



THE THEOSOPHIST

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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

Life is Unity

The human being, when not animalish which he tends to be, will find that he has a purpose different from just looking after his body, and its physical comforts. He begins to realize what is relationship, which is intrinsic to his nature. It concerns everything that exists, the earth itself, the vegetation, worms of every kind, insects which fly, the unseen beings who may be around, his fellow human beings, and so on. Each one can think for himself of what appears to him to be a part of life. If he goes far enough he will realize that everything that exists, what is apparently animate or inanimate, has a close contact with him. In fact, he is unable to distinguish them, or the life in them, from what is in himself. The body may appear to be different, but it is composed of the same material as his own body.

Thich Nhat Hanh points out that we are connected with everything. But we do not know it.

It is a strange thing that everything looks different — in a way it is different — but it is also the same. This is one of the great paradoxes of life, which we cannot grasp with our ordinary minds, but which is grasped by something more refined. We will not try to name it —

something in our consciousness which responds to unity.

It may be that the fundamental portion of our life is nothing but the unity with all things. So relationship gradually becomes one of unity. To begin to discover why each human being is, and to think differently about what the human being lives for, is the first step. The simplest of men thinks that he exists in order to eat and live out his life as best as he can; this is all that he knows. We do not understand the purpose of life till we come to the point where we begin to think carefully about it. Something within us has moved us to examine the relationship with the rest of existence, whatever form that existence may take, insect, bird or fish, or human being or whatever.

Whatever one looks at in this world, one gets, if one is really aware, the feeling of something beyond physical existence, something which cannot be divided. Ultimately we can only call it the 'One'. Even if different names are given, it is the one truth which pervades all existence. Very few of us feel we have the time to look at Nature. In fact, it is considered a sin to look, and not to be doing something or other all the time. But Nature has a vast variety in it, even the small area we look

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at. In the *National Geographic Magazine* some years ago, there was an article which was called 'God's Half Acre'. Every half acre, even a half acre in a desert where you think that nothing is growing, is actually full of life, and every half acre has something in it which one can only say is marvellous.

So there are these differences, which are not difference; man belongs to that network or relationships which are unity, but we rarely realize it. Unfortunately we think we are different and superior to everything else. And we not only not accept it but we have no idea whatever that we will come to the truth only by looking at things, without making a difference, between the looker and that at which he is looking.

How Are We Related?

In a way the tiger is related, let us say, to the butterfly and other creatures one can think of. Only when our eyes which are full of deceit see, we say: 'illusion is better'. In Theosophy we are told that life is one. Does it mean only what our mind may make of it, or is it actually one in spite of the bodies, which each little portion of life may use at any particular time? Think of the bodies of the human being. A person may be born today in a certain race, community, having a certain sex, looking in his own way, but the next incarnation may be totally different. So the body does not matter. The body contains the same elements of matter, but we are not aware of this.

Simple people, like the American

Indians, before they began to become more sophisticated, were forced to change their life, which they were living in their natural way. But they had a sense of unity. Many American Indians did not kill more than they needed for their existence. They believed that they had to eat other animals, but they had a profound feeling of respect (perhaps I exaggerate) for the life around them. They regarded all that life as one — in a simple sort of way. But one can realize this in a profound way, and that is what human life is meant to be — to grow in the feeling of oneness, which even the primitive man can feel. It grows and becomes a reality to the more enlightened people. So we look at nature and we realize that we belong to the network of relationships.

To start with, realization may be only mental, but it becomes more and more of a reality, is based in reality, something which we grasp deep inside ourselves which we cannot put into words. And evidences of unity can be seen everywhere in Nature, if we have eyes to see beauty. There is great truth in the simple statement that the divine appears as truth, beauty and goodness to human beings. If we look at things carefully, we see beauty in their construction, in the way they behave, what they do.

Beauty is Everywhere

We often feel the need to kill or hurt something, but the more a person develops spiritually, the less inclined he is to kill and hurt. Unfortunately, as he proceeds in life with a physical body, some killing

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takes place, even if there is no intention to put an end to another existence. The feeling of beauty, the sacredness, the importance of life in any form is very clear and felt by that person, not merely thought of; because to think of such things is easy in a way. Although for many, life contradicts it and therefore it cannot be seen as a truth, but it is a truth.

The Bendits, Lawrence and Phoebe, in their book, speak about taking a little sand in the palm of the hand, and letting sight increase. They see, not sand, not as what we consider to be useless material, because there is so much of it all over the world. But every handful of sand contains a brilliance. The light of God (if one likes to put it that way) is shining through every material, even if it seems to be of no value. We have to use some of this material, but we can learn to be aware that we are using property which we do not possess. The whole idea of possession brings a note of something different.

So even sand contains for him who knows something of the indescribable, that precious element we call God. There is nothing natural that does not possess beauty. If we look carefully, we will find that the beauty that we feel in some creatures is only an enhancement of what exists everywhere. But to feel that only our enhanced sense of beauty is real, the rest is not, is an imagination. The worth of things, not in terms of monetary value, but the reality of it can change from person to person, from creature to creature, but deep inside it remains the same. Goodness also exists everywhere. We think that

certain things are good, and other things are not. We think that some creatures are good and other creatures are bad; this becomes false when we see correctly.

We begin to see that no portion of life fails to contain the element of goodness. We see a caterpillar crawling on leaves: it may appear to us a nuisance, or it may appear as a subject of scientific study; it may appear in different ways. But to a person who really sees, it is the divine element which takes a particular form, and does what it wants to according to what is fitting for it. So truth, beauty and goodness are part of the one existence that is everywhere. We see division and differences, some are more attractive to us than others, but to the eye that really sees, all these things appear divine. So the person on the path realizes that much of the activity that the human being indulges in, has nothing to do with being human at all.

There are many ways of turning away from the divinity which is everywhere. Everything in life offers a possibility to understand the nature of the one divine existence. Human life is not meant for only ordinary purposes. We have to eat, we have to keep clean, we have to do certain things which are necessary, but let us keep them to the minimum and not make them very important in life.

In *The Mahatma Letters*, there is mention of a man bringing a message from them, who is dirty, who does not wear nice clothes, but he himself was a clean individual. These external things do not matter much, but the internal awareness, the perception of things as they really are,

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should not be very far, and we should be tentative in our attitude towards things: I know somebody, how he is, how he is not, and so on. We can be tentative in the best sense of the word 'negative', not taking everything that we see to be correct, not taking anything for granted, making our internal condition open to see the new in the old. Everything that we have seen in a particular way may be wrong. So with this mind we can have a different attitude towards everything that exists.

Why Plant Trees?

You need tremendous energy to keep up with all the changes that are taking place in the world. And you cannot have energy if you allow yourself to remain complacent in relation to the widespread devastation and suffering which human beings are inflicting on Nature and her creatures. The callous destruction of the Amazon rainforest continues almost unabated, in spite of international public opinion against it. In many countries, countless cows are confined to extremely small spaces, having hormones pumped into them so that the milk production continues to feed a market based on such cruelty. Soon after their calves are born they are killed in order to supply 'tender

meat' to the same market.

Krishnamurti was once asked: 'Why should we plant trees?' He replied:

. . . When you plant a tree and watch it, when you nourish a tree, when you take trouble over it, it gives you the feeling — not just intellectually — that you are part of the earth . . .

When you have a pet — a dog, a cat, a bird, a horse — something you care for, take care of, you brush it, comb it, and see that it does not catch disease. You love it and it loves you and so you have that feeling of loving something other than just yourself: wanting saris, coats and wondering how you look. Most people think about themselves all the time, and if you plant a tree, make a garden, it helps to break down this concern . . .

Very few in India take the trouble to create a garden . . . When you think out what you are going to plant, about putting a rock there, a bigger rock there and a plant there, you begin to appreciate something; you create something beautiful . . . Is not that part of education? . . .

Have you ever looked at the stars? . . . They are all moving away from each other at a terrific speed. . . . Think of that space.

Our whole business therefore in this life is to restore to health the eye of the heart whereby God may be seen.

St Augustine

The Bodhisattva Path

BHUPENDRA R. VORA

IT is a great honour to deliver the prestigious Blavatsky Lecture and to pay tribute to this great *Yogini*. There is a truly touching event in Madame Blavatsky's life when she was on her way from Paris to New York in June 1873 and had acquired a first class ticket for the Atlantic crossing. On her way to boarding the ship she found a woman with two small children, desolate and weeping. This woman had apparently been swindled and was therefore stranded without any money and unable to travel to New York. With the generosity of a Bodhisattva, Madame Blavatsky changed her first class ticket for steerage tickets for herself and this woman and her children. She spent ten days in the overcrowded steerage quarters of an emigrant ship with its filth, the bad smells and rats. Ten days of horror it was, except for the warm companionship of the grateful woman and her children. *The Key to Theosophy* defines charity as 'personal exertion for others; personal mercy and kindness; personal interest in the welfare of those who suffer; personal sympathy, forethought and assistance in their troubles or needs'. These are the virtues of a Bodhisattva.

