

HUMAN SOCIETY, SPIRITUALITY AND RENEWAL

Mrs Linda Oliveira

(Summary of Public Lecture on 30.12.2009)

The quest of modern technology has spawned numerous discoveries. But the ultimate human adventure is another quest which is at once profound and intimidating. Professor Kurt Dressler has formulated this as 'the fundamental human search for the origin, essence, and end of our puzzling existence in a multifaceted world'. One way of describing this process is a quest for Spirit, reflected more and more in our emerging spirituality.

Human society presents as a large array of institutions, but can be reduced from this level of complexity to its essential building blocks — people and what transpires between them. In fact the philosopher J. Krishnamurti described society, fundamentally, as relationship. He observed: 'Human beings throughout the world have tried to create a just society, outside. But society is our relationship with each other. . . '. For many, an unfolding relationship with the spiritual may

help bring a more balanced perspective to life.

Spirituality is a term which tends to be used loosely today and may have a certain vagueness about it. Some of the features of authentic spirituality are:

– It transcends the psychic realm, being characterized by more deeply seated, innate longing to connect consciously with the Divine. This expresses itself naturally in ethical living. Konrad Lorenz viewed the greatest danger of humankind today 'not in the nuclear threat or in the ecological crisis, but in the progressive decay and disintegration of ethics and morality'.

– Secondly, the unfoldment of spirituality requires sustained attention; it does not manifest rapidly.

– Thirdly, the unfoldment of genuine spirituality is a 'do-it-yourself' enterprise and cannot be bestowed upon us by another.

– Fourthly, an ability to simply

remember various religious teachings does not necessarily make a person spiritual. But when such knowledge is accompanied by a feeling of the inwardness of life, and a genuine willingness to examine oneself, then spirituality may emerge.

– Fifth, spirituality requires thoughtful intelligence tempered with discernment.

– And sixth, spirituality means the activation of our highest qualities which emerge from the inside outwards. Such qualities include humility and the noblest nuance of love. They are essentially selfless and altruistic qualities which are not centred on the individual. Spirituality is ‘other centredness’.

Spirituality becomes increasingly prominent as we uncover meaning in life. Devoid of meaning, life remains ordinary and even arid. The author, J. J. van der Leeuw wrote: ‘When we realize the eternal meaning of life we can see how much there is in life that is superfluous and even harmful, we can see how much there is that can be spared and must be eliminated, but at the same time we can see how much is lacking, how much *more* we need.’

The cosmic power of *maya* suggests that by and large we have a distorted view of the world as a result of our own

conditioning, which is bound by time. But when the mind is still then conditioning recedes, there are no memories or anticipations, and clarity enters. When there is a larger perspective, and life is seen as from above, then the view completely changes. A veil, or a limited view, is lifted when things become clear. There is, in effect, a new mode of seeing which is at once deceptively simple and yet profound.

The essential polarity which one meets in the Wisdom-Teachings is *Purusha-Prakriti*, or Spirit-Matter. The Tibetan word *fohat* denotes a certain dynamism resulting from polarity which both energizes *and* binds, acting like a kind of glue. It is brought very much to life with spiritual awakening and its associated inner renewal, as our more material vehicles become spiritualized. With the renewal of the individual comes energy and goodness, as well as a natural ethic which cascades into our activities and relationships. In fact, the Golden Rule might be rephrased in the following way: ‘right relationship is the cornerstone of a good society’. In meaningful relationship there is renewal. And the eventual renewal of a critical mass of humanity, reflected in right relationship, can act as a midwife for a renaissance of human society.



The man who has definitely built a buddhic vehicle has that consciousness all the time in the background of his lower physical, astral or mental consciousness.

C. W. Leadbeater

WISDOM AND TECHNOLOGY: INNER TRANSFORMATION AND OUTER CHANGE

Mr Marcos de Resende

(Short Lecture delivered on 30.12.09)

When the Theosophical Society was founded 134 years ago, the world, seen from outside, was very different.

