

COMPASSION AS RADICAL LIVING

Linda Oliveira

(Summary of Public Lecture delivered on 31.12.2015)

In China not so long ago, a free-diver with severe cramps was rescued by a beluga whale. This was an act of compassion — a fitting introduction to today's subject.

The word 'radical' is associated with anything which goes against the grain of mainstream society. Two further renderings are of particular relevance to this exploration: an inherent or fundamental part of the nature of someone or something; and that which is thorough and intended to be completely curative, e.g., radical or extreme surgery.

Two questions therefore arise:

What is our radical or fundamental nature? and

Is there a sense in which human consciousness actually requires radical surgery?

We are ultimately bound together by a deep and unshakeable Unity — that Noumenal consciousness which embraces and nourishes each and every one of us. Madame Blavatsky put it this way:

The radical unity of the ultimate essence of each constituent part of compounds in Nature — from star to mineral atom . . . and whether applied to the spiritual, intellectual or physical worlds — this unity is the one fundamental law in Occult Science.

We have a sense of this single Reality deep within us. The need to experience it plays out in different ways, such as the human longing for connection. However, a sense of Unity seems to be virtually invisible in the lives of many. This results from the kinds of connections people choose to make. The microbiologist, Charles Birch, wrote about relationships. To him, relating simply involved making connections, of which there are two types:

- When railway carriages are connected, the only difference the connection makes is that one carriage pulls the other along. This is a mechanical kind of relationship, perhaps a relationship of convenience, with one carriage having the power to determine exactly

where the other moves. The carriage being pulled along is therefore powerless.

- He described the second main type of connection using one word, and one word only: compassion. This is an internal relationship, contrasting strongly with the external way in which two train carriages relate to each other. Compassion therefore constitutes a very different order of relationship.

Birch commented:

When we fail to make connections that are critical for our lives and the life of the world we become adrift like small rafts on the ocean.

It is therefore very necessary to give serious consideration to a totally different kind of life. For example, far better than treating humans as means to our own ends, is the great virtue of valuing others for themselves. For we each have intrinsic value.

The theme of compassion has been strongly emphasized in the Buddhist and Jain traditions. In Theravada Buddhism, it forms one of the four sublime states or 'divine abodes':

compassion (*karuna*)
loving kindness (*metta*)
sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and
equanimity (*upekkha*)

When one develops these, the Buddha counsels radiating them in all directions. Certain states of mind are greatly beneficial to the world. The potency of compassionate thoughts can be harnessed and directed outwards.

In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition,

karuna is one of the two qualities to be cultivated on the Bodhisattva Path, along with enlightened Wisdom (*prajna*). Shantideva described the Awakening Mind, which results in a different quality of consciousness and a spirit of boundless generosity. The chief feature of the Jain tradition is *ahimsa*, which derives from respect for everything that has life. It is informed by a compassionate view of sentient life forms and a wish to preserve them. *The Voice of the Silence* emphasises the twin qualities of Wisdom and Compassion. Each is needed in order for the other to flower fully.

Krishnaji mentioned that until each of us has a deep sense of compassion, we shall have 'mechanical, computer-like minds ... and we shall miss the extraordinary depth and beauty, the whole significance of life'.

What is our radical — that is, fundamental — nature as human beings? Some may use the term Atman; some may think of it as Compassion fused with Wisdom. Yet words fall short of describing that which is essentially a profound and deep experience. Human consciousness does require radical surgery. But there is a catch: *we* have to carry out the operation. The need to live compassion, to *do* compassion (to 'compassionate'), and not just talk about it, is urgent. We need to be radicalised in the *best* sense of the term, not in the sense in which this word has gained currency today. This implies living and breathing Unity. Are we up to the challenge?



HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS OTHER KINGDOMS

B. D. Tendulkar

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 1.1.2016)

As the President's message proclaims, 'responsibility assumes compassion'. Thus human beings are assumed to have compassion for all other living beings also. At the present stage of human evolution, however, the bond of compassion, linking the human kingdom with all other kingdoms of Nature is almost missing. *The Voice of the Silence* says, 'Help Nature and work on with her; . . . unsullied by the hand of matter she shows her treasures only to the eye of Spirit — the eye which never closes, the eye for which there is no veil in all her kingdoms.' Obviously humanity is expected to shift the focus of consciousness from the land of matter to the eye of Spirit to strengthen our bond of unity with other kingdoms. Strengthening of this bond alone will develop a sense of responsibility towards other kingdoms.

Let us not presume, as we often do, that the human kingdom is supreme and other kingdoms exist only for its benefit. This only exhibits human arrogance arising out of human insensitivity to interdependence of various king-

doms and the existence of the one life underlying the whole of Nature, comprising all kingdoms. The human kingdom is unique, but neither supreme to nor independent of the rest.

This uniqueness can be attributed to its potential to rise to the highest level of consciousness and its capacity to work in collaboration with Nature to hasten the process of evolution — not only of human evolution, but of all other sub-human kingdoms. Humanity has benefited in abundance from them, and owes gratitude to them. This gives rise to our duty and responsibility towards other kingdoms.

In our arrogance of supremacy and self-centredness we have become blind to our responsibility and causing harm and violence to them. It is high time that we develop sympathy and compassion towards these our younger brothers and perform our duty to them as their elder brethren. Then we may realize that life is Universal in character and all animate beings and inanimate things are expressions of the one life in different forms.



Number of delegates registered Thursday, 31 December: 890

OPENING OF THE CONVENTION

About 890 delegates are attending
the 140th International Convention on the opening day.

The Convention was inaugurated at 8.00 am on 31 December beginning with an invocation by the students of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School followed by the lighting of the lamp (*kuthwilakku*, a tall brass lamp with five wicks) by the President and others, Prayers of the Religions, and the Universal Prayer led by the President, Mr Tim Boyd. The International Secretary, Ms Marja Artamaa, read out greetings received from overseas. The General Secretary of the Indian Section, Mr S. Sundaram, conveyed greetings from different parts of the Indian Section.

General Secretaries and representatives of Regional Associations gave greetings of their members, as listed below:

General Secretaries:

Mr Narendra Shah	East and Central Africa
Mrs Linda Oliveira	Australia
Mrs Sabine Van Osta	Belgium
Mr Marcos L. B. de Resende	Brazil
Mrs Jenny Baker	England
Mrs Manuela Kaulich	Germany
Mr S. Sundaram	India
Mr Wim Leys	Netherlands
Mr John Vorstermans	New Zealand
Mrs. Angels Torra Buron	Spain
Ms Mirva Jaatinen	Finland
Mr Antonio Girardi	Italy
Mr Jack Hartmann	South Africa

Representatives:

Mrs Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu	European Federation and France
Mrs Nancy Secrest	TOS International
Mr Abraham Oron	Israel
Ms Birgitta Skaerbo	Sweden
Mr Branko Staric	Slovenia
Mr Domen Kocevar	Fellows at Large to Adyar
Mrs Isis de Resende	Brazil
Mr B. L. Bhattacharya	Bangladesh
Mr Isaac Jauli	Mexico
Ms Laura Rodrigues	Argentina
Ms Carol Nicholson	Krotona Institute, USA

Ms Nancy Secrest
Ms Nilda Venegas
Mr Robert Beland

Theosophical Order of Service
Cuba
Canada

The President welcomed the gathering and delivered the Presidential Address speaking on the significance of the theme of the Convention, 'Compassion and Universal Responsibility', and gave a comprehensive report about the work of the Society around the world, and declared the Convention opened.



THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

Beginning this year with the Indo-Pacific region, the Indian Section reports no change in their membership, still at 11,327. The North India Study Camp was held at their Varanasi headquarters in October 2014. The study was on the late international President Mrs Radha Burnier's contributions and approach to Theosophy, directed by Mr P. K. Jayaswal, National Lecturer. The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, first visit to the Indian Section headquarters coincided with this event, and he gave a public lecture on 'The Ever-Present Future' on 29 October. A two-day seminar on 'Education in the Light of Theosophy and Present Day Challenges' was organized by the Section in March 2015. It was based on Dr Besant's Adyar Pamphlet no. 16, *Education in the Light of Theosophy*. The international Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, spoke at this seminar on 'Educating the Poor and the Contribution of the Olcott Education Society'. A three-day study camp was also held in March by Prof. R. C. Tampi, based on Ms Joy Mills' *The Human Journey — Quest for Self-Transformation*.

The 92nd South India Theosophical Conference was inaugurated by Mr Boyd at Adyar in April on HPB's *The Voice of the Silence*. Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary of the Indian Section, welcomed the gathering and Dr Satapathy gave the concluding address. Several distinguished members also spoke on various topics related to HPB's book. In May the Section organized four events at the Himalayan Study Centre in Bhowali: a study camp on Clara Codd's *The Way of the Disciple*, directed by Mr Jayaswal; a Workers' Training Camp; a camp for the Uttarakhand Region; and a study camp on *At the Feet of the Master* by Alcyone (J. Krishnamurti), organized by the Marathi Theosophical Federation and conducted by Prof. C. A. Shinde, National Lecturer. A study camp on 'Virtues' was organized in Bhowali in October 2014 by the Karnataka Federation and study of *The Secret Doctrine* was directed by its President, Mr B. V. Thippeswamy in April. A special session of the School of the Wisdom was organized by the international headquarters this year for the first time in Bhowali, attended by participants from the USA, Brazil,

Spain, Australia, and India in September, and was based on Shirley Nicholson's *Ancient Wisdom — Modern Insight*. Dr Satapathy inaugurated the course and Prof. Tampi directed it.

Apart from visiting the Section headquarters in Varanasi, Mr Boyd also visited the Utkal Theosophical Federation in Bhubaneswar, the Bengal Theosophical Federation in Kolkata, and the Karnataka Theosophical Federation in Bangalore, where he delivered public talks. Dr Satapathy visited Bhubaneswar during the East Zone Theosophical Conference and delivered a talk on *Theosophy and Altruism*. He also addressed various theosophical gatherings during his visits to the Tamil, Assam, and Delhi Theosophical Federations, and conducted study camps in Guwahati and Delhi. The Section's journal, *The Indian Theosophist*, was published every month with an average monthly circulation of 3,200. A special number of the journal on Dr Radha Burnier was brought out in November.

Mrs Linda Oliveira, National President of the TS in **Australia**, reports that they had a successful annual Convention with keynote speakers and longtime TS members Drs Victor and Olga Gostin. Their Section's annual School of Theosophy was held at the Springbrook Centre in Queensland on 'Discovering Buddhist Wisdom: Philosophy and Practice'. They also received the award of the first annual prize to Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, for research into the Perennial

Philosophy in its Eastern and Western Traditions; commenced publication of their redesigned national magazine; had an active schedule of National Speakers around the Section, and also a successful tour of the Section by International Lecturer Mr Vicente Hao Chin Jr, who conducted a Self-Transformation seminar at the Canyonleigh Centre in New South Wales. The placement of the new national website online earlier this year, and an active programme of activities in Lodges, Branches, and Study Centres were other accomplishments.

The **New Zealand** Section held its national Convention in Napier last January with guest speakers Mr Vicente Hao Chin Jr, from the Philippines, and Mr Barry Bowden from Australia on 'The Way Forward for Humanity: Achieving Universal Brotherhood'. A 'Process of Self-Transformation' seminar was also held in Napier, facilitated by Mr Hao Chin and others. Around 30 people attended this 3-day event. The School of Theosophy was held for four days at the HPB Lodge in Auckland with Ms Dorothy Bell from Australia, on 'Theosophical World View — Window of a New Mind'. The Central Region held two events: a weekend seminar held at Palmerston North on 'Theosophy Foundations' facilitated by the National President, Mr John Vorstermans, and an event held at Wellington entitled 'The Wisdom of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras', a study and meditation retreat. The Section membership went down by 28, from 704 to 676.