The Bodhisattva is a spiritually advanced being in whom the Bodhichitta has flowered and who is on the path to full Buddhahood or Adeptship, the fully awakened and all-knowing One, who is perfect in wisdom. It is also used to indicate a spiritual being who has chosen to renounce Nirvāna or the final state of enlightenment and bliss so that other sentient beings may be helped in achieving liberation. It is in this context that Theosophical teachings refer to the Bodhisattva ideal, followed by many of the Masters of Wisdom who in their infinite compassion for humanity have chosen this path of service.

It is said about Gautama Buddha that he resolved in his life as Sumedha, to become a Buddha of Compassion and help mankind, in the presence of the then Buddha Dipankara. Forgoing the opportunity to become an Arhat, he resolved: 'Let me rather, like Dipankara, having risen to the supreme knowledge of the truth, enable all men to enter the ship of truth and thus I may bear them over the Sea of Existence, and then only let me realize Nibbāna myself.' A similar tradition exists in the Jain philosophy where

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a being resolves to become a *Tirthankara* or a builder of the ford, to help men cross the sea of life to the other shore.

Some of the previous lives of the Buddha as a Bodhisattva are featured in the tales of his previous lives. These show that life after life, in whatever form he was born, the Buddha helped all sentient beings. It is said of Gautama Buddha that there is no spot on earth where he has not in some past life, sacrificed his life for the sake of others. Theosophical literature mentions the many lives of this Great Being as a Teacher of mankind dispensing the divine wisdom so that men may be liberated from their bondage. It is awe-inspiring that so much of the spiritual teachings, of the many religious traditions, in the different parts of the world, is attributed to him as Bodhisattva in one or other of his incarnations as either Vyāsa in India, Hermes in Egypt, Orpheus in Greece, Zarathustra in Persia and finally as Gautama Buddha in India once again. As a teacher of men and gods he helped all beings. In his final incarnation as Prince Siddhartha he made the ultimate sacrifice on attaining Buddhahood, of renouncing Nirvāna until all sentient beings entered the doors of that blessed state. Esoteric literature rightly calls this the great sacrifice or *mahābhinishkramana*.

Pali texts refer to the Buddha's contemplation, following his enlightenment, about the state of the world and the chain of causation. Legend has it that as a Prince of Kapilavastu he had sight of human suffering in the form of disease, old age and death whilst going round the city, and

resolved to find the cause of suffering and the way to liberation. Having found the way to end this suffering on that full moon night of May, he mused whether humanity was ready to receive his message. *The Light of Asia* describes symbolically, this moment of the concern of Mother Earth that the Buddha may not preach the *dharma*, and sent out a cry for help:

Surely I am lost, I and my creatures.
Oh, Supreme! Let Thy Great Law be
uttered!

The Master cast his vision forth on the world and its suffering humanity and resolved to utter the Law. Declared he: 'Yea I preach! Whoso will listen, let him learn the Law.'

Thus started the work of the Buddha for which he had long prepared. Resolving to renounce the fruits of Nirvāna, he chose to be a Nirmānakāya and lead all sentient life to the doors of liberation. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Madame Blavatsky reveals the mystery of the Buddha's refusal to enter into Nirvāna in the following words:

Thus after his outward death, twenty years later, Tathāgata in his immense love and 'pitiful mercy' for erring and ignorant humanity, refused Paranirvāna in order that he might continue to help men.

Many of the close disciples of the Buddha who had attained to the level of Arhat chose the path of their Master so that they could also work for the liberation of humanity. The Masters of Wisdom connected with the world have similarly

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resolved to work for the welfare of humanity rather than seeking the bliss of Nirvāna. *The Voice of the Silence* refers to them as having formed a 'Guardian Wall' built by their hands. Raised by their tortures, by their blood cemented, it shields mankind from further and far greater misery and sorrow.

The *Bhagavadgītā* lays emphasis on unselfish service to mankind without desire or attachment and calls it the path of work for the realization of God. In one verse (III.19) it specifically teaches that through the performance of one's duty in society, man worships and attains the Supreme. In an ancient hymn of the *Ṛg Veda* there is a remarkable statement on the ideal of service to humanity:

Who is it that is said to live? He who lives for the sake of others truly lives.

The *Anna Sukta* of the *Ṛg Veda* lays down the duty of service to others. It mentions various kinds of service amongst which are the helping of others in distress, the spread of knowledge and distribution of food to the needy. It indicates that service must be performed not with vanity or with a sense of patronage but with utter humility and selflessness.

There is a fine example of the Bodhisattva spirit in the *Bhāgavata Purāna* about King Rantideva. During a period of devastating famine in his kingdom, Rantideva spent the whole of his wealth in feeding the hungry and the distressed. Deeply pained at the distress of his people and by way of atonement, the King undertook a fast for forty-eight days and

did not take food or water during that period. On the forty-ninth day when he was satisfied that almost all the hungry and the distressed in his kingdom had been relieved of their suffering and misery, he decided to break his fast. Just when he was about to have his first drink of water after forty-eight days, he heard the pit-eous cry of a person of lowly stature, Pulkasa, asking for water to quench his thirst. The King who was in the midst of his ministers stopped, took the water placed before him and ordered that the cup be immediately given to Pulkasa. The ministers remonstrated strongly with the King at his suicidal act. The King however did not budge and made the famous pronouncement in moving terms as recorded by the great sage Vyāsa:

I do not seek from the Supreme Lord the highest bliss nor do I care for Liberation, the cessation of the round of births and deaths. My only desire is to suffer with all beings and be present among them and serve them so that they may become free from misery. My hunger, thirst and fatigue, my disappointment and delusion — all these undesirable features of my distressed soul have disappeared upon my giving water to one who was suffering from acute thirst.

This great declaration of Rantideva also recorded in the *Mahābhārata* emphasizes the supreme duty of relieving the suffering of others and bettering the lot of one's brothers and sisters. It states that sharing of the suffering of others is not only necessary for sharing the burden of sorrow

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of others but for moral purification. In the Bodhisattva tradition it declares that the duty of relieving of suffering is greater than seeking one's own salvation.

In one of the Upanishad-s is a symbolic story about the *deva-s*, *asura-s* and humans approaching the Creator, Lord Brahmā, and expressing dissatisfaction about the state of their lives where there was no peace or contentment. The *deva-s* were used to a life of opulence and sensual pleasures, the *asura-s* were used to inflicting pain and suffering on others and the humans were greedy and accumulated wealth and possessions. None of them had any peace of mind and wanted the Lord God to help them. The story of the Upanishad states that Brahmā responded by proclaiming the syllable 'Da' three times. The *deva-s* understood the syllable to mean *damyata* or restraint in their sensual life, the *asura-s* interpreted the sound to mean *dayā* or compassion for all beings and the humans assumed that it meant *dāna* meaning charity towards the less fortunate. There is a very significant message in this story about the kind of life that should be lived in which the three aspects of *damyata*, *dayā* and *dāna* are always present.

In the Gospel of Saint Matthew in the New Testament is given an indication of the kind of selfless giving that ensures the realization of the Divine. The Lord says:

For I was a-hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and ye

visited me; I was in prison and you came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him saying, 'Lord when saw we thee a-hungered and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison and came unto thee?' And the King shall answer and say unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' (Matt., 25:35)

The Bodhisattva-s or Mahatma-s are driven by a compelling desire to help alleviate suffering in the world and to lead all sentient life to liberation. They are not merely beings on their way to the status of fully enlightened Buddha-s or Adepts, but are beings who through their great compassion for all sentient life, renounce the ultimate bliss for themselves. This is indicated in the vow of the Bodhisattva that states:

Never will I seek to receive individual salvation. Never will I enter into final peace alone, but forever and everywhere will I live and strive for the redemption of every creature throughout the world.

The Bodhi seed of the Bodhisattva is nurtured and watered by compassionate and loving deeds till it blossoms into Bodhichitta or the heart of wisdom. A similar seed as that of a Bodhisattva exists in each human being as all are part of the Universal Consciousness, which is

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inherently compassionate; however, only by reason of ignorance and imperfection in love, the glory of the Bodhi heart is not yet made fully manifest. Through selfless living and loving deeds performed life after life, and following the path of many enlightened beings, the aspirant reaches that state of perfection and compassion which is that of the great initiates on the Path.

