



# THE THEOSOPHIST

VOL. 132 NO. 10 JULY 2011

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NOTE: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to the Editorial Office.

Cover Picture: Swami T. Subba Row – Adyar Archives

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Official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky, 1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this magazine.

# THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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**The Theosophical Society** is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

**Theosophy** is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

# On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

## **The Awakening of Intelligence**

In the present day, technology, productivity, organization and connected matters have become very important. This could end in great danger: the danger of losing what is important in life. Because aspects of living which are essential for inward improvement, are getting overlooked or neglected, everywhere relationships are retreating. This may give rise to tussle, tension and strife, while we need goodness, sensitivity and harmony, to build relationship not only with people but with all things. It is not enough to sit at home watching videos or reading books to find out what is good. It is important to meet challenges in relation with people, working with them, and harmonizing with Nature.

It seems to me that the task of bringing people together is meant for learning the beauty of right relationship and the goodness of life. It is not enough just to be in front of a holy man, unless it helps in bringing to the fore greater truth, goodness and holiness in oneself. So, coming together with people, is really in order to grow into a state of goodness and integrity.

Relationship is not only with human beings but with all life and being happy with Nature, people of varied

environments and with oneself. This is important. Usually, something affects relationship and we get into states of disorientation with animals, plants, and the earth, not only with human beings. We are related to the earth and therefore part of what we call our planet. Perhaps the religious life means all this, to have an intimate inner bond with everything, from earth to other people around us. All of us, sooner or later, must have relationships that are free of prejudice and following it by a state of love and harmony.

Theosophical centres usually have a variety of subjects to discuss. They are meant to stimulate enquiry, and not just the usual state of responding, by ignoring or assertion. One way is not necessarily better than another, but we are talking about the Theosophical approach which we wish to understand. In many Theosophical centres there is a good library and people are exposed to subjects through lectures and discussions. These can be useful, but they need to be made alive through inner awakening. Krishnaji used the phrase, 'The Awakening of Intelligence'. Intelligence means spiritual awareness. If through contact with Theosophy and Lodges of the Theosophical Society, a change is not brought about

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within oneself, then it has done almost nothing, or very little.

One can say the same about studying or learning spiritual literature. We do not learn in order to quote and appear erudite or anything like that. We participate in order to spark consciousness, to awaken the mind. In the very well-known work *Viveka-chudāmani*, it is said: 'What is the use of books if they do not awaken the mind, and what is the use of books if the consciousness is awake.' In both cases one can say that it is increase in perception that is valuable.

Of course we know that we have to apply ourselves for intelligence to awaken and to flower. In some cases the time may not be right and pleasures still seem important. We cannot do anything except to leave freedom to everybody. To me it seems that intelligence cannot grow when there are contradictions inside, when we feel like saying, 'Do not listen to people who are Christians, Buddhists or whatever else.' We are then closing a part of the mind. So, we are saying do not allow the mind to become conditioned. If that is clear, one can listen to anybody or read anything and not get confused.

Truth is not a fortress we build, to sit inside, apparently protected on every side. If a comparison is to be made, it is like pitching a tent for the night — meant only to be unpitched next day. So, we can listen without conditioning, listen with respect and be free inside.

### **The Blending of Man with Nature**

In the original programme of the

Theosophical Society, Madame Blavatsky wrote of the 'spiritual and psychic blending of man with Nature'. This phrase is not easy to understand, because we are not used to thinking along these lines. Here we will attempt to explain a little bit of our understanding, even if it is difficult.

It is not easy to know and realize what life is, and most people are not even considering this fundamental question. They are born willy-nilly, and go on living life in the same way, perhaps inventing a reason which suits their personality. Each person has his or her own social, psychological and personal background, and each one tries to imagine the aim of life to suit this background; but neither the perception, nor the aim may be correct. Since both emanate from a petty situation of life, the person is probably quite unaware of the vast order in Nature. It is only by deep and constant meditation that anyone learns to distinguish between what is important and what is unimportant. In *At the Feet of the Master*, the distinction between these two is said to be part of the understanding of the vast area of the real and unreal of which everybody has heard.

In an important book of his, David Bohm says: 'Order and Unity are part of an implicate order which . . . constitutes a fundamental aspect of Reality.' We have only to think about the vast difference between unity and disunity, order and disorder to realize that there is an immeasurable distance between them. To the person who thinks of this subject at all the distance seems almost impossibly

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long, order and unity are so far away from the life that we live.

The social life of the human being is full of confusion. He lives to put a little order here and there and may even imagine that he is succeeding. The same happens with unity, so the reality is that disorder and disunity afflict him every now and again unless he ceases to think this usually happens. It is too painful to look at facts and therefore we try to ignore them and somehow pass through life after life, which is why it happens that we spend so many incarnations achieving almost nothing.

In the *Bhagavadgītā* Arjuna asks the Divine Presence to deign to explain by what glories he pervades these worlds. The Lord replies: 'There is no end to details of me . . . whatsoever is glorious, good, beautiful and mighty, understand that to go from a fragment of my splendour.' Everything that is manifested has something of the good, the beautiful and the mighty. This is so, not only in forms and appearance, but also in the consciousness and mode of being of all that exists in Nature. That is what the Emancipated can see, experience and rejoice in knowing.

There is ever-increasing perfection in the infinite variety of which we are vaguely aware. Even the most despicable of creatures have in them hidden or explicit, a perfection which is manifesting itself now and for ever more. To study it, to learn, to see, is an art — the greatest art that we are capable of learning. In fact, to see order and beauty, is not an ordinary

experience. We are used to these terms, so we think we know them, but we do not trust. This is a truth which can be seen now and forever in the smallest being, as well as in the vast universe. That is why it is said, 'There is no end to my divine powers'.

The question is asked how can I know them, in the smallest as in the greatest. To know seems easy because we have very little idea of knowledge in our lives, but perhaps it would be best to say we know through meditation.

Meditation is another word which has become commonplace, but it is not. All life can be a meditation because everywhere, in the smallest as well as in the greatest, this is shown in some way. The door may be small but when one sees through it, the other side is infinitely glorious and good. There is nothing which does not carry the perfection which belongs to it.

Though it is now mixed up with other things, the truth must not be forgotten that there is before each one the beautiful and wonderful to experience and to know.

### **The Past and the Future**

We work, as far as I have been told, for the future. Many changes in the world should bring about one great difference. The world will not be divided, but will be one, a totality working towards the same end. All the small changes which take place have little relevance to this great change into a unity within which there will be many differences. The small changes appear important now, but in view of what

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our Society is working for, these have no relevance or little relevance.

One of the minor concerns which people have now is whether so and so is recognized for what he is or whether he is not. We can go back in history to find out whether Napoleon was a great figure or an ordinary man who became important because of circumstances. The fame that a person achieves in worldly affairs or circumstances is from a certain point of view of little consequence. What is important is the movement of progress in the real or spiritual sense, involving awakening to realities. Sometimes we mix this up with small matters. In the real context, the forward movement depends only on what promotes a greater understanding of our function as human beings.

Humanity is said to be special, because it is at this stage that a new life-wave comes down, enabling everyone to move further up if he wishes to do so. It is only in humanity where there is a struggle between the higher nature and the lower. The lower nature has gone along in a beautiful way until the human stage, but it is when a change has to be made from the lower mechanical progress to a higher intellectual, moral and spiritual upliftment that the difficulties begin. The Theosophical Society is concerned with this movement. It is not merely important because of the vehicle or instruments involved, but a taking over of command by the higher nature, which is the beginning of a future of untold and unimaginable beauty.

Recently several letters have been addressed to the President asking that justice be done to Mr Judge. About one

and a quarter centuries have passed since he was prominent among members. There are some who favour the actions that he took, and others who do not; are we going to make a judgement on behalf of all the members at this point? Is this really feasible? The decision in favour or not, will be only on paper, and people will continue to think of what is possible as they wish and see. The Society cannot regulate this, and is not called upon to do so.

So, the best thing is to discriminate to the extent that our own intelligence lets us, which may be right or wrong. What does it matter to others? Since one cannot shape, or want to shape, what other people think, the Theosophical Society cannot, after one hundred and thirty years, decide what its members should see or think about past happenings. There is the case of C. W. Leadbeater, who I think was much misunderstood and maligned. Others may think he was a bad character. Will our thinking change what he was? There are many people who, being human, had faults and weaknesses. By finding out what exactly was the matter, it helps neither them nor us. Our present attitude towards things is what matters, not the conclusions we may make about what people in the past did.

So, let us act in the present and keep our conclusions about past personalities and events tentative and in the background. We can then move forward from where we are, which is what we have to be truly concerned with. What is the direction in which we are proceeding? Are we moving and if so, is it towards a greater understanding of life? ✧

# The Watchful Eye that Observes

C. A. SHINDE

THE theme of the Convention is 'Theosophical Teachings on the Path'. The path is the path of preparation, to prepare oneself for sacrifice and service; and the teaching given is not mental but spiritual, where there is no knower inside oneself. The important teaching to remember on such a Path of preparation is that the more we share, the more we have. That makes the difference in one's living. Every one of us has something to share; therefore, on the path of preparation, sharing needs to be the attitude of mind. The sharing attitude is the helping or benevolent attitude.