PAINTINGS BY FLORENCE FULLER

Florence Fuller, an Australian artist, was highly regarded during her active career as a portrait and landscape painter. At the peak of her career she turned to devote her art to the service of the Theosophical Society.

An exhibition of paintings by Florence Fuller is the highlight of the collection in the Adyar Museum during the Convention. Her portraits of J. Krishnamurti, Annie Besant, J. I. Wedgewood and some miniatures are on display.

Florence Fuller was born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa in 1867 and migrated as a child to Melbourne, Australia, with her family. There she trained with her uncle Robert Hawker Dowling and teacher Jane Sutherland and studied at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School, becoming a professional artist in the 1880s.

Fuller joined the Theosophical Society on 29 May 1905 in Perth, following C.W. Leadbeater's tour. the same week as Bessie Rischbieth, a feminist and social activist. Together they shaped the growing Perth Lodge into the powerful force it would become in the twenties. Fuller was Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian of the small Lodge and lent her studios for Lodge meetings. In 1906 she wrote a short essay which drew on Blavatsky's writings, urging her fellow Theosophists to put aside the physical body and its needs, to realize that the lower personal self is fleeting and to seek out the highest and truest self. In winter 1908 Annie Besant toured Australia and

membership doubled. Besant visited Fuller's studio and admired her early portraits of Olcott and Blavatsky (now in the Perth Lodge) and invited her to Adyar.

The timing of Fuller's arrival could not have been better. Fullers's stay in Adyar from 1908 to 1911 coincided with an extraordinary period in the history of the Society, and Fuller was at the heart of all the activity. Fuller had a small studio built for her, still called the Fuller Bungalow.

Fuller's personal search for the higher, true self was played out on a dramatic scale in the River Bungalow's octagonal room on a daily basis. As Leadbeater conducted the research into Krishnamurti's past lives. Fuller's practical experience in Adyar enacted what she had before only read about; that the human subject was articulated around a spiritual core, that the physical envelope was ephemeral and even personality was temporary, She learnt that on the subtler level she was connected with people of other races and genders and even with all creation.

Fuller's official position, while in Adyar, was Recording Secretary. Her main project, however, was the ambitious task of painting portraits of the Founders, significant members of the Adyar household and the Masters. In the Theosophical Society Fuller found the patron she had been trained to expect. Her portraits were placed in meeting rooms and museums and published with inspirational

quotations by the Founders. This project was diligently undertaken and pleasure in her progress reported in the Society's journals.

Fuller's portrait of Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in the Perth Lodge of the TS, was painted before her arrival in Adyar. In this painting we can see something of Fuller's academic repertoire. Olcott had died in 1907 obliging Fuller to work from a photograph. In this work Olcott is portrayed as founding father and sage of the Theosophical Society. The high forehead clearly denotes intelligence, and the snowy beard, wisdom. In her portrait of Annie Besant painted in 1918, on display at the Adyar Museum, Fuller has opened herself to a psychological reading of the sitter. She has described Besant as an intellectual and organizational giant. Would Fuller have described this work as having captured the hidden life within? The personality of the sitter has been captured — Besant's penetrating

gaze reveals much about the person that Fuller knew. But both Besant and Leadbeater taught that personality was as evanescent as the physical form. Beautiful as this portrait is, it does not represent the 'hidden life within' that Fuller came to Adyar to find.

Fuller's return to London in 1911, in time to march behind Annie Besant in what has been described as the last of the great suffragette marches for the Coronation of George V, was also a period of coming to terms with the reality of earning one's living through portraiture.

Fuller returned to Sydney with Leadbeater in 1916 where she undertook a number of teaching positions, lecturing and writing in Theosophical circles. Fuller remained within the Theosophical community until, increasingly vulnerable to poverty and ill health, she was committed, at sixty, to a hospital.

(From *The Theosophist*, March 2004)



To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms, this is at the centre of true religiousness.

Albert Einstein