In *The Mahatma Letters* is an intriguing reference by the Adept known as Mahatma M., in connection with the retreat of Mahatma KH, for the purpose of preparing for a higher initiation that would lead him further on the path of Bodhisattvahood. It is interesting to note Mahatma M.'s statement about 'the old tower within whose bosom, have gestated generations of Bodhisattva-s'. The location of the Tower is a mystery as also the kind of preparation the Mahatma was involved in, which would lead to the flowering of the Bodhichitta, to fullness of wisdom and unbounded love for all humanity. It is stated that he was preparing for his higher initiation that would ready him for his future work as a Teacher of men.

The compassion of this Mahatma was evident in his request to his brother, the Mahatma M., to ensure that the spiritual teachings that the two English gentlemen, A. P. Sinnett and A. O. Hume, were receiving from him did not suffer due to his absence. This Mahatma has been a teacher of mankind life after life and on his way to becoming a Bodhisattva. Elsewhere in *The Mahatma Letters* he

advises Theosophists:

You should, even as a simple member, much more as an officer, learn that you may teach, acquire spiritual knowledge and strength that the work may lean upon you, and the sorrowing victims of ignorance learn from you the cause and remedy of their pain.

The significance of this advice must be realized by Theosophists. The darkness of ignorance, which pervades the human race and is the cause of suffering, must be dispelled by the light of true wisdom about the purpose of life; and this is the work of Theosophists.

In the famous letter of the Great Adept known as the Mahachohan is given an indication of the duty of a Theosophist. The Mahatma says:

It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvāna (the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom) which is after all only an exalted and glorious *selfishness* — but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause as many of our fellow-creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true theosophist.

It is this spirit of compassion and love, implicit in the principle of Universal Brotherhood, which should be the guiding light of a Theosophist. To understand the oneness of all existence is to develop an intense state of spiritual love, divine wisdom and compassion, founded upon an impelling will to help all sentient life.

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There is a legend about the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara that shows him as thousand-handed and thousand-eyed, signifying his consciousness and compassion that helps all life. With a multitude of arms this being can help all those who suffer, and with the many eyes, see their suffering. This is a beautiful poetic imagery of a compassionate being, who is a source of inspiration to millions around the world, and is therefore eulogized with great faith with the mantra:

I bow to you Avalokiteśvara, Bodhisattva,
Mahāsattva, the granter of peace and
security from the calamities of the world.

All who are truly committed to this path never tire of the number of people that need to be helped or the amount of work involved or the time that needs to be devoted to this work. This was evident in the life of the founders of the Theosophical Society, Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott.

Śāntideva, the author of *Bodhicaryāvatāra Sutra*, states that the condition of a Bodhisattva is not reached through grace, but by sheer self-effort following the landmarks provided in texts and scriptures. Long before the aspirant reaches this state the person must have sown the *bodhi* seed in the heart as the Buddha did in a long past former life. The journey is possible only through the intense spiritual discipline of the Path. From the outset the aspirant must be very clear as regards the motive, which should be that of selfless service of all sentient life. *The Voice of the Silence* asks: ‘Can

there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shall thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?’

Esoteric literature refers to the various steps that an aspirant goes through, until the stage is reached of a firm resolve, to work for the well-being of all sentient life. The text of this solemn promise is given in *Bodhipataprādīpa*, a work by the great Atiśa. It reads:

I shall play host to all living beings
and rescue them from the cycle of incar-
nations. Henceforth, until I attain the
highest enlightenment, I shall not engage
in hostility, wrath, avarice or envy. I shall
practise the pure life and avoid sin and
desire. With rapture in the vow of morality
I shall act as the Buddha. I am not zealous
to attain enlightenment by a speedy method
but for the sake of a single sentient being
I shall remain until the very end. I shall
purify the immeasurable fields. I shall
cleanse all actions of the body and speech
and mind and refrain from deeds that are
not virtuous.

The taking of such a vow means to save all beings, to destroy all passions, to learn the truth, to teach it to others and to lead all beings to liberation. In the three jewels of Theosophical literature, *At the Feet of the Master*, *The Voice of the Silence* and *Light on the Path* is laid out the path to self-purification and the journey to the temple of Divine Wisdom.

The path of transcendent wisdom elaborated in *The Voice of the Silence* guides the aspirant to that level of sensitivity and compassion where the

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person feels these qualities for all sentient life. It has also been described as the 'wisdom that brings the person to the other shore'. Our worldly existence is that of highs and lows, where the mind is constantly creating various kinds of emotions and thoughts of fear, anger, anxiety, love and hate, etc. There is no stability in such a mind. But to arrive at the other shore is to realize a pure, tranquil condition. The attainment of this Wisdom Consciousness is possible through the cultivation of the 'perfections' of charity (*dāna*), purity or self-discipline (*śīla*), patience (*kṣānti*), desirelessness (*virāga* or *vairāgya*), diligence or vigour (*vīrya*), profound meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).

The Voice of the Silence refers to *dāna* as the key of charity and love immortal. There is no better description of such a charitable and loving spirit than the one given by St Paul to the Corinthians:

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth . . . (1 Cor., 13)

The charity referred to here is not merely the giving of alms but a giving of oneself unreservedly and unconditionally in service without any kind of expectations for the fruits of action. In the *Bhagavadgītā* such action has been termed as selfless action (*nishkāma*

karma). Human beings find it easy to donate to some charity or other to ease the conscience, but find it difficult to serve others by listening to their problems sympathetically. Charity also signifies generosity of spirit, and to feel equanimity when others do not act in the manner that one may consider right and proper. The example of the Christ providing refuge to the woman accused of adultery, and protecting her from the crowds surging forward to throw stones, is indicative of such charity (John, 8:6–11).

Śīla has been explained as 'the key of harmony in word and act, the key that counterbalances the causes and the effect, and leaves no further room for karmic action'. It is described as good conduct.

'Patience sweet that naught can ruffle' is the cultivation of that state of mind where no ups and downs in life, no successes or failures and pains can influence the peace and harmony of the being and the mind remains like the placid waters of a translucent lake.

Virāga or *vairāgya* is indifference to pleasure and to pain. It is the realization of the transitoriness of worldly life, resulting in a state of dispassion and indifference to things, which commonly sway men. With a deeper understanding, the aspirant realizes that pleasure and pain are illusory and result from incorrect perceptions of the nature of things.

Vīrya, as *The Voice of the Silence* states, 'is the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal truth, out of the mire of lies terrestrial'. It is courage under every kind of trial and tribulation in life.

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The sixth virtue is *dhyāna* or meditation that leads to the realization of the higher self.

The seventh is the state of wisdom, the resultant that the aspirant on the Path develops. Some scriptures refer to ten stages or virtues of development that lead to Buddhahood (*Avatamsaka Sutra*). The development of these virtues to their perfection is an effort that spans many lifetimes.

Dr Annie Besant was once asked a question: 'Who will be the builders of the new civilization?' Her reply was very pertinent:

Those who are growing into the spiritual life, those who cannot be happy while others are miserable, those whose meals are rendered bitter by the starvation of the poor, those whose luxury is a burden because of the wants of the miserable and only those who shall sacrifice that others may be happy.

Dr Besant set up the Theosophical Order of Service to ensure that the wisdom teachings of Theosophy did not remain mere ideals but living tools of service for the less fortunate members of humanity and other forms of life. The duty of the Theosophist is to develop the virtues required for the path of service by a determined and conscious effort. It is also to learn the Divine Wisdom that is Theosophy so that he may teach and enlighten the minds of men towards a more spiritual and harmonious way of living.

The Buddha's advice for the development of sensitivity, compassion and love of the Bodhisattva was the practice of the four meditations of love, pity, joy and equanimity. The practice of these meditations and the cultivation of the virtues leads to the awakening of the Buddha or Christ Consciousness within the aspirant's heart and places the person on the Path of the Bodhisattva-s or Mahatmas. ✧

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. There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer. There is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through. There is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. For those who win onwards, there is a reward past all telling — the power to bless and save humanity. For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.