A distinctive statement from a Mahatma Letter focuses on the large purpose of the Theosophical Society: 'You have done well to see the "large purpose" in the small beginnings of the Theosophical Society.' The Theosophical Society was started to help humanity by feeding the soul with the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood. For this, one needs to have watchful discrimination and a discriminating watch, as man's life is in his own hands. Many of us are aware that the Theosophical Society is engaged in spreading this message of Universal

Brotherhood throughout its branches all over the world.

The Theosophical Society is a vital, living organization and its growth in the last 135 years indicates the spreading of its message. The first message is of educating people to live in a brotherly way not only with men but also with all that surrounds us. Another message is about its role; the Theosophical Society plays its role as a cornerstone which connects the walls of religions that are at right angles to each other, and thereby it brings about the essential unity of all religions. The walls of religions need to be connected by an understanding of the Brotherhood of religions. The third message for each one to remember is that Theosophical teaching itself is the way of holiness; it is the gospel of goodwill. H. P. Blavatsky, in her messages, says that he who preaches the gospel of goodwill teaches Theosophy. It teaches us to view life in its entirety, its totality, to see the oneness of life through self-discovery, which also means to educate oneself to look into the noumenal world beyond the phenomenal. Perhaps then one can realize that it is the surest path to purification.

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**Prof. C. A. Shinde** is a National Lecturer of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, and Librarian of the Adyar Library. Talk given at the international Convention, Adyar, in December 2010.

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It is the path of dedication of the mind and heart for self-discovery. The teaching says 'to live to benefit mankind' is its first step. Theosophy teaches us to try our best to treat others as we would wish to be treated ourselves. One enters the path only when one prepares oneself and realizes the value of 'living for giving'; because the law of growth in spirituality consists in giving and not in taking. Living not for oneself but for others means that the one on the path of preparation needs to learn to forgive his enemies, to give his heart to his child, to tolerate his friends, to revere his parents and thus to become a good son to them. In this sense, is it not a philosophy of gratitude?

A gospel of goodwill involves a benevolent attitude, loving kindness and universal love. In one word, it is Brotherhood, which teaches us to examine our life and which says: Man's life is in his own hands, ignorance is no excuse for doing wrong; an unexamined life is not worth living. Even if all of us do not have equal talents, each one's life provides enough opportunity to develop talent provided one has a watchful eye to examine one's own life. To see we should not be merely curious about each other but more concerned about each other. That makes one forgive his enemy, tolerate his friends, revere his parents and give his heart to his child and become a good son of his Father in Heaven. It is a gospel of goodwill that teaches us to examine our life, to learn that an unexamined life is not worth living as animal passions within us become predominant.

### The Watchful Eye

The word 'Watch' in my talk 'The Watchful Eye that Observes' implies to keep under observation, to be on the alert, to be careful and see that all is well, not to stumble or do something wrong. The word 'watchful' implies to observe closely, employing both mind and heart. The watchful eye that observes implies the triple attention of the eye, head and heart. When I observe closely the letters of the word 'watch', it gives me valuable guidance. Its five letters are W-A-T-C-H.

**W** stands for watching my Words. **A** stands for watching my Action. **T** stands for watching my Thought. **C** stands for watching my Choice (because by nature we are very selective) and **H** stands for watching whether there is Harmony in all these. In the course of evolution man has been gifted with freedom of choice. Until now, he has been very concerned about becoming an effect in worldly matters. Now, however, Watchful Discrimination and Discriminating Watch need to be the characteristic feature on his path of preparation. The Watchful Eye is a distinctive eye; it is a clear eye. It is the eye of understanding. It is a Bodhichakshu. Unlike the physical eye it sees insights and grasps the truth; the truth of non-separateness or unity of life. It makes one learn not only that *the unexamined life is not worth living*, but also to have a balance between *the rationality of the mind and the generosity of the heart*.

In Mahatma Letter No. 69, it is clearly mentioned that 'The Real knowledge here spoken of is not mental but a spiritual

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state implying full union between the knower and the known.’ It is the Watchful eye, the rational mind and generous heart that can grasp this truth. This is not a mere mental enquiry but an experience in the heart by the involvement of the whole man. There is no use in arguing about it; it has to be experienced. The *Kathopanishad* mentions: ‘When all the desires of the heart are overcome, this very mortal becomes immortal and experiences Brahman, the Universal Self, here in this very Life.’

Really remarkable about the triple attention of the eye, head and heart is that one does not get confused by the important statements of spiritually enlightened persons; rather they give one the ability to grasp the meaning and help him to tread the path with confidence. Two statements in this connection regarding the spiritual state of Union between the knower and the known are 1. The observer is the observed, and 2. Truth is a pathless land.

The statement, ‘The Observer is the Observed’, points to the state of consciousness where there are *not two but one*. Neither is there the knower nor the known and of such an integrated state of consciousness, J. Krishnamurti says: ‘The perfume of a flower is the flower. The very flower is the essence of that perfume.’ In such an exalted state there is no subject — no object. Only one is there. There is neither knowledge nor ignorance because there is no knower within to declare it. All has gone. All has disappeared and merged in the source.

In such an exalted state, one could at once comprehend certain strange statements given in *Light on the Path*: ‘The mind may recognize truth but the spirit cannot receive it.’ The watchful eye that observes without the observer, indicates a process of learning by way of unlearning, the process of understanding by way of non-understanding. Does this sound new and strange? One may find it too abstract a teaching but perhaps it is true that such an exalted state of heart and mind needs to be experienced by the involvement of the whole man.

The second statement is ‘Truth is a pathless land’. One can comprehend it at least intellectually, for when one understands that Space as dimension is an illusion and as infinity is vision then there is no path or land. Because, then one would see land everywhere, around him, above him, below him; land would be everywhere, interpenetrating, and inherent in the heart. Such a consciousness or awareness has no choice because its centre is everywhere but its circumference is nowhere. So is it not for each one of us to enquire? And is it not that there are as many paths as there are enquiring human hearts? It is not the Path that varies but the means to reach destiny that varies. When the teaching says, ‘There is no other path to go’, one needs to set his feet firmly on the path of holiness *that involves the whole man*. In this sense, one can see the Theosophical teaching is no teaching but an understanding — *understanding, by way of attention and alertness*, by having an enquiring heart that makes one experience

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what lies beyond the understanding of our brain consciousness. It is understanding through an integrated state of consciousness, experiencing peace that passeth understanding. Such understanding remains not only as an ideal but becomes his responsibility, because any *discovery bears its own responsibility*.

In order to understand such a teaching of responsibility and to be more clear about it, let us imagine we are all together climbing the spiritual ladder — a ladder of evolution that leads to the divine temple. What would happen if any one of us stopped in the middle of the ladder? Not only would he stop his own onward movement or progress, but also that of all those who are climbing behind him. On the other hand, if he takes himself in hand and hastens his progress, then not only would he hasten his own progress but also help the others to progress. Such a helping attitude on the path also means *neither thinking nor feeling* evil towards a brother. Secondly, when a Theosophist finds something of real worth he must share it with others, that is, 'If you know, let others know' should become his way of life. To help human beings in their spiritual progress should become the highest aim of the path of service and sacrifice.

One more point about this spiritual ladder that we must remember is that the steps on it symbolize the steps of our own Karma. Karma seems to be bad but it is beneficent. At the human stage one is bound to make mistakes but the law of Karma rectifies these and hastens one's progress. However, one who is wise

rectifies himself, becomes aware of his responsibility and knows man's life is in his own hands. All this has to be discovered by himself afresh. The steps of Karma need to be climbed step by step by taking oneself in hand, i.e. by holding firmly the two vertical poles of the ladder.

The vertical poles of the ladder symbolize qualifications like devotion and wisdom. This is how the teaching of Karma makes life intelligible. In the same way the teaching of Reincarnation makes one *realize* and be aware of the ongoing path of evolution of the soul or the unfoldment of consciousness. It is an important teaching of Theosophy regarding the *existence* of perfected men. It is one of the most distinctive teachings and one of the most encouraging. It holds all the members together as they see that human destiny is one, i.e. to have conscious perfection.

### Stability on the Path

Stabilization on the ongoing path of perfection is much more difficult than to have knowledge about it. What is needed is to discover for oneself afresh two things: that life and happiness are inseparable, and each man is to himself the way. H. P. Blavatsky described this road with inspiring words in which she describes the nature of the road and what is needed on that Path. She writes: 'There is a road steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road. And it leads to the very heart of the Universe.' Further, she gives a hint that 'There is no danger that *dauntless courage* cannot conquer. There

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is no trial that *spotless purity* cannot pass through. There is no difficulty that *strong intellect* cannot surmount.'

Such important teachings make one *self-reliant* and, that in turn helps to stabilize one on the Path. The whole-hearted feeling of the aspirant, his watchful eye and generous heart help him see how his motive regulates and directs his thoughts in his dealings. He sees the importance of the right direction of thought. Theosophy also teaches one to observe the observer within. By an action of triple attention one needs to prepare himself to become alert to consider, to become alert to decide, and to become alert to act. That brings dimensional transformation in his service.

