypothesis for each man until he is able to develop powers by which he can see for himself; but in the meantime he may easily acquire practical certainty with regard to it, by weighing it against all other hypotheses and seeing how perfectly it, and it alone, accounts for the observed phenomena of life. This is exactly the ground on which are held a large number of what are commonly called scientific facts.

Theosophy has a considerable literature, but it has no inspired Scriptures. We who write books on the various branches of the subject, put before our friends the results of our investigations, and we take every care that what we state shall be scrupulously accurate as far as our knowledge goes; but the model which we set before us when we write is not the sacred Scripture but the scientific manual.

DANCE BY CHILDREN FROM ADRUTA HOME, ORISSA

Children from the Adruta Children Home, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, performed a stage show of Odissi classical dance and folk dances from Orissa and West Bengal on the evening of 27 December at the Adyar Theatre. Their presentation was a delight to the participants who saw the children dressed in the costumes of those regions. The performance included a dance based on the Dasavatara and folk dances for harvest and welcoming the seasons. The Adruta Children Home — an award-winning institution — came into existence with the intent to find a home for fatherless, motherless, unclaimed and deserted children. The Home activities for the children include study, learning tabla, listening to classical Indian music, practising Odissi dance, learning Fine Arts as well as sports. Mrs Linda Oliveira, the Vice-President of the TS, thanked the organizers and participants at the end.

MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

Delegates at the Convention had the opportunity of seeing a special exhibition in the TS Archives on 'At the Feet of the Master in 47 Languages'. Originally published in 1910, the book written by a young J. Krishnamurti has been translated into almost 90 languages in the world. The exhibition also included vintage photographs of Krishnaji at the Madanapalle High School in Chitoor District, Andhra Pradesh, as well as photographs of him together with Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater and other TS leaders. The TS Museum was open early every afternoon for visits and remains a storehouse of TS history that delights and inspires those who visit it.

SERVICES AT THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

Midnight Mass was celebrated on Christmas Eve at 11.00 p.m. by the Rt. Rev. Pedro Oliveira, Auxiliary Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church for India. He was assisted by Rev. P. J. John, Deacon of the Church of St Michael and All Angels, and Server S. Lusia. In his sermon Bishop Pedro considered the metaphysical and cosmological dimension of the Christmas Festival as the Incarnation of the Divine into the world. A number of delegates attended this service. Bishop Pedro also celebrated the Holy Eucharist on Christmas Day and during his sermon he explored the mystical dimension of Christmas as the birth of Christ in the depths of the human soul. Rev. John and Server Lusia have been conducting the Office of Prime every day at 6.30 a.m. during the Convention.