H. P. Blavatsky

Some Difficulties of the Inner Life — I

ANNIE BESANT

EVERYONE who sets himself in earnest to the living of the Inner Life encounters certain obstacles at the very beginning of the pathway thereto, obstacles which repeat themselves in the experience of each, having their basis in the common nature of men. To each wayfarer they seem new and peculiar to himself, and hence give rise to a feeling of personal discouragement which undermines the strength needed for their surmounting. If it were understood that they form part of the common experience of aspirants, that they are always encountered and constantly overclimbed, it may be that some cheer would be brought to the cast-down neophyte by the knowledge. The grasp of a hand in the darkness, the sound of a voice that says: 'Fellow-traveller, I have trodden where you tread, and the road is practicable' — these things bring help in the night-time, and such a help-bringer this would fain be.

One of these difficulties was put to me some time ago by a friend and fellow-wayfarer in connection with some counsel given as to the purification of the body. He did not in any way traverse the statement made, but said with much truth and insight that for most of us the difficulty lay more with the Inner Man than with

his instruments; that for most of us the bodies we had were quite sufficiently good, or, at the worst, needed a little tuning, but that there was a desperate need for the improvement of the man himself. For the lack of sweet music, the musician was more to blame than his instrument, and if he could be reached and improved his instrument might pass muster. It was capable of yielding much better tones than those produced from it at present, but those tones depended on the fingers that pressed the keys. Said my friend pithily and somewhat pathetically: 'I can make my body do what I want; the difficulty is that *I* do not want.'

Here is a difficulty that every serious aspirant feels. The improving of the man himself is the chief thing that is needed, and the obstacle of his weakness, his lack of will and of tenacity of purpose, is a far more obstructive one than can be placed in our way by the body. There are many methods known to all of us by which we can build up bodies of a better type if we want to do so, but it is the 'wanting' in which we are deficient. We have the knowledge, we recognize the expediency of putting it into practice, but the impulse to do so is lacking. Our root-difficulty lies in our inner nature; it is inert, the wish to

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move is absent; it is not that the external obstacles are insurmountable, but that the man himself lies supine and has no mind to climb over them. This experience is being continually repeated by us; there seems to be a want of attractiveness in our ideal; it fails to draw us; we do not wish to realize it, even though we may have intellectually decided that its realization is desirable. It stands before us like food before a man who is not hungry; it is certainly very good food and he may be glad of it tomorrow, but just now he has no craving for it, and prefers to lie basking in the sunshine rather than to get up and take possession of it.

The problem resolves itself into two questions: Why do I not want that which I see, as a rational being, is desirable, productive of happiness? What can I do to make myself want that which I know to be best for myself and for the world? The spiritual teacher who could answer these questions effectively would do a far greater service to many than one who is only reiterating constantly the abstract desirability of ideals that we all acknowledge, and the imperative nature of obligations that we all admit — and disregard. The machine is here, not wholly ill-made; who can place his finger on the lever, *and make it go?*

The first question must be answered by such an analysis of self-consciousness as may explain this puzzling duality, the not desiring that which we yet see to be desirable. We are wont to say that self-consciousness is a unit, and yet, when we turn our attention inwards, we see a bewildering multiplicity of 'I's and are

stunned by the clamour of opposing voices, all coming apparently from ourselves. Now consciousness — and self-consciousness is only consciousness drawn into a definite centre which receives and sends out — *is* a unit, and if it appears in the outer world as many, it is not because it has lost its unity, but because it presents itself there through different media. We speak glibly of the vehicles of consciousness, but perhaps do not always bear in mind what is implied in the phrase. If a current from a galvanic battery be led through several series of different materials, its appearance in the outer world will vary with each wire. In a platinum wire it may appear as light, in an iron one as heat, round a bar of soft iron as magnetic energy, led into a solution as a power that decomposes and recombines. One single energy is present, yet many modes of it appear, for the manifestation of life is always conditioned by its forms, and as consciousness works in the causal, mental, astral, or physical body, the resulting 'I' presents very different characteristics. According to the vehicle which, for the time being, it is vitalizing, so will be the conscious 'I'. If it is working in the astral body, it will be the 'I' of the senses; if in the mental, it will be the 'I' of the intellect.

By illusion, blinded by the material that enwraps it, it identifies itself with the craving of the senses, the reasoning of the intellect, and cries, 'I want', 'I think'. The nature which is developing the germs of bliss and knowledge is the eternal Man, and is the root of sensations and thoughts; but these sensations and thoughts themselves are only the transitory activities in

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his outer bodies, set up by the contact of his life with the outer life, of the Self with the not-Self. He makes temporary centres for his life in one or other of these bodies, lured by the touches from without that awaken his activity, and working in these he identifies himself with them. As his evolution proceeds, as he himself develops, he gradually discovers that these physical, astral, mental centres are his instruments, not himself; he sees them as parts of the 'not-Self' that he has temporarily attracted into union with himself — as he might take up a pen or a chisel — he draws himself away from them, recognizing and using them as the tools they are, knows himself to be life not form, bliss not desire, knowledge not thought; and then first is conscious of unity, then alone finds peace. While the consciousness identifies itself with forms, it appears to be multiple; when it identifies itself with life it stands forth as one.

The next important fact for us is that, as HPB pointed out, consciousness, at the present stage of evolution, has its centre normally in the astral body. Consciousness learns to know by its capacity of sensation, and sensation belongs to the astral body. We sensate; that is, we recognize contact with something which is not ourselves, something which arouses in us pleasure, or pain, or the neutral point between. The life of sensation is the greater part of the life of the majority. For those below the average, the life of sensation is the whole life. For a few advanced beings the life of sensation is transcended. The vast majority occupy the various stages which stretch between the life of sensation, of

mixed sensation and emotion and thought in diverse proportions, of emotion and thought also in diverse proportions. In the life that is wholly of sensation there is no multiplicity of 'I's' and therefore no conflict; in the life that has transcended sensation there is an Inner Ruler Immortal, and there is no conflict; but in all the ranges between there are manifold 'I's and between them conflict.

Let us consider the life of sensation as found in the primitive man of low development. There is an 'I', passionate, craving, fierce, grasping, when aroused to activity. But there is no conflict, save with the world outside his physical body. With that he may war, but inner war he knows not. He does what he wants, without questionings beforehand or remorse afterwards; the actions of the body follow the promptings of desire, and the mind does not challenge, nor criticize, nor condemn. It merely pictures and records, storing up materials for future elaboration. Its evolution is forwarded by the demands made upon it by the 'I' of sensations to exert its energies for the gratification of that imperious 'I'. It is driven into activity by these promptings of desire, and begins to work on its store of observations and remembrances, thus evolving a little reasoning faculty and planning beforehand for the gratification of its master. In this way it develops intelligence, but the intelligence is wholly subordinated to desire, moves under its orders, is the slave of passion. It shows no separate individuality, but is merely the willing tool of the tyrannous desire 'I'.

Contest only begins when, after a long

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series of experiences, the Eternal Man has developed sufficient mind to review and balance up, during his life in the lower mental world between death and birth, the results of his earthly activities. He then marks off certain experiences as resulting in more pain than pleasure, and comes to the conclusion that he will do well to avoid their repetition; he regards them with repulsion and engraves that repulsion on his mental tablets, while he similarly engraves attraction on other experiences that have resulted in more pleasure than pain. When he returns to earth, he brings this record with him, as an inner tendency of his mind; and when the desire 'I' rushes towards an attractive object, recommencing a course of experiences that have led to suffering, he interposes a feeble protest, and another 'I' — consciousness working as mind — makes itself felt and heard, regarding these experiences with repulsion, and objecting to being dragged through them. The protest is so weak and the desire so strong that we can scarcely speak of a contest; the desire 'I', long enthroned, rushes over the weakly-protesting rebel, but when the pleasure is over and the painful results follow, the ignored rebel lifts his voice again in a querulous 'I told you so', and this is the first sting of remorse.

As life succeeds life the mind asserts more and more, and the contest between the desire 'I' and the thought 'I' grows fiercer and fiercer, and the agonized cry of the Christian Mystic: 'I find another law in my members warring against the law of my mind', is repeated in the experience of every evolving Man. The war grows hotter

and hotter as, during the devachanic life, the decisions of the Man are more and more strongly impressed on the mind, appearing as innate ideas in the subsequent birth, and lending strength to the thought 'I', which, withdrawing itself from the passions and emotions, regards them as outside itself, and repudiates their claim to control it. But the long inheritance of the past is on the side of the monarch it would discrown, and bitter and many-fortuned is the war.

Consciousness, in its outgoing activities, runs easily into the worn channels of the habits of many lives; on the other hand, it is diverted by the efforts of the Man to take control and to turn it into the channels hewn out by his reflections. His will determines the line of the consciousness-forces working in his higher vehicles, while habit largely determines the direction of those working in the desire-body. The will, guided by the clear-eyed intelligence, points to the lofty ideal that is seen as a fit object of attainment; the desire-nature does not want to reach it, is lethargic before it, seeing no beauty that it should desire it, nay, is often repelled by the austere outlines of its grave and chastened dignity.