At that time, not so long ago, when we consider the thousands or millions of years since the existence of mankind, there were no cars, aeroplanes, powerful computers, internet, no atom bombs and other lethal weapons. Although human beings have lived with wars, they have never been as deadly and dangerous as the great wars that occurred in the twentieth century, due to technological development.

Technological development has approached the world from the outside. Today, communication is instantaneous, the displacements are infinitely faster and there is technology for everything. The outside world has changed a lot.

Why is there still so much misery, so much suffering, murders, animal killing, exploitation of man by man, harmful to the environment, right in the twentieth-first century ?

Technology has developed so much that it would not be difficult for modern man to put an end to hunger in the world. But it does not end. What is missing for this to happen ?

The development of the intellect, of mental power, which is characteristic

of our time, has generated incredible technology, but has not allowed the ending of human problems. Instead, the excess of mental energy, separated from the whole being, has created problems of all kinds, inside and outside each one of us.

Technology can make practical life easier and more comfortable for those who have access to it, but it does not, by itself, make man happier than he is. The flourishing of wisdom, which is theosophy, is necessary in order to make possible the inner transformation that leads us to a full and happy life.

How to awaken wisdom? How to allow or permit it to come to us? How do we make Theosophy a reality in our lives?

The awakening of wisdom involves self-knowledge, which is not an informative or cumulative process as is intellectual and technological knowledge. It is, essentially, observation and perception of ourselves, of human nature and of life as a whole.

The enormous technological changes the world has passed through is slowly changing the face of the planet. Instantaneous communication and news, modern and efficient means of transportation, internet, all this has created a culture of globalization, where the most striking distinctions shall be

between those who have or do not have money, who have or do not have access to the technology and to the material comforts it provides.

Regardless of all these external changes, the human problem remains the same. Man does not comprehend himself and life. Selfishness has been taken to an extreme and there is a frenetic search for pleasure and material satisfaction. This is the human condition today. As long as man does not realize that this kind of

satisfaction is not synonymous with happiness and that technology and material comfort cannot make man into a fully-realized being, there is no solution to the human problem. Only self-knowledge, which is the perception and understanding of ourselves and of the movement of life, can lead to a state of integration with all beings and the universe. Then technology will coexist with wisdom, serving a higher purpose, the improvement of the human condition, inside and outside each one of us.

ALL IS BRAHMAN

Mr Bhupendra Vohra

(Short Lecture delivered on 30.12.09)

Metaphysics or Brahmavidya has been considered as the supreme science since ancient times. It postulates that there is an Infinite and Eternal Principle that is the rootless root of all manifestation. In *The Secret Doctrine* this principle has been described as the substratum of the universe that is Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable. The *Bhagavadgita* describes this Reality as the Ashvattha tree with roots above and branches below signifying the manifested universe. The physicist David Bohm postulates that the world is an unbroken wholeness in flowing movement. He states that each manifested form, whether an undersea

current, a stone or a subatomic particle, is a separate whole and at the same time part of a larger whole.

There is a symbiotic relationship between life in its variety of forms and expressions. The principle of Universal Brotherhood is not merely an ideal to be worked for but a fact in nature. Shri Ramana Maharshi states that there is no other but the One Self. An enquiry into the question 'Who am I?' leads to true wisdom. Then the accretions arising from the cognitive senses fall away and there remains a state of awareness.

The repositories of wisdom, the Upanishad-s, reveal much about this life principle. In the story of Shvetaketu

and his search for true knowledge there is much to be learned. Brahman is in all things and may be experienced with deep insight. The poet William Blake describes the quest in the following words:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour.

When there is at-one-ment with all life in its variety of expressions, then a larger perception of the Real is experienced. Professor Jagdish Chandra Bose's investigations proved that the so-called 'inorganic matter' is responsive to stimulus. Theosophical teaching states that there is no dead matter and consciousness pervades everything in this manifested universe. The dance of Krishna with the Gopi-s is a symbolic representation of the One Spirit at play with myriads of forms of life in the objective world. *The Light of Asia* states that this Reality is indescribable . . .