Service in the physical world becomes right action. Service in the emotional world progresses from sympathy and empathy to compassion. Service in the mental world gains a quality of understanding rather than finding faults with others. He thus learns to move by conviction rather than by his likes and dislikes.

Such faith and confidence in oneself is a good sign of one's progress. It gives the right spirit of enquiry and he would then contemplate questions arising in his doubting mind because doubt grows in proportion to faith. He asks questions such as: Why do some people give their lives to others? Why have our leaders given their whole life for the great cause of Theosophy in spite of many difficulties? Why did they continue to serve without any complaints? Why did they

remain constantly active in good work and try to do what is most worth doing? Such deep enquiry leads one not only to progress but also to have patience. He asks further about the Teaching of Theosophy especially when it proclaims there is no dead matter, that everything is life and consciousness, that there is one essence, one life, one consciousness in the midst of diversity, and the existence of perfected ones. Is it not a new perception of Theosophy?

If one contemplates and reflects on such teaching given about the origin of man, one may be struck by the thought of the time period taken by the evolutionary process to bring about the origin of man. A thoughtful imagination starts up in the aspirant, like: How long did life wait as a rock before it evolved into a plant? How long did life wait as a plant to evolve into an animal? How many millions of years must it have taken for the life in animals to become a man? Such contemplation then definitely leads one to know the spiritual value of devices that are in his possession, like the mind, intellect and heart. Then he understands man is endowed with a mind to think rightly, with an intellect to analyse and appreciate, and with a heart to feel and harmonize.

Such deep enquiry and triple attention makes him sensitive. The one hidden life vibrates in minerals, shines in plants and animals and perhaps makes him feel his responsibility towards harmony, and especially to look into the noumenal world beyond the phenomenal. He understands the basic teaching that there is a descent

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of spirit into matter followed by ascent through matter; in modern terms, an involution followed by evolution progressing at the human stage by self-induced and self-devised ways and means. The teaching or gospel of Goodwill makes one silent both inwardly and outwardly. We see that people of goodwill are often silent. There is a very inspiring teaching in the Upanishad-s by a sage to his disciple:

When the sage was pressed for a definition of God he remained silent; that means God is silence. When again asked

to express God in words he said: '*Neti, Neti*' (Not this, Not this). But when pressed for a positive explanation he uttered the sublime words '*tat tvam asi*' — Thou art That. You are that Brahmā. That is what the Mahatma states, that the spiritual state implies full union between the knower and the known.

The teaching makes clear that the differences are not in essence but are in the states, conditions, limitations and degrees of one's intelligence and this is observed through the Watchful Eye — and that helps one on the Path. ✧

If an eye never falls asleep,  
All dreams will by themselves cease:  
If the mind retains its oneness,  
The ten thousand things are of one  
suchness.  
When the deep mystery of one suchness  
is fathomed,  
All of a sudden we forget the external  
entanglements:  
When the ten thousand things are  
viewed in their oneness,  
We return to the origin and remain what  
we are.

Jianzhi Sengcan

# Opening the Door to the Eternal Mysteries

BHUPENDRA R. VORA

THE formation of the Theosophical Society at the end of the nineteenth century was an event of great significance for the evolution of human consciousness. It was into a climate of traditional religious intolerance and dogmatism on the one hand and the materialistic philosophy of natural sciences on the other that the modern Theosophical Society came on to the stage. According to the prime founder, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, this new Society was to be for the revival of the wisdom-religion that she claimed had been preserved throughout the ages in the Mystery Schools, particularly those of the East.

The ancient Mystery Schools of India, Chaldea, Egypt and Greece taught the mysteries of the Universe to the elect few aspirants who were found suitable to receive this knowledge under vows of secrecy which have never been known to be broken. In the ancient India of the Upanishad-s it was the tradition for an aspirant to go to the *āśrama* (hermitage) of the Rshi with wood for the sacrificial fire. The significance of this offering from

the outer point of view was that he would serve his Master faithfully and look after his daily needs. The inner significance was however more profound, that he was surrendering his lower personality to gain the higher knowledge which in India was known as Brahma Vidyā or the Divine Wisdom. The aspirant was put through rigorous tests before the esoteric wisdom was revealed to him.

In the School of Pythagoras, not only was the aspirant expected to adhere to a certain code of conduct but also to observe silence; i.e. be an Akoustikoi for a certain period of time until he obtained enough knowledge to entitle him to speak. Similar traditions existed amongst the Essenes, Druids and other ancient peoples. The Maya and Inca cultures of South America reveal such traditions as well. In ancient Egypt, sacred ceremonies were performed in the Pyramids where initiates were introduced to the deeper aspects of life.

These Mystery Schools taught that Secret Science which is in the hands of the Occult Brotherhood. The system of

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**Mr Bhupendra R. Vora** is a member and former General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in East and Central Africa, now living in England. Talk given at the Blavatsky Lodge, London.

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teaching differentiated between the outer or exoteric and the inner or esoteric knowledge. The esoteric knowledge was only imparted to those who were entitled to receive it. Thus the knowledge or Gnosis, as the early Christians called it, was unwritten and imparted only to the duly prepared. When the Christ was asked by his disciples why He spoke to the public in parables He replied: 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables' (Mark, 4:11).

There was a time far back when the Wisdom Religion was taught universally. The Hindus refer to this period as Satya Yuga or the Age of Truth. As the world fell into the darkness of ignorance the ancient teachings became occult and became unavailable except for those who were qualified to receive them. The destruction of the great libraries of Alexandria in Egypt and Nalanda in India are examples of the places of learning that were destroyed by the unenlightened. In Europe during the Dark Ages, there was a climate of religious intolerance in which free thought could not survive. The proposition of the Heliocentric Theory was considered a heresy. With the coming of Sir Francis Bacon and others, the darkness of ignorance began to lift.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Himalayan Mahatmas who inspired the founding of the Theosophical Society felt that the time was ripe for humanity at large to receive the divine wisdom or Theosophy. It was with a view

to bring the light to humanity en masse, in preparation for a New Age that the Theosophical Society was set up. What is the nature of this knowledge? In the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine* is quoted a *sutra* from the ancient *R̥g Veda*. The sage who composed it, enquires about the mystery of creation in beautiful poetic words that express the human quest for the Truths of Existence. The *sutra* known as the Nāsadiya Sutra reads as follows:

Nor Aught nor Nought existed; yon bright sky was not, nor heaven's broad roof outstretched above. What covered all? What sheltered? What concealed? Was it the water's fathomless abyss?

There was no death — yet there was nought immortal, there was no confine betwixt day and night; the only One breathed breathless by itself, other than It there nothing since has been. Darkness there was, and all at first was veiled. In gloom profound — an ocean without light. The germ that still lay covered in the husk burst forth, one nature, from the fervent heat. . . .

Who knows the secret? Who proclaimed it here? Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang? The gods themselves came later into being. Who knows from whence this great creation sprang? That, whence all this great creation came, whether its will created or was mute. The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven, He knows it or perchance even He knows not.

Gazing into eternity . . . Ere the foun-

## Opening the Door to the Eternal Mysteries

dations of the earth were laid . . .

Thou wert. And when the subterranean flame shall burst its prism and devour the frame, Thou shalt be still as Thou wert before and know no change, when time shall be no more. O, endless thought, divine Eternity.

Why was the Universe created? Whence! How! Whither does it end! What am I, what is the purpose of my existence, what is the goal! What is God and where is He! How am I connected with him and the Universe! What is the explanation for the apparent injustices of life! What is the meaning and the use of suffering and pain! What is luck, fate or destiny! What is life — what death! Theosophy attempts to answer these and many other similar questions which men of all ages have asked.

Behind the outer forms and rituals of the traditional religions of the world, may be discovered this wisdom tradition. This Divine Wisdom is the Gnosis of the Christians, Brahma Vidyā of the Hindus and Sufism of the Muslims. An example of the esoteric nature of the teaching can be seen in this verse from the great Sufi teacher, Jalaluddin Rumi, regarding the soul's evolutionary journey:

I died from the mineral and became a plant;  
I died from the plant and reappeared in an  
animal;  
I died from the animal and became a man.  
Whenceforth then should I fear? Where  
did I grow less by dying? Next time I  
shall die from the man,  
That I may grow the wings of the angel.

With the advent of the Theosophical Society the veil was lifted from the ancient and timeless wisdom. Madame Blavatsky described her publication, *Isis Unveiled*, in the preface, as 'A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology'. However, *The Secret Doctrine*, which is a synthesis of science, religion and philosophy gives a very fascinating view of the nature of Reality and the cyclic process in three fundamental propositions which are the cornerstones of the occult philosophy:

1. An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable PRINCIPLE [Parabrahm] on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception . . . It is beyond the range and reach of thought — in the words of the *Māndukya Upanishad* 'unthinkable and unspeakable'.
2. The Eternity of the Universe *in toto* as a boundless plane; periodically 'the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing'. . . 'The appearance and disappearance of Worlds is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux.'
3. The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-soul [Parabrahm] . . . and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul — through the Cycle of Incarnation . . . in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic Law.