'The difficulty is that I do not *want*.' We do not want to do that which, in our higher moments, we have resolved to do. The lower 'I' is moved by the attraction of the moment rather than by the recorded results of the past that sway the higher, and the real difficulty is to make ourselves feel that the lethargic, or the clamorous, 'I' of the lower nature is not the true 'I'.

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How is this difficulty to be overcome? How is it possible to make that which we know to be the higher to be the habitual self-conscious 'I'?

Let no one be discouraged if here it be said that this change is a matter of growth, and cannot be accomplished in a moment. The human Self cannot, by a single effort, rise to manhood from childhood, any more than a body can change from infancy to maturity in a night. If the statement of the law of growth bring a sense of chill when we regard it as an obstacle in the way of our wish for sudden perfection, let us remember that the other side of the statement is that growth is certain, that it cannot be ultimately prevented, and that if law refuses a miracle it on the other hand gives security. Moreover, we can quicken growth, we can afford the best possible conditions for it, and then rely on the law for our result. Let us then consider the means we can employ for hastening the growth we see to be needed, for transferring the activity of consciousness from the lower to the higher.

The first thing to realize is that the desire-nature is not our Self, but an instrument fashioned by the Self for its own using; and next that it is a most valuable instrument, and is merely being badly used. Desire, emotion, is the motive power in us, and stands ever between the thought and the action. Intellect sees, but it does not move, and a man without desires and emotions would be a mere spectator of life. The Self must have evolved some of its loftiest powers ere it can forego the use of the desires and emotions; for aspirants

the question is how to use them instead of being used by them, how to discipline them, not how to destroy. We would fain 'want' to reach the highest, since without this wanting we shall make no progress at all. We are held back by wanting to unite ourselves with objects transitory, mean and narrow; cannot we push ourselves forward by wanting to unite ourselves with the permanent, the noble and the wide? Thus musing, we see that what we need is to cultivate the emotions, and direct them in a way that will purify and ennoble the character.

The basis of all emotions on the side of progress is love, and this is the power which we must cultivate. George Eliot well said: 'The first condition of human goodness is something to love; the second, something to reverence.' Now reverence is only love directed to a superior, and the aspirant should seek one more advanced than himself to whom he can direct his love and reverence. Happy the man who can find such a one when he seeks, for such finding gives him the most important condition for turning emotion from a retarding force into a lifting one, and for gaining the needed power to 'want' that which he knows to be the best. We cannot love without seeking to please, and we cannot reverence without taking joy in the approval of the one we revere. Hence comes a constant stimulus to improve ourselves, to build up character, to purify the nature, to conquer all in us that is base, to strive after all that is worthy. We find ourselves quite spontaneously 'wanting' to reach a high ideal, and the great motive

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power is sent along the channels hewn out for it by the mind. There is no way of utilizing the desire-nature more certain and more effective than the making of such a tie, the reflection in the lower world of that perfect bond which links the disciple to the Master.

Another useful way of stimulating the desire-nature as a lifting force is to seek the company of any who are more advanced in the spiritual life than we are ourselves. It is not necessary that they should teach us orally, or indeed talk to us at all. Their very presence is a benediction, harmonizing, raising, inspiring. To breathe their atmosphere, to be encircled by their magnetism, to be played on by their thoughts — these things ennoble us, unconsciously to ourselves. We value words too highly, and depreciate unduly the subtler silent forces of the Self, which, 'sweetly and mightily ordering all things', create within the turbulent chaos of our personality the sure bases of peace and truth.

Less potent, but still sure, is the help that may be gained by reading any book that strikes a noble note of life, whether by lifting up a great ideal, or presenting an inspiring character for our study. Such books as the *Bhagavadgītā*, *The Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path*, *The Imitation of Christ*, are among the most powerful of such aids to the desire-nature. We are apt to read too exclusively for knowledge, and lose the moulding force that lofty thought on great ideals may exercise over our emotions. It is a useful habit to read every morning a few sentences from some such book as those

named above, and to carry these sentences with us through the day, thus creating around us an atmosphere that is protective to ourselves and beneficial to all with whom we come into contact.

Another absolutely essential thing is daily meditation — a quiet half-hour in the morning, ere the turmoil of the day begins, during which we deliberately draw ourselves away from the lower nature, recognize it as an instrument and not our Self, centre ourselves in the highest consciousness we can reach, and feel it as our real self. 'That which is Being, Bliss and Knowledge, that am I. Life, Love and Light, that am I.' For our essential nature is divine, and the effort to realize it helps its growth and manifestation. Pure, passionless, peaceful, it is 'the Star that shines within', and that Star is our Self. We cannot yet steadily dwell in the Star, but as we try daily to rise to it, some gleam of its radiance illumines the illusory 'I' made of the shadows amid which we live. To this ennobling and peace-giving contemplation of our divine destiny we may fitly rise by worshipping with the most fervent devotion of which we are capable — if we are fortunate enough to feel such devotion — the Father of the worlds and the Divine Man whom we reverence as Master. Resting on that Divine Man as the Helper and Lover of all who seek to rise — call Him Buddha, Christ, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Master, what we will — we may dare to raise our eyes to the ONE, from whom we come, to whom we go, and in the confidence of realized sonship murmur: 'I and the Father are One, I am That.'

(Part II to follow)

Dr Annie Besant and the Revival of Indian Spiritual Heritage

C. V. AGARWAL

INDIA'S spiritual heritage is not like an archeological heritage. It is like a magnificent tree, ever putting forth newer branches, fresh leaves, flowers and fruits. We, especially the Indian Theosophists, must protect it well from all destructive agencies and influences, and nourish it adequately.

Mrs Besant's work on the Indian spiritual heritage was facilitated by the fact that not only had the ground been cleared but the foundation had also been laid by the tours, lectures and writings of Col. H. S. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, the two Founders of the Theosophical Society. In passing, it may be said that Hindus have alleged that Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky adopted Buddhism and promoted Buddhist ideas and terminology. Buddhists say that Mrs Besant did the same for Hinduism. That is partly true. There are historic facts which need not be gone into here. On the other hand, Mme Blavatsky wrote in her Scrapbook in October 1875: 'The Wisdom of India, her philosophy and achievements *must* be made known to Europe and America.'

It is for this purpose that they arrived in India on 16 February 1879. It is noteworthy that the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj and a few other less known movements started almost at the same time as the Theosophical Society was founded (1875). They also attempted the revival of India's spiritual heritage.

The Founders were besieged by Hindu and also Parsi visitors. The Hindus honoured them most for unveiling the Indian spiritual heritage.

Col. Olcott had no plans to do what he did for Buddhism, but the Buddhists in Sri Lanka were in a worse position than the Hindus in India and in response to their desperate calls, he went to Sri Lanka a year after his arrival in India. There he revived Buddhism, and then followed his memorable work for the cause of Buddhism.

When one thinks of the Indian spiritual heritage one thinks of the sublime teachings enshrined in the Veda-s, Upanishad-s, *Gītā*, and so forth. But the teachings of the Buddha, Mahavira and other teachers are also part of the Indian spiritual

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heritage. It is a wrong impression to think that Dr Besant did little for Buddhism. Mrs Besant toured Sri Lanka several times and gave a series of lectures published in more than one book. That work also falls within the purview of the present subject.

In 1883, when travelling was very difficult, Col. Olcott travelled 11,000 km in India and 43 Lodges were founded. On 9 March 1883, he was invested with the sacred brahmanical thread by Pandit Taranath, Tarka-Vachaspati, to mark the gratitude of the Hindus to him for his services in the revival of Sanskrit literature and of religious interest among the Indian people. All this made Mrs Besant's work easier.

Mrs Besant arrived in India on 16 November 1893 after lecturing at the World Parliament of Religions in September 1893. On her way from Tuticorin to Madras and at the 1893 Convention she gave 48 lectures and then from Calcutta went to Lahore and the western coast, delivering 121 lectures and arousing respect for the Indian heritage.

As an example, mention may be made of the lecture at the Town Hall, Calcutta, in January 1894. The Hall was overflowing and a very large number of young people had assembled. She exhorted them not to copy the West and drew attention to their own spiritual heritage. The audience was so inspired that there was spontaneous applause. Even slogans were shouted against Western education. The Anglo-Indian newspapers wrote alarming editorials, saying that Mrs Besant was undoing what the British had done; if

Indians were so inspired by their own heritage, there would be danger to British Rule. The matter went as far as the Viceroy. Col. Olcott cautioned Mrs Besant not to indulge in politics. In fact, she did not give political speeches.