'Measure not with words the Immeasurable.'

The physicist Robert Oppenheimer, while discussing the science of particles, puts forward views that are very similar to those in the Isha Upanishad. Sages have attempted to describe this Reality by a process of negation but paradoxically also affirmatively. *The Secret Doctrine* refers to Brahman as the unchanging, pure, undecaying supreme root, the 'One true Existence, Paramarthika'. Scientists are currently conducting experiments in the Large Hadron Collider to establish the conditions that prevailed at the time of the 'Big Bang' and to ascertain whether there is a unified theory that unifies all the laws. The point of manifestation of the universe has been described as 'Sakti-Cakra' in the Siva Sutra-s.

The entire cosmos is creation in motion. There is a grand cosmic drama, in which the dance of Brahman is manifested from the microcosmic level to the macrocosmic level.

J. KRISHNAMURTI — VIDEO

This programme featured a DVD presentation of J. Krishnamurti's fourth talk at Brockwood Park, England, in September 1983. The subject was 'What kind of brain is needed for meditation?' Although there are strange ideas about meditation in the world today, Mr Krishnamurti brings to our consideration a fresh and sane approach. In his talk he poses an important question: 'What is the beginning of all existence? To probe into something unknown there must be a quality of brain that is completely free. Such a brain must have space and silence.' Only such a brain, he stated, can become aware of the unity of all life and its sacredness.

INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION

The 119th Indian Section Convention was held in the morning of 28 December 2009. Inaugurating the Convention the International President, Dr Radha Burnier, mentioned her long association with this Section which is the largest in the TS and has many languages and Federations. She also said that the Federations and Sections are there for a matter of convenience but actually the people of the world have to be one. It is part of our work to see them all as one. Many forms of life are all part of one beautiful universe and to see that unity everywhere is important. Everything will be noble and in a state of perfection if what is inside is in order.

A number of greetings were conveyed by the General Secretary, Mr S. Sundaram, and by the Presidents and Secretaries of the sixteen Federations within the Section. Mr Sundaram presented the Annual Report for the year 2008–09, giving a brief overview of the work done by the Section during

that time. He also focused on the tasks that have yet to be taken up in the future. His report was followed by the Treasurer's report which was presented by Mr P. S. Panchakshari.

The International Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, presided over the meeting. In her remarks she commented on the vitality of the Indian Section and what factors might contribute to this. She also addressed the relationship between Theosophy and the Theosophical Society, in reference to a well-known quotation on the subject in HPB's *The Key to Theosophy*. In addition, she gave some consideration to a number of qualities which constitute authentic Theosophical teachings.

Short talks on 'Theosophy is a Science and Art of Living' were held on 29 December in which Mr Shashwat Padhey, of the Utkal Federation, Mr Nitin Abhayankar, of the Marathi Federation, and Dr Sunita Maithreya, of the Madras Federation were the speakers.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SESSION

(30 December 2009)

The Questions and Answers panel consisted of the International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, Mr Colin Price and Mr Pedro Oliveira. Some of the questions examined included: Why was Theosophy never officially defined in the TS? What attitudes on the part of members can further or hinder the work of the Society? What is the practical meaning of our third Object? What advice can be given to a young member who has just joined the TS?

WHY THE FOUNDERS CHOSE ADYAR

(Excerpted from *The Theosophist*, May 2004)

Writing in *The Theosophist*, July 1882, in an editorial comment entitled 'Coming Events Foretold', which preceded a statement by a chela of Ramalinga Pillay who, much before the Founders had arrived in India, had preached the principle of Universal Brotherhood and the existence of the Mahatmas, HPB remarked:

'When, in answer to a direct challenge, the author of *The Occult World* wrote to the *Bombay Gazette* (4 April 1882), he began his letter with the following profession of faith: "I was already sure, when I wrote *The Occult World*, that the Theosophical Society was connected, through Madame Blavatsky, with the great Brotherhood of Adepts I described. I now know this to be the case, with much greater amplitude of knowledge." Little did our loyal friend fancy, when he was penning these lines, that his assertion would one day be capable of corroboration by the testimony of thousands. But such is now the state of the case. Sceptics and prejudiced or interested witnesses in general may scoff as they like, the fact cannot be gainsaid. . . .