The Three Fundamental Propositions lay before us the principles governing the Universe and the evolution of life.

## The Theosophist

Madame Blavatsky describes this Universal Principle as 'having a centre everywhere and circumference nowhere'.

She states in *The Secret Doctrine* that this ancient and timeless wisdom has been conveyed to mankind in an unbroken chain from one planetary system to another, from one globe to another, during eons of time by those Great Beings, who are members of the Occult Hierarchy. These Mysteries consist of a vast body of teaching which embraces every conceivable subject to which the mind of man can be turned.

An amazing amount of knowledge covering science, philosophy and religion is covered in this magnum opus of Blavatsky. A vast panorama of evolution opens before us with the revelation of the subjects of cosmogenesis (origin and evolution of the cosmos) and anthropogenesis (origin and evolution of man).

The other great source of this knowledge is *The Mahatma Letters*. The fine scholar, Virginia Hanson, states that the history of *The Mahatma Letters* is in time but the wisdom contained therein is timeless. In their correspondence with the two English gentlemen, the Mahatmas reveal many aspects of the spiritual teachings. The originals of these letters are preserved in the British Library.

The Mahatmas discuss at length the state of traditional religions, in many of the Letters. Institutionalized religions with their priesthoods and churches, dogmatic beliefs, blind ritualism and anthropomorphic conceptions, are given as the causes of a multitude of evils and a great

curse of humanity. These religions have turned their followers into selfish bigots and fanatics that hate all mankind out of their own sects without rendering them any better or moral for it. In the name of their religions, human beings impose untold suffering on their fellow human beings without any qualms.

The Mahatma KH states:

the sum of human misery will never be diminished unto that day when the better portion of humanity destroys in the name of Truth, Morality and Universal Charity, the altars of their false gods.

The Theosophical Society was expected to be the cornerstone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity. In this connection the Great Adept, the Mahachohan said:

To achieve the proposed object, a greater, wiser and especially a more benevolent intermingling of the high and the low, of the alpha and omega of society was determined upon.

It was with this view in mind that the three Objects of the Society were formulated. They are a complete charter for the regeneration of humanity covering all aspects that would, if understood and implemented, remove the causes of division amongst the peoples of the world. The first Object in particular was considered by the Founders to be of primary importance in bringing about a realization of the oneness of all life.

The essence of the occult teaching is the concept of the One homogeneous

## Opening the Door to the Eternal Mysteries

Principle which is the substratum of this manifested universe and which pervades all the myriad forms of life. Universal Brotherhood was therefore proposed not as a speculative theory but an absolute reality. In the three fundamental propositions, Madame Blavatsky refers to this One Principle as Parabrahman.

Occult doctrine proposes that there is an Immutable Principle (Parabrahman) or Reality. From this Nirguna (attributeless) One Reality comes into being the Saguna (with attributes) Reality, in cycles of time. In the Time and Space dimension the One becomes the Many and evolves through the various planes of existence to reach perfection and in accord with the cycles

of time the day of Brahmā comes to an end. The night of Brahmā begins and the Manifested world merges back into the One Unknown rootless root of all existence.

In *The Mahatma Letters*, the Mahatma M refers to this cyclic process in the following words:

When the Spirit-man reaches the last bead of the chain and passes into final Nirvāna, this last world also disappears or passes into subjectivity. Thus are there among the stellar galaxies births and deaths of worlds ever following each other, in the orderly procession of natural Law. And . . . the last bead is strung upon the thread of the 'Mahāyuga'.

The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,  
The first of his acts of old.  
Ages ago I was set up,  
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.  
When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.  
Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth;  
before he had made the earth with its fields,  
or the first of the dust of the world.  
When he established the heavens, I was there,  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
when he made firm the skies above,  
when he established the fountains of the deep,  
when he assigned to the sea its limit,  
so that the waters might not transgress his command,  
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
then I was beside him, like a master workman;  
and I was daily his delight,  
rejoicing before him always,  
rejoicing in his inhabited world  
and delighting in the sons of men.

Proverbs 8:22–31

# T. Subba Row Garu

JOSEPHINE RANSOM

ONE of the most brilliant figures who passed across the early stage of the Theosophical Society was T. Subba Row Garu, BA, BL. He was born on 6 July 1856 and died on 24 June 1890. He belonged to the strict Smārta Brahman caste. His early years showed no exceptional talents, but in 1872 he began a brilliant college career. A little later he passed his law examinations with ease, and by 1880 had a lucrative law practice. He was married but had no children. Later on he suffered from some ‘mysterious cutaneous disease’, said Colonel Olcott, who endeavoured to help him by means of his own great powers of healing and mesmerism, but to no avail. Early on the day of his death, Subba Row said his Guru called him and he did not wish to be disturbed; without further word or sign to those about him he died. ‘A great star fell from the firmament of contemporary thought.’

Subba Row’s connection with the Founders of the Theosophical Society began with a correspondence between himself, HPB and Damodar. Then in 1882 these three with Colonel Olcott formed a close personal friendship. It was not thought that he possessed any special occult knowledge, but upon meeting HPB

his hidden store of such knowledge suddenly opened out. He recognized his Guru and ‘thenceforward held intercourse with him and other Mahatmas; with some personally at our Headquarters, with others elsewhere and by correspondence’. He was most reticent about this occult side of his nature. When importuned for occult instruction, he replied that he ‘dared not reveal any of the secrets entrusted to him by his Guru’. But seemingly with those who ‘knew’ he opened out, and showed himself not only a brilliant conversationalist upon metaphysical subjects but also a very competent instructor in Occultism — as was seen with C. W. Leadbeater, whose occult powers he helped to train.

Indian philosophy was Subba Row’s main interest and in that he was deeply versed, especially in its occult implications. He studied Western philosophy also. ‘He was an intellectual phenomenon,’ wrote Colonel Olcott of him, and others regarded him as ‘one of the highest Occultists of Southern India’. HPB considered him her equal in Occultism.

Because he believed the world, and especially the Western world, was in no way prepared for the open acceptance of occult doctrines, he joined issue with HPB

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Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, July 1956.

## T. Subba Row Garu

whose frankness in giving out all she could of her own occult knowledge made him very uneasy. She was entrusted with acquainting the world in general with the idea and ideals held throughout the ages by esotericists. Knowledge of the laws and powers in Nature has always been held as dangerous if acquired by anyone not properly prepared to use it for the benefit of others and not for the aggrandizement of the individual. So Subba Row was reticent where HPB was open. It was well known that he declined to have anything to do with *The Secret Doctrine* in which HPB set out to instruct the world, and not only the selected few, in Occultism.

Part of HPB's work was to explain the full complement of the 'principles' which go to make the total of the human constitution, a subject upon which the Western world was entirely ignorant. She argued cogently for the sevenfold set of principles, Subba Row for a fourfold classification. From different angles both were of course right. What matters most to us in these days is that their controversy left us a rare rich legacy of occult information about the constitution of man. It must be remembered that Subba Row's views were published in *The Theosophist* and therefore widely disseminated and studied, and helped to shape thought in those early days. It is important to note what the Masters seemed to wish to impart (guardedly) about man's full constitution and the exact relation of the parts of his small human cosmos to the great cosmos. For of such knowledge is Occultism. The 'forces' inherent in the great cosmos are

one and all with utmost precision repeated in man, and they act and react upon one another with exactness.

Understanding all this and being exceedingly well versed in the ancient scriptures, both those which are 'Aryan' in origin and development from the Veda-s and Upanishad-s onwards, and those which came from Atlantis and are called Tantra-s and Āgama-s, Subba Row said that only the 'Initiate' can understand the inner meaning of all the occult information to be gained from both sources. Part of true Occultism is an intimate knowledge of the human constitution, its origin and its use. It is helpful when considering Subba Row's point of view to keep before us the diagram overleaf and so be clear about what he and HPB had in their minds and why they differed.<sup>1</sup>

The first column under Esoteric Buddhism shows how Mr Sinnett understood from the Masters' letters what is the arrangement of man's principles. Upon this Subba Row commented that it meant 'the Tibetan form of Esoteric Buddhism is in closer connection at the present with the Esoteric Doctrine than any other popular religion, on account of the presence of the great Himalayan Brotherhood in Tibet and Their constant guidance, care and supervision'.