It is not enough to give an inspiring lecture on spiritual regeneration. 'The Means of India's Regeneration' was the theme of her lecture in Calcutta early in 1895. She said: 'But these physical means of regeneration cannot succeed, unless they flow down, as the lowest means of spiritual ideal; and the unifying of India must be founded on and permeated by spiritual life.' In the present situation this call for high ideals to descend to the physical level, given over a century ago, is relevant, as the Government and the social service organizations seem to be dealing primarily with physical means. Therefore, for the re-spiritualization of India, the rehabilitation of her 'spiritual consciousness' was the first task to which Mrs Besant addressed herself.

In 1896 she made Benares her home and started studying the original Indian scriptures with the help of the Sanskrit pandits and Dr Bhagavan Das. Their translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* is perhaps one of the most standard translations in English. From then onwards, there is a noticeable change in her presentation in lectures and the books which she wrote.

Hinduism does not seem to be the right word. Sanātana Dharma, used by her later, is a better term. Her speeches and writings brought insight into the inner truths of Sanātana Dharma; her deep

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understanding of its metaphysics, mysticism, symbology and sociology threw light on its obscurities and intricacies.

This is a very important contribution of Mrs Besant to Hinduism. At that time the Indians educated under British rule, under the influence of the Christian missionaries, were ashamed to call themselves Hindus. They themselves laughed at the various *samskāra-s* of the Hindus. To them there seemed to be no meaning in the rituals, whether *nāmakarana* (naming a child), the sacred thread, or *śrāddha* (after-death rituals). Every one of these rituals has a spiritual basis which the pandits performing them did not understand. Thus, the numerous *deva-s* and angels were ridiculed, the Hindus were said to have thirty-three crores of gods, whereas Hinduism spoke of only one God. One God cannot express himself fully in one aspect; thus He expresses himself in many aspects. Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and other religions also have many angels. Humans and *deva-s* (angels) evolve in parallel streams. Similarly, all ceremonials have deep significance. Take for instance, the naming of a child. Every Hindu name has a meaning, generally that of a god or goddess like Sarasvati, or a virtue, like *śānti*, and it is hoped that the child will show forth that quality. It should remind the elders of that quality when they call the child, and the name should not be distorted.

During the first decade of her life in India, Mrs Besant so much identified herself with the Hindu way of living, speaking and thinking, that some,

especially those belonging to other religions, misunderstood her. She made it clear that 'Theosophy is not to be identified with any particular form of the everlasting Brahnavidyā'. The word meaning of 'Theosophy' is Brahnavidyā. It acts like a leaven (yeast) 'which could make Hinduism live again in the hearts and minds of the Hindus'.

Scholars were giving lip service to the Veda-s, Purāna-s and Upanishad-s. Mrs Besant drew attention to various allegories and symbols. This turned the attention of the intellectuals to the pure waters of spirituality. She explained how Aryan thought was in harmony with modern scientific discoveries. She made them proud of their divine heritage.

In the work for the Indian heritage Mrs Besant had to struggle not only against foreign domination dating from the Moghul period but also against powerful theosophical groups led by Judge and later, Steiner. Both broke away from the Theosophical Society. They maintained that the TS was founded in the West to revive and spread Western Occultism and not Eastern Wisdom. According to them, the East had hardly anything to give.

Mrs Besant pointed out the heresy of separation. She exposed the hollowness of the goal of *sva-vimukti*, aspiration by the spiritually-selfish among the Hindus for their own individual liberation. There is no congregational worship in the Hindu tradition. She inspired the founding of the Bharata Samaj which tries to popularize congregational *pujā*. She aroused in people an altruistic regard for the salvation of all.

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Mrs Besant gave two illuminating series of lectures, one on 'The Four Great Religions' and the other on 'The Religious Problem in India'. These were followed by talks on other religions. In these she drew attention to the beauties and sublimity not only of Hinduism but of all the great religions. All these religions are well established in India.

In a secular state, about which there is so much talk these days, there is a genuine need to understand how to ensure secularism. She said that all the Faiths are like many-hued gems in the imperial crown of the Great Jeweller, the Creator.

Mrs Besant drew the attention of the Hindus to the teaching enshrined in their scriptures of noble tolerance of other creeds and faiths. She tried to prove in her speeches that all religions were variants of the same Ancient Wisdom, and not competitors.

If the members of the TS study these talks and understand them, and then if each of them, in his or her small or large circle, spreads this essential message of our spiritual heritage, Theosophists will strike the note in public life that is most needed. Most older, retired people have set, hardened minds and will not be easily influenced. Unconsciously one tends to go on 'beating one's own drum'. Nevertheless we can address the younger generation and influence them. But this is a very difficult task. Youth is cleverer and better informed and so needs to be handled tactfully, subtly. The young person can be influenced and helped by stories from the scriptures with correct inter-

pretations. Much help can also be obtained from Mrs Besant's talks at the Central Hindu College. Unfortunately only a few of them are available to the public.

One example of Mrs Besant's explanation may be given by way of illustration. There is reference to Ahalyā becoming a stone image owing to a curse and Śri Rāma releasing her by touching it. If a person becomes a stone image he or she does not suffer at all for he or she neither thinks nor feels. However, if one's consciousness is attached to a stone image, one is conscious of one's real being but is tied down or limited by the stone image; then there is suffering. So Ahalyā's consciousness was attached to a stone image. A person born and brought up in prison does not suffer prison life as a free citizen suffers when imprisoned.

There is another less emphasized yet significant contribution of Mrs Besant regarding the Indian spiritual heritage which merits greater attention. The Hindu as well as the Buddhist scriptures, using different terminology, speak of liberation, *jivanmukti*. Followers of both these great faiths believed that the door to liberation is closed in this dark age. Those who have studied the development of Buddhism in the modern age will remember how enthusiastic Dharmapala was when he heard from the Theosophists that the door to Arhatship is still open.

Mrs Besant drew attention to this possibility — nay, to our destiny — in her presentations, *In the Outer Court* and *The Path of Discipleship*.

Her speeches, life and work, made the

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Hindu a better Hindu, the Buddhist a better Buddhist, and so forth.

As Mrs Besant's work in the field of education is very well known, I have saved mention of it for the end. For any deep-rooted and lasting effect, right education is needed. In the Central Hindu College and its hostels there was an exemplary combination of freedom and discipline. Many examples can be given. Those interested may go through the interesting book by Mr Sri Prakasa.

It is remarkable how she organized religious education on non-sectarian lines. Even when Madame Montessori was a little girl, Mrs Besant's emphasis was on drawing out inherent spiritual qualities hidden in the pupils rather than on considering them as vessels to be filled with information.

While there was a great deal of superstition, orthodoxy and misrepresentation, she admirably explained the inherent ideal of Varnashrama Dharma which in the course of time degenerated into the caste system prevalent at present.

Much light is thrown on India's spiritual heritage by her lectures on *The Avatāra-s*. She showed that the concept of Avatāra-s is in accordance with the modern theory of evolution. In 1899 she lectured on *Dharma, Mahābhārata, Rāmachandra — the Ideal King*; in 1903 she compiled the *Sanātana Dharma Text-books — Elementary and Advanced*, and also *Hindu Ideals*.

She gave a number of inspiring lectures to the students of the Central Hindu College. Some of them were on: Children

of the Motherland: Some of her sons; some of her daughters (1906); In Defence of Hinduism (1908); Questions on Hinduism with Answers (1909); The Education of the Depressed Classes (1909); The Religious Problem in India (1909). The last two are most relevant in the present day.

Tackling girls' education was much more difficult. Mrs Besant had to get lady Theosophists from abroad to organize it. In the school, to start with, only two or three girls could be enlisted. They had to be brought in closed curtained bullock carts. Some people threw pebbles at them, saying that Mrs Besant was spoiling them; would the girls work as clerks in offices? Girls became Prime Ministers and Governors in the decades that followed.

Through educational work she subtly brought about social reforms of far-reaching import. No student could marry while studying. That was a practical step against child marriage. Of course, there was no question of a dowry, which has assumed monstrous proportions in many segments of our society.

Another important way in which she proceeded was by initiating good work for humanity and, when others were ready to take it over, to hand it on to them. This is exemplified in her turning over the Central Hindu College with all its assets to Pandit Malaviya to form the nucleus of the Benares Hindu University.