'While at Madras [May 1882], we were told that a well-known Tamil scholar, a Pandit in the Presidency College, desired to have a private conversation with us. The interview occurred in the presence of Mr Singaravelu, President of the Krishna Theosophical Society, and another trustworthy Theosophist,

Mr C. Aravamudu Ayangar, a Sanskritist, of Nellore. We are no more at liberty to repeat here all the questions put to us by the interviewer than we are to divulge certain other facts, which would still more strongly corroborate our repeated assertions that (1) our Society was founded at the direct suggestion of Indian and Tibetan Adepts; and (2) that in coming to this country we but obeyed their wishes. But we shall leave our friends to draw their own inferences from all the facts.'

In *Old Diary Leaves* (Second Series), Col. Olcott explains:

'In my travels over India and Ceylon I had been observing places, people, and climates, with a view to selecting the best place for a permanent Headquarters for the Society. Liberal offers of houses, free of rent, had been made us in Ceylon, and, certainly, the Island presented a most charming appearance to one seeking an Asian home; but several considerations, such as its isolation from India, the cost of postage . . . overweighted its loveliness and led us to choose India in preference. Up to the present time, however, no good property had been offered us, and we had made no definite plans. On 31st May [1882], however, we two were begged by Judge Muttuswamy's sons to go and look at a property that was to be had cheap. We were driven to Adyar, and at the first glance knew that our future home was found.

‘People glibly speak of Madras as “the Benighted Presidency” and as being insufferably hot. The fact is, however, that as regards climate I prefer it above the others, and as to Sanskrit Literature and Aryan Philosophy, it is the most enlightened of the Indian Presidencies; there are more learned Pandits in the villages, and the educated class, as a whole, have been less spoilt by Western education. In Bengal and Bombay there are more *litterateurs* of the class of Telang and Bhandarkar, but I cannot recall one equal to T. Subba Row, of Madras, in bright genius for grasping the spirit of the Ancient Wisdom. And his being at Madras was one of the causes of our fixing upon that Presidency town for our official residence. Although he is dead and gone, yet we have never regretted our choice, for Adyar is a sort of paradise.’

In *The Mahatma Letters* it is said: ‘This Subba Row will help you [Sinnett] to learn, though his terms he being an initiated Brahmin and holding to the *Brahmanical* esoteric teaching — will be different from those of the “Arhat Buddhist” terminology.’ . . . ‘*Upasika* and

Subba Row, though pupils of the same Master, have not followed the same philosophy — the one is Buddhist and the other an Adwaitee.’ The presence of this initiated Chela in Madras was therefore of paramount importance in the Founders’ decision to establish the TS Headquarters there. And it also made clear the character of Adyar as a centre for the Masters’ work.

HPB, in a letter to her aunt Nadyezhda A. de Fadeyev:

‘It is simply delightful. What air we have here; what nights! And what marvellous quiet! No more city noises and street yells. I am sitting quietly writing, and now and then gaze over the ocean sparkling all over as if a living thing — really. I am often under the impression that the sea breathes, or that it is angry, roaring and hurling itself about in wrath. . . . But when it is quiet and caressing, there can be nothing in the world as fascinating as its beauty, especially on a moonlight night. The moon here against the deep dark-blue sky seems twice as big and ten times brighter than your European little mother-of-pearl ball.’

The essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man, the adjustment of his godlike qualities and aspirations, and their sway over the terrestrial or animal passions in him. Kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, goodwill to all beings, and perfect justice to others as to one’s self, are its chief features. He who teaches Theosophy preaches the gospel of goodwill; and the converse of this is true also — he who preaches the gospel of goodwill, teaches Theosophy.

H. P. Blavatsky

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