HPB defended the sevenfold classification, which is the basis of Vedāntic teaching and of our present usage in the Society. But the fourfold classification of the third column, Subba Row contended, was of a greater antiquity. For, said he, 'though there are seven Principles in man,

THE SEPTENARY DIVISION IN DIFFERENT INDIAN SYSTEMS

Esoteric Buddhism	Vedānta	Tāraka Rāja Yoga
1. Sthula Śarira	Annamayakośa	} Sthulopādhi
2. Prāna	} Prānamayakośa	
3. The Vehicle of Prāna		
4. Kāma Rupa	} Manomayakośa	} Sukshmopādhi
5. Mind { a) Volitions and feelings, etc.		
b) Vijñānam		
6. Spiritual Soul	Ānandamayakośa	Kāranopādhi
7. Ātmā	Ātmā	Ātmā

there are but three distinct Upādhi-s in each of which his Ātmā may work independently of the rest'. The word Upādhi means 'sheath or seat of the different states of existence'. Much of this controversy passed into our Theosophic thought, for HPB was asked questions about it and her answers have been embodied in *The Secret Doctrine*, especially in the fifth volume.<sup>2</sup>

At the request of many members, Subba Row gave, at the Convention of 1886, a series of 'Lectures on the Study of the *Bhagavadgītā*'. In these lectures he uses the term Daiviprakṛti, the 'Light of the Logos', which is known to students of *The Secret Doctrine* as 'Fohat', and as

Kundalini when operating in the human body. He based his talks on a fourfold classification of the principles in man, the solar system, the solar cosmos, and the 'whole cosmos'. In enumerating these basic principles he explained them 'in the order of evolution'.

He postulated that Parabrahman exists before all things and is the one essence from which starts into existence a centre of conscious energy, the Logos (of which there may be a countless number) — the first 'Ego' to appear in a cosmos, the one source of all energy, the abstract Logos, 'the beginning of all creation and the end of all evolution'. This first Logos, unborn and eternal, exists in a latent condition in

the bosom of Parabrahman and starts as a centre of conscious energy at the time of cosmic activity, and when it does, from its 'objective standpoint', Parabrahman appears to it as a 'veil', as Mulaprakṛti (the root of matter). Even by this first Logos (or Ísvara) Parabrahman cannot be seen as It is but only 'with a veil thrown over It, and that veil is the mighty expanse of cosmic matter'. This Ísvara emanates a conscious energy which is its power and light.

Thus we have four characteristics which are the bases of all things in our universe. They are: 1. Parabrahman; 2. Mulaprakṛti — not Parabrahman itself, but its appearance; 3. Ísvara or Logos, the 'one Ego'; 4. The Light of this Logos, Daiviprakṛti, or Fohat. This Light is the 'intellectual' energy of Ísvara, the 'One existing representative of the Power and Wisdom of Parabrahman. Matter acquires all its attributes and all its powers by the action of this Light that emanates from the Logos upon Mulaprakṛti'. It is the link between objective matter and the subjective thought of Ísvara, the one instrument with which Ísvara works.<sup>3</sup> These eternal four principles are worked out with care and expressed in noble language in the Proem in the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*.

Then Subba Row asks that we conceive of the manifested universe again in a four-fold way, this time as corresponding to the four basic human forms or *Śarira-s*.

1. The manifested total solar system with all its principles is the *Sthula Śarira*, the physical body of the cosmos;

2. The Light that emanates from the Logos is the *Linga Śarira* (the subtle body) of the cosmos;

3. This Logos is the one germ from which the whole cosmos springs — which contains the 'image' of the universe — the *Kāraṇa Śarira* (causal body) existing as it does before the cosmos comes into existence;

4. Parabrahman, which bears the same relation to the Logos as our Ātmā does to the human *Kāraṇa Śarira*.

This fourfold nature of the 'infinite universe' is repeated in the nature of the solar system. For a further description of this solar system the word Vāch (Sound, Voice, Word) is used. This Sacred Word, or Verbum, or Pranava, has four states which correspond to the four principles of the solar cosmos. These four are:

1. Vaikhari Vāch — audible utterance; this represents the whole cosmos in its objective form;

2. Madhyamā Vāch — middle sound, inaudible: the 'Light of the Logos';

3. Paśyanti Vāch — the sound of the Logos itself;

4. Parā Vāch — Supreme Sound or Word, which is Parabrahman.

*The Secret Doctrine* explains how these four operations of cosmic Sound are repeated in the human body as it courses through certain chakra-s. By concentrating on uttered sound one can move, in reverse as it were, from Vaikhari Vāch to Parā where the one full sound of the 'Voice of the Silence', the cosmic consciousness, is experienced.

Another correspondence of great

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interest is that which shows how the fourfold set of cosmic principles is the basis of the four in man:

1. Viśvānara (entire, universal) — the one physical basis from which the whole objective world started into existence;

2. Hiranyagarbha (golden womb) — or auric cosmic envelope;

3. Íśvara, the 'Kingly One' — the Logos; the cosmic thread upon which universes are strung;

4. Parabrahman — the Supreme Being; the One in which all inheres.

It must be left to interested students to work out these correspondences for themselves, for to do so here would make this article far too lengthy.

Subba Row regarded Śri Kṛshna as an incarnation of the Logos itself descending 'to the plane of humanity for some great thing that had to be done in the world', so that every utterance of Śri Kṛshna was

momentous. His teachings, as embodied in the *Bhagavadgītā*, were expounded in these lectures by Subba Row with extraordinary insight, and his ideas about them seem to have in them something of the quality of 'revelation'. Studying these illuminating ideas (as well as other writings of his) enables us to understand why HPB desired to have him collaborate with her in the composition of her wonderful book, *The Secret Doctrine*.

So great was Colonel Olcott's admiration for Subba Row that in 1883 he instituted in his honour the Subba Row Medal. It was awarded for the best essay in esoteric science and philosophy — Aryan, Buddhist, Chaldean, Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian. In 1888 special subjects were prescribed; but since 1891, the Medal has been awarded to the author of a valuable contribution to Theosophy. It was awarded to HPB herself in 1888.

### Notes

1. This diagram is printed on p. 212 of *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, Adyar edn.

2. HPB wrote that 'between the three Upādhi-s of the Rāja Yoga and its Ātmā, and our three Upādhi-s, Ātmā and the additional three divisions, there is in reality but very little difference . . . A Rāja Yogi must . . . accept the Tāraka Rāja classification in principle and theory, whatever classification he resorts to for practical and occult purposes'. See *The Secret Doctrine*, I.213.

3. *The Secret Doctrine* describes this action of Fohat as the 'bridge' by which the Ideas existing in Divine Thought are impressed on Cosmic Substance as the 'Laws of Nature'; Fohat is the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation.

**The path of occultism seeks the chela and will not fail to find him, when the fit man presents himself.**

T. Subba Row

# The Reticence of T. Subba Row

SEYMOUR D. BALLARD

He lived his occult life alone.

(H. S. Olcott)

IN the early part of June 1890, Colonel H. S. Olcott, in response to a request from Swami T. Subba Row, who was then very ill, went from the Society's Headquarters into the city of Madras to see him. On that occasion and on two others the Colonel exercised his healing powers to the extent that it looked as though Subba Row would recover. However, a relapse set in and on 24 June the prominent young lawyer, whose occult knowledge Madame Blavatsky considered as equal to hers, died at thirty-four years of age.

The few pictures of him show a sturdy young man wearing a turban. His features are pleasing and his eyes have a steady, penetrating look. He was born on 6 July 1856, in the Godavari District on the Coromandel Coast. He was a Brahman. As a boy he did not show forth any of his great mental capacities. But from the time he entered the Madras Presidency College in 1872, it was apparent he was an exceptional student destined for a brilliant future. He was first in his class when he took his BA in 1876, and fourth when he got his law degree two or three years later.

And once, because he took an interest in geology, he passed a civil service examination in that subject, after only a week's study. In 1880, he began to practise law in Madras; and from the accounts of those who knew him, Subba Row seemed headed for an outstanding career in the legal profession. As yet he exhibited no interest in occult matters.

Occultism came to him suddenly as a result of his meeting the Colonel and Madame Blavatsky. The year was 1882 and he was then twenty-six. His career in the Society was to be short; but while it lasted it was important. Colonel Olcott credits him with being chiefly responsible for the Founders' choosing Madras as the place to locate the Society's Headquarters. The Colonel has written that contact with HPB was the event that brought about the flooding into Subba Row's mind of an immense store of occult knowledge accumulated in other lives. He recalled his previous life and knew himself to be a chela of one of the Mahatmas. There are many references to him in their letters; and the Colonel also has written of his

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Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, July 1956.

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association and contacts with the Adepts. While in his mid-twenties the busy young lawyer contributed articles, profound and original, to *The Theosophist*. Such was his erudition and authority that Madame Blavatsky sought his collaboration, as we know, in the preparation of *The Secret Doctrine* and wanted his name with hers on the title-page.

For a revealing indication of the impact he had on the Society, one need only recall that its unique literary accolade bears his name — the T. Subba Row Medal. What may be forgotten is that it was established while Subba Row was still alive, in 1883, when he was twenty-seven.

Perhaps the high-water mark of his Theosophical life came when he was thirty and gave the Convention lectures, regarded then, as now, as a Theosophical classic — *The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgitā*. Those who heard them recalled his impressive grasp of his subject, and that each lecture was given with the aid of a very few notes on a small piece of paper. Yet in them he brought forward a point of view that led to his dropping out of the Society. This severance, the Colonel takes pains to point out, had no effect on the close ties that existed between the Co-Founders and T. Subba Row.

