

WHO AM I?

Mrs Radha Burnier

(Summary of Public Lecture delivered on 30.12.2010)

Who am I? is a question that could be asked by anybody, and most people will immediately say: 'I am so and so, was born to so and so, had my schooling in such and such a school, I have been working as an officer in a reputed organization for many years, or I am proficient in such and such a subject'. This kind of answer which is the most common we can expect is easy, and it is the story of what the physical man or woman was and did.

But the trouble is, that the physical person is only a part of the real person. What is the real person will remain intact; most people hope that they will be alive after the death of the body. If the body dies the feelings and emotions do not necessarily die, although people who are grossly materialistic think that is the end.

The emotions can be of various kinds including attachment to or repulsion of certain people. Besides the physical existence, one could experience jealousy or depression, or elation and

contentment. It all depends on what the person has experienced. There are numerous feelings, some of which are of course temporary, but others may be lasting; and the person still has the lasting feelings, good or bad. They have to be worked out, which perhaps can happen to him or her in another life, provided we think of Life as consisting of different conditions which one experiences.

Similarly, the thinking process will include many things, and emotions and thoughts may be mixed up in an ir-retrievable way. The thoughts may be, let us say, concern for members of the family, or they may be thoughts of suspicion with regard to some persons. But leaving aside all such thoughts about food, about livelihood and so on, there are thoughts that do not have a basis in experience, in the past life. These thoughts may be of some scientific evaluation which we think of as ordinary; or the thoughts may be of people, whether a person is nice or not,

is useful or is a vagabond — there can be many thoughts of such a kind. But there are also thoughts of a more personal nature. Mathematicians may think of a problem of which nobody else except for a few mathematicians, are conscious. So thoughts can range over a vast area, some real, some imagined, some foolish, some useful, etc.

These thoughts and feelings are real to the average person. The average person has to work out his likes and dislikes of the physical environment, ups and downs, and mental images. This needs another incarnation. So he passes from what we call the world to another. It is a long journey which everybody has to go through until he or she begins to realize that most of the ideas pertaining to physical life, and also to our emotions and thought worlds, are unnecessary. In fact we feel empty and aimless when we do not have thoughts. But are we really empty, or do we imagine so?

Let us try to understand what happens even for a few moments when one is very much alive, but with no thoughts. Then one is merely watching, listening, receptive to whatever may come. Then we begin to see and know inwardly many things, which we do not normally even think about for a short time; or if we do, it is only by way of a casual observation. When the mind is not working on the many things that absorb it, and is watching silently, unagitated, it begins to see what has never been seen before. An old face still looks beautiful, because behind the wrinkles and other signs of age the

person sees a life, an individuality with great possibilities. Or he may see the leaf of a tree lying on the ground and it is like seeing a whole world of beauty, of qualities of life, which we had never known of as existing.

Then we may give attention to what the Vietnamese teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, points out: ‘We have a great many stems linking us to our Mother Earth. There are stems linking us with the clouds. If there are no clouds, there will be no water for us to drink. We are made of at least seventy percent water, and the stem between the cloud and us is really there. This is also the case with the river, the forest, the logger, and the farmer. There are hundreds and thousands of stems linking us to everything in the cosmos, and making it possible for us to be. Do you see the link between you and me? If you are not there, I am not here. This is certain. If you do not see it yet, please look more deeply and I am sure you will. I asked the leaf whether it was frightened because it was autumn and the other leaves were falling. The leaf told me, “No. During the whole spring and summer I was completely alive. I worked hard to help nourish the tree, and now much of me is in the tree. I am not limited by this form. I am also the whole tree, and when I go back to the soil, I will continue to nourish the tree. So I do not worry at all. As I leave this branch and float to the ground, I will wave to the tree and tell her, ‘I will see you again very soon’.”

“That day there was a wind blowing and, after a while, I saw the leaf leaving the branch and float down to the soil,

dancing joyfully, because as it floated it saw itself already there in the tree. It was so happy. I bowed my head, knowing that I have a lot to learn from the leaf.'

We do not know whether the author of these words is fully aware of the depths of what he says.