Even before coming into contact with the Theosophical Society, as a result of her wide study, Mrs Besant had a general, rather vague idea about India's spiritual

heritage. Her interest in India is reflected in her small book *England, India and Afghanistan* (1878). She learnt of its greatness on joining the TS but came to know it more definitely when she travelled along with Mr G. N. Chakravarty, who was deputed by Col. Olcott to present the Hindu viewpoint at the World Parliament of Religions (1893). Mr Chakravarty was a scholar of Sanskrit texts and a fine English speaker. Her association with him continued for a little over a decade.

Mrs Besant gradually moved on to greater depths and practical implementation of spiritual ideals when she gave talks on 'Ancient Ideals in Modern Life' and 'Wake up India'.

Realizing that India's spiritual message would not be known by the world at large as long as India was an enslaved country, Mrs Besant plunged into political activities and set a new standard of work.

Those who are interested in knowing how Mrs Besant put spiritual ideals in political work may go through Mr Rajkumar's book *Annie Besant's Rise to Power in Indian Politics*. Her motive, the author says, 'was to establish a brotherhood of man, realizing the unity of all'.

In *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism*, Catherine Wessinger, referring to differences with Mahatma Gandhi, wrote: 'The word non-cooperation was abhorrent to Mrs Besant. According to her, only cooperation would bring about a condition of true brotherhood . . . with everyone working for everyone else in love and service . . . cooperation between the people and the Government is

very basic to society.' Our present-day politicians need to pay heed to such words by Mrs Besant.

Finally, how can we reach the source of energy and insight that Mrs Besant had in abundance? In her own words, 'Learn to trust the Divine in you. There lies your real strength. You *are* divine. You don't want to look up to the skies to find the Divine; look into your own heart and the Divine is alive in you.'

In her pamphlet, *On the Nature and Existence of God*, written a year after ending her marriage, Mrs Besant said: 'Matter is . . . the same as spirit; existence is *one*, however manifold in its phenomena; life is one, however manifold in its evolution . . . only one substance exists in all around . . . the universe is eternal.' She continued: 'We pretend to know the Unknown if we declare him to be the Unknowable. Unknowable to us at the present, Yes! Unknowable for ever, in other possible stages of existence? We have reached a region into which we cannot penetrate; here all human faculties fail us; we bow our heads on the threshold of the Unknown.' These expressions reveal her depth of understanding from the days of her youth.

Dr Besant changed from being a devout Christian, an atheist, a Free-Thought activist, a radical, a social reformer, a labour leader, and finally became a Theosophist. In her life as a Theosophist also, there were several phases, but her unceasing search for Truth remained unabated, and rather gained depth and momentum as the years rolled by. ✧

Without Loving Care, I am Nothing

ABRAHAM ORON

EVERY human being longs for love, wants to be loved. We are all strongly drawn to those who love us and to those we love. As students of Theosophy the love of others is one of our most inspiring ideals.

But why is love so hard for us? Why is it so difficult for us to feel closeness, warmth, caring, fondness, brotherhood and compassion for others, even sometimes for those within our own families?

Theosophy teaches that we all are sparks of the same flame and each person's soul has a divine source. Intellectually we can accept that we are all brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same eternal essence that dwells within each one of us. But when it comes to living, most of us can express deep care and warmth to only a very few of those we meet daily.

The answer may be found in this beautiful pearl of wisdom known as *Light on the Path*. In its second part it says:

Listen to the song of life. Look for it and listen to it first in your own heart. At first

you may say: 'It is not there; when I search I find only discord.' Look deeper. If again you are disappointed, pause and look deeper again. There is a natural melody, an obscure fount in every human heart. It may be hidden over and utterly concealed and silenced — but it is there. At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope and love.

What it actually says is that you cannot love others if you do not find the source of love in yourself. It also says that we cannot find that source of love which is in our Higher Self and spiritual Soul if we are not willing to look inward. But looking inward can be difficult, because we may encounter our lower self or that which is unpleasant, that which causes discord within us.

Light on the Path describes this state:

When you have found the beginning of the way the star of your soul will show its light; and by that light you will perceive how great is the darkness in which it burns. Mind, heart, brain all are obscure and dark.

Mr Abraham Oron is President of Covenant Lodge, TS, in Israel. Talk delivered at the international Convention, Adyar, in December 2010.

The Theosophist

Our Inner Self who is also our inner teacher, wants us to see the truth about our personality, about our motives, about our selfishness, about our anger and fear. Can we look inside and see all these things without judgement? Just see what we hold inside, and feel the suffering which is connected with such attitudes? This willingness to look inside is the beginning of freedom from that which separates us from our Divine Self who is the source of love within.

Yes, it is so true that without loving care we are nothing, but we cannot really love and care for others if there is a gap inside us separating us from the source of love within.

We all need love, we all exist because of the love of those who cared for us when we were young and weak. Everyone experienced the strength that a loving smile or look or touch can give. The whole of creation is held together by the bond of divine love and compassion.

Rabindranath Tagore expresses this in a beautiful way:

Love is the only reality and it is not a mere sentiment. It is the ultimate truth that lies at the heart of creation.

The Voice of the Silence says:

Canst thou destroy divine Compassion? Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of laws — eternal Harmony . . . the light of everlasting right, and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal.

All the beauties of nature are the result of the care and nurturing love of an infinite

number of invisible intelligences who are operating within the inner side of nature. Personally I believe that you cannot create beauty without love.

Even the law of karma with all its strictness and sometimes hardness is the outcome of divine love, which shows through pain that we deviate from the path that leads to a lasting peace and happiness. This love and tenderness of God for his creation is expressed in Tagore's *Gītānjali*:

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.

Yes, we all need to be loved and cared for, but sometimes we are stuck in this wish to be loved, and forget that we are here in order to develop our ability to love, without which we can never be really happy in our life. Without loving care for others our life feels valueless and meaningless.

The essence of Love — which is closeness and connection, has its source in the ability to listen from one's depths

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and to sense the depth of another in your own deep self; to feel his soul, her soul, the joy or the pain, the calm, or maybe the inner war, and beneath it all maybe sense even if faintly the light of the inner self.

There is no possibility to really love if we do not perceive some of the inner beauty of another's soul. One can perceive it only when we quieten our criticism and judgement, truly accepting the other with his or her flaws, knowing that these flaws, like our own, are the product of the learning process we are in. He or she may not see the beauty, nobility and wisdom in the depths of their soul. Nor may we see our own soul's beauty.

This is why we have to 'look for the song of life', for that which is the embodiment of beauty and love in our own deep soul. When we find it in ourselves, then we can find much that can be loved in others.

Let us return to *Light on the Path*, which says:

And so deceptive is the illusion in which you live, that it is hard to guess where you will first detect the sweet voice in the hearts of others. But know that it is certainly within yourself. Look for it there and once having heard it, you will more readily recognize it around you.

Love and kindness begin in ourselves. Sometimes while in meditation we can sense some of the beauty, love and peace that comes from the depths of our being. These moments are the beginning of Self-knowledge and Self-love (self with a capital S). Unselfish Self-love is possible

when we experience these lovable qualities in ourselves. It is hard for us to love and have faith in ourselves when we experience and emphasize mostly those negative qualities of our personality which we do not love and sometimes even hate.

Here is a beautiful quotation from Madame Blavatsky's *Practical Occultism*, which emphasizes this idea:

The 'God' in us — that is to say, the Spirit of Love and Truth, Justice and Wisdom, Goodness and Power — should be our only true and permanent *Love*, our only reliance in everything, our only *Faith*, which, standing firm as a rock, can for ever be trusted; our only *Hope*, which will never fail us if all other things perish; and the only object which we must seek to obtain, by our Patience, waiting contentedly until our evil Karma has been exhausted and the divine Redeemer will reveal to us his presence within our soul. The door through which he enters is called *Contentment*; for he who is discontented with himself is discontented with the law that made him such as he is; and as God is *Himself* the Law, God will not come to those that are discontented with Him.

Being at war with ourselves, being too hard and unkind to ourselves, indicates the lack of Self-love, without which love of others is not possible.

When we are able to look at our lower self from the standpoint of the higher, then we can direct and educate the lower self with kindness and without hardness. Being kind to ourselves helps us to be kind, tolerant and helpful towards others.