The whole matter of the difference of opinion between Subba Row and HPB may be studied, and with profit, in the posthumous collection of his writings in the book entitled *Esoteric Writings*.

We read the words of the master KH in *The Mahatma Letters* (pp. 376, 429):

This Subba Row will help you to learn . . .

You are wrong in distrusting Subba Row's writings. He does not write *willingly*, to be sure, but he will never make a false statement.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of these and similar references, one notes with regret that Subba Row's early death was the apparent curtailing of what might have been a prodigious career in the growth of the Society.

Reminiscences all concur in pointing out that he was an attractive personality. And his talk, when he could be persuaded to talk, was, like his writings, profound and much sought after. Subba Row would talk about occult matters only to a very few — the Founders, Mr and Mrs Cooper-Oakley, C. W. Leadbeater and a few others. He was extremely fond of tennis and went to the Cosmopolitan Club for a few sets almost every day after the law courts were closed. After tennis, we are told, he would go to a friend's house and talk of occult matters to his friends there including Mr and Mrs Cooper-Oakley. On Sundays and holidays he visited C. W. Leadbeater and others at the Society's Headquarters.

Other members approached Subba Row, sensing that in him was knowledge and wisdom, but they got no response. Sir S. Subramania Aiyer (Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, 1907–1911), contributing a delightful and informative appreciation of Subba Row in a later edition of *The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgitā*, observes that his request

## The Reticence of T. Subba Row

for help and information did not get very far, nor did Subba Row in the six years he knew him ever once speak of the Mahatmas. In Subba Row's obituary notice, Colonel Olcott records that Subba Row's mother often asked about spiritual matters, but he would not discuss them with her.

Thus there was about Swami T. Subba Row a noticeable reticence puzzling to his contemporaries, no less to us. What might be the sources of this reticence which seems to have been carried to an extreme? Extreme does not seem too strong a word when one considers his disinclination to assist Madame Blavatsky with *The Secret Doctrine*. She wrote to Colonel Olcott on 24 February 1888, that she had heard from Tookaram Tatya, a friend of Subba Row's, that he would help 'provided I took out from it every reference to the Masters'<sup>2</sup>

The materialism of the age called into existence the Theosophical Society, whose

mission included the making known to the West certain tenets of the occult doctrine. It was to be a time of dissemination. Discrimination then as always was to be exercised, but to the degree T. Subba Row represented? The real source of his reticence, one feels, was a general reluctance of men of the East, which he shared, to make available too easily to the materialistic men of the West something so profound as their understanding of the ancient wisdom. The East was all too familiar with the lack of respect Westerners could show towards things sacred.

The degree of risk that had to be taken in launching the Society intuited and gauged by the Founders was not perceived, one would like to suggest, by him. We may regret this reticence of Subba Row, because his association with and contribution to the Theosophical Society, brief and great, appears to have promised so very much more. ✧

### Reference and Note

1. See also *The Mahatma Letters*, pp. 70, 457, 458.
2. *The Secret Doctrine*, Adyar edn., I.29.

**Beauty is Truth, Truth is Beauty — that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.**

John Keats

# The Last Grain of Sand

ELISABETH SCHMIDT

IN one of the first letters sent by the Adept-Teachers to A. P. Sinnett, the Master of the Wisdom declares: 'regarding the nature of man he is the same as millions of years ago'. I think we are actually convinced of the evolutionary development. We do make progress, do we not? Why are we then the same as millions of years ago?

Most of us see evolution as a straight-line development: we change, grow and develop slowly, little by little. Or, maybe it is different; the development may be in stages — we grow gradually for a long time until we reach a certain steep point, and suddenly an explosion-like change occurs.

Have we reached the next step and thus the next platform? We may again investigate this for a long time until the next evolutionary thrust brings another big change.

This notion is not so strange, as records of the history of various species according to fossil findings show. The same species exist for a very long time and then suddenly an extremely fast evolutionary step takes place, and a number of new species come into being. They again exist for a long period until the next evolutionary

breakthrough. Scientists call this special development 'punctuated equilibrium'. This fact inspired me with the idea for the title of this article.

Let us imagine a see-saw with a tin can placed on its highest point. Slowly, ever so slowly, sand is poured into the tin. With the increase in weight we come to the point where a single grain of sand is enough to make the see-saw move with a jerk. (This may illustrate the analogy of the article's title.)

If in the past millions of years we have actually remained unchanged — that is, our pace of growth has remained almost imperceptible — we may have been just adding more sand, so to speak. And then a faster change regarding humanity can take place, an evolutionary breakthrough.

In the quoted letters of the Masters of the Wisdom there is an obvious feeling of considerable urgency and serious concern as to the stage of growth and development that we have reached in the past 125 years. The Adept-Teacher says that the success or failure of the Theosophical Society is a question of salvation or doom — heaven or hell — for the present humanity as a whole, and decisive for its further development or

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## The Last Grain of Sand

retrogression. How could the Theosophical Society have influenced the prevailing conditions over a hundred years ago? And the question today is what we can do to change the situation, which refers to the entire culture of our Western civilization!

More than three hundred years ago a new way of looking at the world was born; a new mental attitude which became known as materialism. It dates back to the birth of Western Science, from its roots of magic and superstition. Those roots in the folklore, myths, and customs provided no firm ground whatsoever, maintained the upcoming scientists. And thus, they started to lay the foundations for modern Science: 'If we can understand it, then we can measure it. And if we can measure, it must be a genuine phenomenon.' This still applies to today's science.

Analysis is one of the key issues of science. Thus, if we want to know all about a flower, it is taken to the smallest pieces until we have molecules and atoms of which it consists. When we know the molecules and atoms and the powers that hold these particles together, then we believe we can also know the flower. It may sound like utter nonsense but this way of thinking is still very widely accepted even today.

Perhaps the Theosophical Society should have tried harder to help humanity refrain from getting entangled in this materialistic approach, with the concomitant enslaving faith in science. It may be well and good for science to consider that life is but the working of atoms and mole-

cules; but when this approach is taken as a philosophy of life, it deprives all things of their value. When this attitude enters moral and ethical values, it results in the estrangement of human beings, and lowers the society as a whole to the devastating level so predominant in the Western civilization. Thus, it is not surprising that the Adept-Teacher said in one of his letters that success or failure of our Society is a question of salvation or doom.

We may be able to recognize the reason for this statement. When we ponder over our Theosophical literature, we may get a better look at the history and at our similar situations today. Most people know something about Atlantis and about the part of the isle of Poseidonis which disappeared in the floods about 11,000 years ago. *The Secret Doctrine* describes what happened in Atlantis most likely about one million years ago — coinciding with the emergence of the fifth root race (our present humanity). The seven great islands were destroyed, it is said, and only the virtuous survived. The letters of the Masters of the Wisdom, referring to the different races of humanity — of which seven are to come into being — say that each previous race was reduced to half by some sort of catastrophe. In the description it is also said 'that the development of the absolutely evil had to be brought to a stop'; thus the catastrophe happened.

Considering the above outline of the destruction of human values, we are probably moving in a similar direction. And maybe, among other reasons, this

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was the main reason for founding the Theosophical Society.

About every hundred years a special effort is undertaken by advanced Beings to aid humanity. In the fourteenth century it was the Tibetan Tson-kha-pa who created a movement for the spiritual development and upliftment of human beings.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Theosophical Society was founded to take on the heavy task of changing the over-intellectualized thought and values, and create harmony. I believe that even now this task is being carried out. Theosophy encourages free thinkers and points steadily to the creative changes needed, the changes that must come lawfully.

We are coming to a turning point; there are indications that we are not steering wisely towards a climax. Clairvoyants have foreseen what may happen at the end of this century. You may have read the prophecies by Nostradamus, which, it is interesting to note, end after the turn of this century. Since the efforts made in the fourteenth century, in every century special circumstances had to be created to bring about a change for humanity and guide it away from the catastrophic course it had trodden as a result of bad habits.

So, how can we stay the course, so to say? When we look at the progress of our civilization, our culture and our race, we are, in our cycle of evolution, at a decisive turning point where even a small cause may have a large effect.

A Theosophical axiom says that on our

evolutionary journey we can hasten our spiritual growth and development by our own concerted effort. Some years ago it was estimated that even if only one percent of the world population started meditating in a peace-loving way, the consciousness of human society would be reversed. Even these small efforts of individuals or of small groups could foster significant results. Perhaps we are at a similar stage as the last grain of sand, and by our efforts we may bring the see-saw to jerk and cause a quantum leap in evolution.

Our literature contains many helpful suggestions in this regard. In Madame Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, we find one of these pointers saying that 'to live for the benefit of mankind' would be the first step. In the tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism we find the pledge of the Bodhisattva, which reads 'where somebody needs help, I will be there to give it' and also 'whatever I do in the way of study and meditation I will do it to be better able to live for the benefit of mankind'.

To Ramana Maharshi the following incident is attributed: One of his followers came and asked him: 'Master, what can I do to help mankind?' In a very gentle manner Ramana Maharshi asked him: 'Now, what can you do?'