Let us look at what Krishnamurti who had no intention of impressing anybody had to say: 'Pure love does not require an object of affection. It is like the shining of the sun. It shines on all. As when the sun rises he floods the world with his own beauty and brings out in every leaf and flower all the delicate shades of colour; so that the pure love that streams forth from the heart of a liberated man sheds its tender light on everyone; and in the light of that love, all the hidden beauty of character, all the strength and beauty of thought and feeling are revealed to the loving eyes of perfect love. But such a love means an utter absence of likes and dislikes. There is neither attraction nor repulsion. The expression of such love must necessarily be as varied as the human beings who receive it.

'Be really in communication with nature, not verbally caught in the description of it, but be a part of it, be aware, feel that you belong to all that, be able to have love for all that, to admire a deer, the lizard on the wall, that broken branch lying on the ground. Look at the evening star or the new moon, without the word, without merely saying how beautiful it is and turning your back on it, attracted by something else, but watch that single star and new delicate moon as though for the first time. If

there is such communion between you and nature then you will commune with man, with the boy sitting next to you, with your educator, or with your parents. We have lost all sense of relationship in which there is not only a verbal statement of affection and concern but also this sense of communion that is not verbal. It is a sense that we are all together, that we are all human beings, not divided, nor broken up, not belonging to any particular group or race, or to some idealistic concepts, but that we are all human beings, we are all living on this extraordinary, beautiful earth.'

So the eyes may be seeing something, but the mind sees very much more, and this may extend very far. We do not know how far because we have not experienced something similar ever before.

Merely giving attention, without thinking of something or the other about what was intended, is not an easy thing. We have become so accustomed to invent or presume with our thoughts things that we see or do not see. In fact the mental process goes on and on even when we are sleeping. Deep sleep without any thoughts is not easy to come to for grown-up people. Children of course may not have complicated thoughts; when they sleep they sleep. But that is not so with people who have numerous mental attractions and observations during their lifetime. But even for a few minutes, if a person watches quietly without inwardly saying something or the other about what he is seeing, he begins to see more and

more of what is not usual. For example, when seeing a leaf, a fruit, a face of someone, he begins to see what is usually not taken notice of. The world is full of unnoticed things, including trees, animals, birds and the sky.

When a person looks fully at any of these things that are around, or as fully as possible, without coming to conclusions, ideas and so on, he sees what most people do not. A tree may be in front of one's house, which one may be 'looking at' all the time, but it takes on a new life when seen with real eyes — eyes which are not affected by thoughts of previous things. So the whole world of Nature appears different, including human beings which we think are the only important things to care for. Therefore the statement in Sanskrit — *Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram*, truth goodness and beauty. When a person is awakened he sees differently; what he sees is true.

This is not only relevant to seeing what exists in Nature; of course, in Nature we see things we like and others which we do not. But real seeing means there are no likes and dislikes, particularly when we see other human beings with whom there is daily contact. One may have prejudices against a black man, or a white one, but all such prejudices vanish and do not exist.

This is made clear by some paintings which show ordinary things like a face or a shape, but there is a light which comes through them. It is what makes for great art. Beethoven seems to have said that he listened to music which

others could not hear, for it came from another sphere, and he tried to bring it down to the physical level. Some of his great works struck people because of the newness in them. The same is true of all great art in any country — that it brings down to the ordinary level something extraordinary from finer worlds and spheres.

If we could only see the reality, every face, every human being would appear different because one sees not only what appears to the average onlooker, but the greater reality underneath, hidden behind the outward appearance. An uncultured, simple person is seen not only as he is, but also as what he will be — a beautiful being, full of light and wisdom. This is the future. Clear eyes see this, and that is why we call such people with such eyes, seers.

What is beyond all this? There, perhaps one can see the enlightened beauty, goodness and truth everywhere, but not in infinite proportion. The enlightened perceivers, the real seers, are not living in time. They will see the past, present and future as a glorious reality, where everything of the past is lighted up in a way we do not understand. There is a wonderful time before all of us, and we have to work towards that. Those who are not aware to that extent see only something of the past and the present, but the enlightened people see everything also as it will be. When we see the bud of a beautiful flower, we already have in our mind's eye what it will become, and we care for the bud, nourish it and look after it till it comes into its own.



INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — II

Tread the Path — The Theosophical Way

(Summary of Talks delivered on 29.12.2010)

Mr Vinayak Pandya

A late member in our Lodge used to tell us that we should have control over ourselves in general and anger in particular. Anger harms us more than the other person. It is expected that we remain cool and calm as members of the TS. It is also expected that we should help others, appreciate their good qualities and ignore their bad ones. We should not gossip, praise and take credit for ourselves.

The TS teachings help us understand the evolution of the human race. We are told that in this evolution there is no going back. We know what is to be done and if we do not serve our fellow human beings then our offence is more severe than that of others who do not know the Theosophical teaching.

Thoughts make a difference. If we think good thoughts, we send positive vibrations which can travel miles without any vehicle. Most relationships in life are selfish. If we can avoid a selfish motive in life, we will be happy.

Can we keep the 'I' away from our action and behaviour? We must make a conscious effort to avoid the 'I' for it is very dangerous.

One good quality is to accept our own mistakes. In Christianity it is called confession. Confession may be to oneself or to others. When we confess, it reduces the heaviness in our mind and

thoughts of guilt. It is important to be a good listener, to understand what others are saying and accept it with discrimination. Even a child can teach us something new. Meditation, music and anything which improves concentration should be practised. A thoughtless state of mind cannot come into being overnight.

Drop the mighty Ego of 'I'. The 'I' is always associated with false pride. Avoid 'tit for tat'. Give love for love, help for help but never give hatred for hatred and violence for violence (even if you are subjected to unjustified trouble). Reduce expectations. Expectation is the major cause for our anger, disappointment, irritation, frustration, stress and other negative emotions. Increase acceptance. Life is full of ups and downs, peaks of pains and pleasures and favourable and unfavourable situations. These are the result of our past karma; therefore let us accept every life situation without resistance. Resistance, in any case, will not change the course of life. Rather, acceptance gives strength to face the situation. Offer gratitude to the many people, known and unknown, who have contributed to our well-being in this life. Meditate regularly. Realize your Divine Self.

The ultimate aim of this human life is to realize our own Self. We are an

entity beyond the limitations of the physical body, mind and senses; eternal, omnipotent and blissful. By

Dr R. Revathy

Divine Wisdom has to be experienced and it cannot be explained in any language. It is also beyond the imagination. This does not mean that such a Divine Wisdom is non-existent.

A Theosophist has to understand the nature of this truth. For him, this Truth is the highest religion. He is not worried if this truth is interpreted differently by different religions of the world. He tries to understand how this truth is approached, experienced and explained by them. Such a comparative study is made by a Theosophist not with a view to finding out the best among the religions but to find out the best in each of them.

We should cross the mighty oceans of 'Samsara'. We also face the problems of wind and weather which threaten us in the shape of karma. A Theosophist however does not lose heart because he has faith in Nature's law.

Madame Blavatsky defined the Theosophical way as ascending the Golden Stairs. First is the requirement of a *clean life*. It means not only physical cleanliness but also cleanliness of the inner nature. An *open mind* means our mind should not be conditioned by any dogmas. It should be able to discriminate between right and wrong, the important and unimportant, the useful and useless, the true and the false, the selfish and unselfish. More important than the open mind is a *pure heart*. The

transcending the limitations of experiences we can realize our true Self, a liberated soul.

mind goes by set formulas. The heart goes much deeper into the matter and looks at things with instinctive suggestions. One should have an *eager intellect* so that genuine enquiry into truth can take place. We should be careful to maintain an *unveiled spiritual perception*. We will then realize that the same bliss which we enjoy is enjoyed by other beings also. We will then find *brotherliness for all*. It is the backbone of our Society. It is beneficial for us to interact with others and advise if necessary and receive instructions if required — the principle of *readiness to give and receive advice and instructions*. Lord Krishna himself went to a person called Sandeepani and studied various subjects under his guidance, exemplifying a *loyal sense of duty to the Teacher*.

The word 'shradha' means absolute faith in the words of the teacher and in the words of the scriptures. Here the difference between the teacher and the truth disappears and you are called upon to willingly obey the call of truth i.e. *the behests of Truth*. From this follows the feeling of endurance towards all sorts of troubles and pains which is stated as *personal injustice*. On completion of this transmission of knowledge by the teacher and experience of truth by the disciple the latter is ready to exhibit the *sense of braveness*. He has to keep an eye on the progress of humanity as a whole.