Each one of us is asked to find the appropriate way. Only the value of our thoughts, insights and ideals that spiritual practice may convey to us will guide our actions to be less and less for our own benefit only, and more for our giving out to our fellow beings. When our actions are for the benefit of others the result may

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be what Krishnamurti termed ‘turning round in the root of our consciousness’ — a complete and radical change. In daily life we will still be confronted with problems, but our attitude will be different.

Some years ago we experimented with pictures that were called three-dimensional. When you looked at one of them in a normal way you saw some pretty, coloured patterns. And when you looked at it from a different angle, you suddenly discovered a violin quite clearly in that picture. But you could not have it both ways.

It is this special way of seeing things that will affect our consciousness. It is up to us to do it. Sometimes we meet a person who is neither a saint nor very religious, and yet his actions in daily life mainly concern helping other people. So we have to consider the question: ‘What can I do to help another to make this turning around in consciousness?’ This is the direction and orientation to which we aspire. If we want to stride ahead for the benefit of humanity, this is the first step. ✧

**Treat the aged of your own family in a manner befitting their venerable age and extend this treatment to the aged of other families; treat your own young in a manner befitting their tender age and extend this to the young of other families, and you can roll the empire on your palm. The Book of Songs says:**

**He set an example for his consort  
And also for his brothers,  
And so ruled over the family and the state.**

**In other words, all you have to do is take this very heart here and apply it to what is over there. Hence one who extends his bounty can bring peace to the Four Seas; one who does not cannot bring peace even to his own family. There is just one thing in which the Ancients greatly surpassed others, and that is the way they extended what they did.**

Mencius I.A.7

# Suffering

KESHWAR S. DASTUR

## What is Suffering?

Suffering is bearing or experiencing or enduring something unpleasant. It is an unpleasant situation, which we try to avoid. It is the absence of happiness or joy. A person can suffer not only physically but also psychologically, emotionally, financially, etc. Nowadays there is much more suffering other than the physical, because of the problems in the modern world. Other terms for suffering are sorrow, pain, misery, grief.

## Why do we Suffer?

Let us consider the causes of suffering. The true cause of suffering is the human psyche.

1. Attachment to individuals or things. And when we lose that individual or that thing, we suffer, we feel pain or are uncomfortable in their absence.

2. Lack of tolerance. People are not able to bear the pain when their feelings and emotions are hurt. They immediately say 'I am sick of this life'. We do not have patience. We want everything to be done or to happen according to our wishes and our way of thinking. We always think that whatever we say or think is right and we

do not listen to others or try to understand them.

3. Desires which lead to greed, jealousy, comparison, envy, anger, hatred, selfishness. If my desires are not fulfilled, I am angry and hate anyone who is an obstacle to their fulfilment. I become selfish and greedy and will do anything in my power to see that my desires are fulfilled.

4. Old age brings suffering. Disease, weakness, dependence on others, the inability to be self-reliant make people suffer. Children do not look after their old parents and they feel neglected.

5. Misinterpreting the situation. Most negative thoughts are based on misinterpreting situations. Are the facts on which you base your pessimism correct? Are you really judging other people accurately? Are you imagining the worst, with no actual reason?

6. Our sorrows always appear heavier than those of others. Our neighbour's trouble appears lighter to bear than our own.

7. Images of perfection. The tendency to think about one's life, job, self, etc. in terms of what should be.

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8. Depression, stress, tension are the present-day cause of suffering. Some people get irritated for certain reasons, the real reason being elsewhere. On the other hand, some become unconcerned and cold and withdraw into silence, when things do not happen according to their wish. Depression is a state of intense sadness that disrupts an individual's social functioning.

9. Sense of separateness. All efforts are causes of sorrow, including the effort to keep oneself separate from the rest of the world. We are making an effort to preserve our ego. All efforts involve 'I', me and mine — the ego-builder. Suffering is a continuous process of the effort of building a separate ego. The source of misery arises in our efforts to become happy.

10. Ignorance. We are ignorant of the cause of suffering, we are ignorant of the usefulness of suffering and we are ignorant of the ways to put an end to suffering. We do not know our real nature, our true being. Suffering arises because we are cut off from our divine nature.

Let us see under what situations in life we suffer:

1. Some are sinking under the burden of poverty. They have neither home nor food, they have to spend their nights on the footpath in the open air, they have to appeal for work from door to door; every day is a struggle for them.

2. Some have lost their wife or husband or father or son, whom they love very much. Life becomes an intolerable burden for them.

3. Some suffer from a chronic disease, which keeps them in a bed of pain. Not a day passes without cruel suffering in body and even more cruel mental torture.

4. Somebody betrays you, cheats you, does you an injustice, which brings a feeling of profound bitterness. Such grief turns life into an inferno of revenge.

5. Some are suffering from an inferiority complex; they may say 'I am a poor person, what can I do?' Some are suffering from a superiority complex; they may say 'I am something — no, I am everything'.

6. Someone is alone, and suffers from loneliness: nobody to talk to, nobody to love.

7. Some suffer when desire for wealth or power or position is not fulfilled. Not only material possessions, but also when the religious or spiritual urge is not fulfilled.

### Worldly Solutions

Let us see how we may turn unhappiness around and make things better — in a worldly way.

1. Difficulties in life do not appear in order to destroy you, but to help you realize your hidden potential. Our advice is to face the problem with courage.

2. Nobody can solve your misery other than yourself. Analyse the cause and think of ways to come out of your misery. When you feel low, you are not the only sufferer: you bother others by your indifference. To win over people, put forth your arguments in such a way that you

may either convince them or be open to being convinced yourself. When there is no solution to a problem, do not waste your time worrying about it.

3. Because there is suffering, we realize the value of happiness, so spread happiness and make others happy. Happiness and sadness are complementary to each other.

4. Avoid comparisons. Wealth and success do not bring happiness. Many individuals with material wealth have achieved this through hard work and perseverance, which are qualities worth emulating in whatever you do.

5. Frustration and disappointment often ruin peace of mind.

6. Always remember that nothing matters much, and that most things do not matter at all. Ask yourself: Is this something for which it is worth suffering? You will discover that most things are not worthy of a second thought.

7. You may enjoy living by what you get, but you can enjoy life also by what you give. Desire to acquire brings sorrow, desire to give brings happiness.

8. Life is the reflection of ourselves. What we are, we see in others. If we are good and kind, we find others also good and kind. If we are crooked, others will also seem to be crooked.

9. Suffering depends on the state of mind. In similar circumstances, people behave differently.

10. God is so compassionate that He never lets us suffer sorrow throughout our life. He gives only as much sorrow as we can bear.

### **Saints, Sages and Seers on Suffering and Happiness**

Saint Kabir says: 'In sorrow everybody remembers God, but in happiness nobody remembers him. If we could remember God in happiness, then why would there be suffering?'

The Mother (Pondicherry) says: 'A smile acts upon difficulties as the sun upon the clouds — it disperses them.'

'The happiness you give makes you more happy than happiness you receive.'

'Whenever in your life you meet hardship, take it as a boon and it will become so.'

When it was asked of Ramana Maharshi how we may avoid misery, he replied: 'Has misery a shape? Misery is only unwanted thought. The mind is not strong enough to resist it. Thoughts rule the life. Freedom from thoughts is one's true nature — Bliss.'

J. Krishnamurti says: Sorrow is self-created, sorrow is created by thought, sorrow is the outcome of time. When you see the root of sorrow, which is the little thing called 'me', from the bottom of your heart, you have the key that will end sorrow.

Zarathushtra says: 'The source of happiness is within man. The most happy is he who most promotes happiness.'

'Sorrows and sufferings, trials and tribulations, are great disciplinarians that lead one to the spring of spiritual enlightenment.'

Lord Buddha expounded the four Noble Truths, which is the essence of his teachings. He says: Birth is suffering, old

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age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering. Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and distress are suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering, disassociation from the pleasant is suffering, not to get what one desires is suffering. In men's lives misery is greater than happiness. — This is the first Noble Truth. All misery arises from the hunger and thirst for life. — This is the second Noble Truth. Each man, without help of priest or scripture can by his own efforts put an end to the 'craving' which causes misery. — This is the third Noble Truth. The Fourth Noble Truth is the Way — the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to the ending of misery.

### Theosophical Teachings

Theosophy explains the problem of suffering — what it is, its origin and end, and the remedy:

You are not alone in suffering. Mankind as a whole suffers. All through life we meet with suffering. There is not a creature anywhere without its share of suffering. Everybody has to go through this pathway of pain before reaching the glorious heights of evolution. There is a Divine Law and suffering is the inevitable result of all violation of the Divine Law. Every creature which suffers, does so because it has violated the Law, either in this or in a former life. So all our suffering is the consequence of our evil actions, words or thoughts, either present or in the past. Unless one realizes that the cause of suffering is within, it will not end.

Theosophical teachings bring us to the

conception of the Law of Evolution or Reincarnation and the Law of Karma. These two great Laws will help us to understand the causes and the utility of suffering.

*The Voice of the Silence* says:

The ladder by which the candidate ascends is formed of rungs of suffering and pain; these can be silenced only by the voice of virtue.

### Law of Reincarnation

Man is a god unconscious of his divinity; he can become conscious of it only after passing through every stage of Evolution. Souls are not created vicious or virtuous, no such insult must be offered to the father of all creatures. Souls are what they have created themselves in a long past of successive existences. Virtuous souls are those that have progressed along the path of evolution; souls which, during thousands of past lives, have learnt the lessons of experience, which after centuries of struggle, have overcome their lower nature and slowly developed the virtues they now possess. Vicious beings, at once cruel and weak, are young souls which have not yet acquired any clear idea of good or evil, and whose conscience, the result of innumerable experiences in the past, has not yet developed. These young souls have still much to learn in the rough school of life, the school of suffering.

If suffering is the consequence of evil, evil is the result of ignorance. The ignorant soul led away by its impulses, desires and passions, commits evil, not

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once but many times, until through suffering and seeing, pain follows after evil actions; it begins to understand from its experiences and avoid the evil. After ages of continuous experiences, the soul develops and in proportion to its development, the evolution becomes rapid.

Every soul is a divine ray, an emanation from the manifested God, or Great Universal Soul. Every soul is therefore, potentially, a god himself, though only a god unconscious of his divinity. To become conscious, it is obliged to pass through all sub-human and super-human experiences, it is forced to descend to the very dregs of matter, in order afterwards to ascend to Divinity — a descending progress or involution, then an ascending progress or evolution, during which numberless ages will pass away.

Annie Besant says:

How could you learn what is just, did you not know what is unjust? How could you choose good, did you not know evil? How would you recognize light, were there no darkness? The evolution of force can only be effected by struggle and combat, effort and training. It is the spur of suffering and deception which impels us forward, bringing into manifestation the strength of our inner life, which would otherwise remain latent.

There are souls of all ages, of all degrees of development. At every rung of the ladder, souls at different stages of evolution exist. We have duties to perform — duties towards our younger brethren, towards our equals, and towards our

superiors. Let us see what *The Voice of the Silence* says regarding our duty towards those who are behind and with us on the ladder of evolution.

Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain, like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun. Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye. But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart, and there remain, nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it, is removed.

God has given free will to man, He has willed that man should attain to knowledge, self-consciousness and finally divinity, through his own experience, that man should become acquainted with evil and suffering and go through all such painful trials as are necessary for the development of consciousness. He has willed that man should be a free agent, that by raising himself, he might identify himself with all his pain and weakness of the past, that he might sympathize with that of his fellow-beings and the divine flower of compassion may blossom within him, preparing him for the sublime role of saviour of the world.

### The Law of Karma

The Law of Karma and the Law of Reincarnation or Evolution are complementary to each other. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. It is the Law of Cause and Effect. Every effect comes from some cause or other; every cause gives birth to an effect.

All suffering is a debt we pay, either to

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men or to the divine Law itself. Karma sets in our path during this present life the beings we have caused to suffer in the past, as conscious or unconscious obstacles to our happiness, instruments of our misfortune. These are the debts we pay directly to men. If we have broken the Law, without doing any special wrong to an individual, then we must pay our debt to the Law. Karma punishes us with events and suffering. But the good Law does not punish, it contents itself with correcting and restoring the disturbed equilibrium by giving a just and useful lesson to the foolish and thoughtless.

Karma is not reward or punishment. Karma is a teacher. Karma is the action of the law of justice. It rights the balance. Karma is not foreign, outside us. Karma is not a tyrant, not a sword hanging over us. If we put a finger in the fire and get burnt, would we call it punishment? Many of our actions are of the same nature. We commit evil through ignorance and then pain follows.

In the scales of karma, motives and intentions weigh far more than actions. Actions have an impact on the physical plane, but motives and intentions have an impact on invisible worlds. For example, if a man builds a hospital in the hope of receiving honour or fame, his actions which have produced good results in the material world, will give him some advantages in another life, but on the other hand, his selfish motives will cause him moral suffering.

Karmic causes weave our destiny, making us what we are and placing us in

a country or environment favourable to their manifestation, and prepare the great events, whether sad or joyful, of our existence. Therefore, we need not be astonished if happiness is both rare and fleeting and if misfortune often knocks at the door. Nor should we be astonished if we note how heavily our thoughts and intentions weigh in the karmic scales. When we possess knowledge, we are more or less masters of our destiny; the ignorant, however, are slaves to their passions and desires, and consequently also to their destiny. If we know and understand the law, we can create favourable karma for ourselves by means of pure and charitable actions and thoughts. Master KH says: 'You have the making of your own future in your own hands, and every day you may be weaving its woof.' Although we cannot prevent the karma produced in former times from coming to us — we shall have to pay all our debts — it is possible to neutralize the effects of the present karma. We cannot change certain karma, but how we meet them is important. The nature of the effect and that of the cause may not always be similar; cruelty, we are told, often causes madness, idleness, lack of intelligence, a life of humiliation.

The Law of Karma controls not only individual destinies, but the whole world. Each nation has its own karma which every individual shares. Wars, catastrophes, epidemics, and so on are karmic effects.

Theosophy attaches more importance to the control of thought than to that of

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conduct. If our thoughts are pure and noble, the motives and intentions just and disinterested, the conduct will necessarily be good.

To reach the glorious goal which can be reached only at the cost of self-denial and pain, must we not accustom ourselves to the idea of suffering and bravely bear the trials sent to us? We should regard suffering as a help and a friend, and welcome it as such, without being despondent or afraid, or possessed of any feeling of revolt.

Therefore, those who suffer poverty, which is brought about by a past life of selfishness, may understand that these sufferings are not only the paying of a debt, but also a means of development. Material struggles develop energy, endurance and patience, qualities which a life of luxury can never teach.

Those who have lost dear ones will know that the links forged by affection can never be broken.

Those who are on a bed of sickness

and suffering should know that what you have sown in your earlier life, you are now reaping in your physical body. You also know that by enduring your present condition uncomplainingly, you are creating good karma for yourself.

Those who are betrayed or cheated should know that they have paid a big debt. Instead of cursing the wrongdoer and hating him, feel pity and sympathy for him.

Those who are unsuccessful in life should learn not to be discouraged, and develop the virtues of gentleness, patience and modesty.

Those who are alone, lonely and seeking love, should learn that in the past, many offered you love and sympathy, and you treated them with scorn and indifference. So now it is your turn to be lonely. Bear this bravely and offer your love and affection to all mankind.

Thus through suffering in life, we learn and make progress in evolution. Suffering is the great teacher of men. ✧

**Your part is to be serene, to be simple. Is someone doing wrong? The wrong lies with himself. Has something befallen you? Good; then it was your portion of the universal lot, assigned to you when time began; a strand woven into your particular web, like all else that happens. Life, in a word, is short; then snatch your profit from the passing hour, by obedience to reason and just dealing. Unbend, but be temperate.**

Marcus Aurelius  
*Meditations*

# Theosophical Work around the World

## USA

Mr Tim Boyd has freshly taken charge as General Secretary of the United States and we wish him and the Section well. The United States is the second largest Section of the TS, after India, with a little more than 3000 members. The Theosophical Society was founded there and it is to be hoped that a new outlook will emanate there as there is need for the world to turn towards the spiritual.

## India — Karnataka & Uttar Pradesh:

The 102nd Annual Conference of the Karnataka Federation which is the largest in the world, was held at Srinivasapura from 27 to 29 May 2011. The theme was 'Relevance of Theosophical Teachings to the Present World' and more than four hundred members were present. Mrs Radha Burnier delivered the inaugural address and presided over the Conference. The titles of talks included 'Universal Brotherhood through Practical Theosophical Teachings', 'The Role of Women in the Reformation of the World', 'The Light of Buddhi', 'Cause in Action' and 'The Meditative Mind'. A panel discussion was held on Theosophical Solutions to Present Problems. After the inauguration, two new Lodge buildings were

opened, one for the Srinivasapura Lodge and the other for Devalapalli Lodge. The Conference was an opportunity of re-dedication to the great work before the Theosophical Society.

The Uttar Pradesh Federation organized a two-day camp on 'Integrated Development of Children' on 12–13 May 2011 at the Theosophical Inter-College in Etawah. More than two hundred children participated, and were exposed to subjects such as yoga-*āsana-s* and healthy living habits, how to become good citizens, Theosophy and the TS, prayer and simple meditation, environment, evolution of man and our responsibility. Copies of a Hindi booklet, based on Annie Besant, were distributed, as well as a pamphlet on the teachings in *At the Feet of the Master*.

Following this, the Federation also held a three-day retreat on 'Seven Great Religions' at Etawah. It attracted about seventy participants, including teachers, local members of Etawah Lodge and members from other Lodges in Uttar Pradesh. Talks were given on the teachings of various religions and also on Divine Wisdom. There was lively interaction between participants and a number of them expressed their appreciation of this opportunity to study. ❖

God finds himself by creating.

Rabindranath Tagore

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Printed and published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, Manager, The Vasanta Press,  
The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai (Madras) 600 020, India, on behalf of the President, The Theosophical Society.