Dr L. Nagesh

Each person should earnestly sculpt a unique path for himself or herself. It is a steep, uphill path to the top of the hill unlike the meandering, round-about-road which the majority travel generally. As spiritual aspirants we need to travel this less travelled path without giving room to even a minute speck of fear. A state of no-fear (*abhaya*) is the first and foremost divine quality required of an aspirant, according to lord Krishna in the *Bhagavadgita*. 'Man know thyself and thou shalt know the universe' said the ancient Greeks long ago. Unfortunately modern man is so engrossed in knowing everything else except the 'Self'.

Theosophia is the Path of return. It means to discover in full consciousness what we always intuitively know — who we are. It is the path of self-realization which unfolds only through renunciation and relinquishment. It is the way of the Heart, the inner quest because 'that which made the cosmos also made thee, so first make Thyself the object of thy search'.

The renunciation of the personality by distancing ourselves from our senses, emotions and thoughts would elevate our consciousness to *buddhi-manas* and beyond. Only then is there direct perception and realization of 'All Life as One'. We need not go anywhere else but only shift our perspective for the good. The Masters have repeatedly said that the Path requires a complete change, and may even be an exact reversal. It is not easy for us because though we want to change, when the occasion arises, we are the ones to resist the change.

A change in one's life is absolutely

necessary because occult truths can only be understood when they are lived. If we are true aspirants, we cannot but live according to them. The path is only for true and unselfish hearts, fearless and confiding souls. One need not possess a high degree of intellect; rather it may even be a hindrance for the progress. Unselfishness of heart is what is required of a person; hence Theosophy is said to be 'Altruism of the highest order'. The intellect belongs to the personality, which is unimportant to the Masters.

The best way to live a Theosophical life is to subjugate ourselves completely in front of the greater good. Our passions and affections arise from the personality and cause a lot of mental disturbance and agitation, but sympathy, empathy, compassion, universal love and brotherhood are expansive. They liberate the consciousness from the fetters of ordinary, mundane life. Being calm, serene, collected and peaceful in the midst of all adversities is the real sign of a person treading the Path because the Path is full of obstacles and impediments. We are intentionally placed in certain circumstances in order to check our integrity and to draw the best out of us.

Living Theosophy is to live a purposeful life, joining hands with God's plan of evolution. To understand these deeper principles, an open mind is required. Let us not anchor strongly to our own beliefs, ideas, conjectures, fixations, prejudices or idiosyncrasies. Let us work like true scientists and live our lives as true Theosophists.

DANCES OF INDIA BY NADAM ENSEMBLE, BANGALORE

On the evening of 29 December delegates had the opportunity to experience a fine dance performance by dancers of NADAM — Narthan Academy for Dance and Music, from Bangalore. The group, co-directed by Nandini Mehta, a fourth generation Theosophist, and K. Murali Mohan, specializes in classical and folk dance forms of India. It seeks to create awareness and instil a sense of appreciation towards the performing arts in the present generation. Their performances included Bbharatanatyam, Kathak and folk dances from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

A Questions and Answers session was held on the morning of 30 December. The panel consisted of the International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, Mr Colin Price, Ven. Olande Ananda and Mr Pedro Oliveira. The questions, which had been submitted beforehand, ranged from the nature of the Path, different approaches to meditation, the possibility of spiritual transformation while one is in physical incarnation, the significance of Vedanta, the source of evil and its cessation, among others. In her concluding remarks the President stated that although answers can be given to certain questions, our duty as members of the Society is to continue to explore and understand life for ourselves, and to live according to that understanding.

J. KRISHNAMURTI DVD PROGRAMME

The evening of 30 December featured a DVD programme of J. Krishnamurti's fourth public talk at Saanen in July 1983. The theme was 'What is Supreme Intelligence?' It is only in intelligence that there is total security. The very word intelligence has an extraordinary sound. Sound contains the deeper significance of a word. One has to listen very carefully so that the word itself unfolds its own significance. First we must negate what is not intelligence. Conflict leads to deterioration of the brain. To end deterioration is to hold on to facts and put away all idealism. When you pursue non-fact, time is involved. All existence is now, so give complete attention to the fact.

Number of delegates registered by noontime on Thursday, 30 December: 1,432.



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