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

WHEN followers of Zen fail to go beyond the world of their senses and thoughts, all their doings and movements are of no significance. When the senses and thoughts are annihilated all the passages to Universal Mind are blocked, and no entrance then becomes possible. The original Mind is to be recognized along with the working of the senses and thoughts — only it does not belong to them, nor yet is it independent of them. Do not build up your views upon your senses and thoughts, do not base your understanding upon your senses and thoughts; but at the same time do not seek the Mind away from your senses and thoughts, do not try to grasp Reality by rejecting your senses and thoughts. When you are neither attached to, nor detached from, them, then you enjoy your perfect unobstructed freedom, then you have your seat of enlightenment.

Huang-Po

The Web of Life

V. KRISHNAN

THERE is much talk of saving nature and the human race becoming the deliverers of the Earth, etc., but in my perception, we are the ones to be saved. We are not any superpower in Nature's creation but only as important as any other creature walking on Earth. She has made us with *the* same materials that she has used to create any other being in this world.

'They' say, everything on Earth is made up of the five elements, or as we call it in India, the *pancha bhuta-s*. When my teacher at school said this, I did not believe him. I knew that there is water inside us because we drink it and there is also air because we breathe it. But, I always used to wonder where is the earth, fire and space.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the Zen master says: 'Looking deeply into a flower we see that the flower is made of non-flower elements. We can describe the flower as being full of everything. There is nothing that is not present in the flower. We see sunshine, we see the rain, we see clouds, we see the earth, and we also see time and space in the flower. A flower, like everything else, is made entirely of non-flower elements.'

The grass needs soil, rain and the sun

to grow and to nurture itself. The cow needs the grass and, indirectly, the soil, water and sun, to produce milk. Milk and milk products help man's progeny. So, yes, I can see the Earth, Water, Space, Fire and Wind in the baby. But the best evidence of it all is when the body dies. Nature does not digest junk and anything natural gets digested like a piece of banana in a cow's intestine. You do not see a trace of a buried carcass after some time. It is back to its elements. The earth in it becomes earth, the fire in it creates heat and evaporates the water, air escapes and leaves an empty space!

If man is made of the same material as that of a frog or a fish, then in what way is he superior? Well, is he superior at all . . . ? The answer is Yes and No!

Yes, because man is the only species to be able to reach the depths of his mind and make sense out of this cosmic web.

No, because, look at the rest of Nature . . . *they are smart, they know their limitations and live with them happily.*

The Siberian cat does not aim to come into tropical regions, nor does a tomato grow on icebergs. The trees' 'children' behave like them and do only all that their parents did, but better than them — and

Mr V. Krishnan is Superintendent of the Garden Department at Adyar.

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that is the grace of evolution. For example, mosquitoes get used to repellents, pests in agriculture become immune to particular pesticides. The catfishes in the Mylapore Tank, Chennai, are very unique. Catfishes are normally scavengers and clean up tanks by consuming algae and other organic matter in the tank. But one can notice that, in the Mylapore Temple tank, these catfishes come to the surface and keep their mouths open constantly to be able to catch the few grains of puffed rice being thrown by the devotees. It is because of evolution that they can change the way they have been doing things for several generations to be able to adapt to the current situation, to make themselves better survivors, but they have never stopped doing what their parents did either.

This is not to mean that one should not be ambitious, but it is to be so within those boundaries.

Why boundaries? We all understand boundaries in a simple manner — geographical and physiological. Geographically, we do not want snakes coming inside our living areas, nor even strangers. We do not mind, however, if our neighbour does, but we want him to keep his antics within his household to maintain social peace.

Physiologically, do we ever see a banyan growing thorns, looking at the bougainvillea to protect itself; or owlets growing canine teeth to tear their prey? Why is it then, man alone, wants to fly to great heights when he cannot, travel at high speeds when he cannot on his own,

eat food that he can neither hunt nor grow?

I think the bane of our civilization today is this craving. And the effect of this is seen as starting from the last century. Until then, man travelled on foot, cycled, the movements of which are limited by the rider's strength, or by animal driven carts; again these animals do not travel at unnatural speeds. He ate what he could hunt or what he could grow. He lived within his boundaries. People call this being backward. Today, to move faster, eat food that is grown all over the world in all kinds of manner to live fashionably, he has depleted so many natural resources and has really abused the web.

Before the 1900s — to be precise, before the Green Revolution — things were far better. Man was in complete harmony with Nature, backed by a sound understanding of its functioning. Following are a few practices to substantiate this understanding:

One of the philosophies of farming was that there are three beings who work towards producing food and that food is shared equally among these beings. So, man took the topmost part of the crop, which was grains, animals took the middle part, which was hay, and the bottom part, the roots, were left as a reward for the soil, the third being in this process. For, soil is not a mix of sand particles, stones and clay, but an ecosystem comprising millions of microorganisms and smaller forms of life.

He used Nature to make Nature produce, so that he could give back to Nature!

The Web of Life

Most of our current issues, be it nuclear war, inflation or poverty, all started when we stopped identifying ourselves as part of Nature and felt that we have to control it; and started to disturb the harmony. In fact most of the world's problems can be traced back to this cause.

On the other hand, trees and birds have remained trees and birds, in such a manner that we still see them as part of Nature. They have been intelligent enough to do things within their capacities. Did I say trees are intelligent? . . . oh yes, they are far more intelligent than we think they are.

Why are some plants' young shoots reddish in colour, e.g. the neem, jatropha, mango . . . ? It is a technique to protect themselves from being eaten up by other animals because red means danger in the animal kingdom. It is proven that many amphibians and insects protect themselves from being preyed upon with red colours on their bodies.

Ever seen a banyan growing under another banyan? Banyans know that they are large and cannot allow another banyan to grow underneath. Also, a banyan wants its children to go far away from it. So, they have planned it in such a way that seeds that fall down from the tree cannot germinate but have to pass through the intestine of a bird or animal to germinate. The banyan, very smartly, has arranged the birds or animals as the seed carriers who will 'drop' these seeds in faraway places.

On the other hand, look at the unbranched coconuts and palmyras growing in clusters. They grow in coastal and dry arid landscapes respectively, and both of them need to withstand a lot of wind currents and need to be in groups so that, together they withstand the winds.

Each being on Earth is living and evolving, hence intelligent!

Do you think the trees and animals know that they are intelligent; well, I guess not, and it does not matter to them either.

We are probably the only species who work and retire, who want to see the 'fruits' of our work. Nothing else in Nature takes time off to think about what it does, whether it is intelligent or not, whether it looks beautiful or not. Trees do not take off and not breathe oxygen for a while. They continue to do what they do day in and day out. There is shade under the tree not because we can use it, but it is designed in such a way that the leaves catch the maximum sunlight and the shade keeps the roots cool.

And so it is with everything that we harvest from Nature . . . flowers do not bloom to decorate our vases, nor trees produce fruits for people who eat their fruits and throw the seeds in dustbins.

Man, being the only species to be able to understand this web called Nature, has to be extremely responsible while harvesting from the rest of the strand of the Web. Because it is he who does the maximum damage to the web, it is he who can repair it too. ✧

Creation is only the projection into form of that which already exists.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, III.2

Books of Interest

ANCIENT WISDOM — MODERN INSIGHT by Shirley Nicholson, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, 2011.

Theosophical texts which relate the lofty teachings contained within *The Secret Doctrine* to modern thought, including recent scientific developments, are not very common. Included in this small category is Shirley Nicholson's *Ancient Wisdom — Modern Insight*. The first edition of this book from the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, is a noteworthy addition to its collection. As some time has lapsed since it was initially published, revised and updated scientific references have been included in the text.

The Foreword to the book describes it as based 'firmly, though not slavishly, on *The Secret Doctrine*' and as an 'eminently readable restatement of theosophical principles'. These descriptions proved quite true to the reviewer on closer examination. The three main sections include 'The Many-Faceted One', 'The One Unfolding', and 'Human Nature and the Human Journey'. Specific chapters deal with subjects such as The Healing World View, Interconnections, The Divinity of Space, Rhythm and Cycles, Sevenfold Illusion, Divine Mind, Karma and Self-Transformation. The book's scope is therefore considerable.

The Ancient Wisdom is explained

clearly in the first chapter, enabling the reader to proceed within a broad context, with an understanding that this Wisdom is not some modern invention. Rather, it has spanned human history in various places and guises. Mention is made, and rightly so, of the necessity for the Wisdom teachings to be transformed into 'living realities which permeate all our attitudes and govern our life'. Stress is laid on essential principles — unity, polarity, cycles, order, evolution — which are 'constantly exerting their irresistible influence in our world'. The need to pay heed to such principles is made very clear. For example, the author asserts that 'our failure to adopt the unitive attitude implicit in twentieth century knowledge is the basis of all our major problems worldwide, whether social, political, ecological, economic, or individual'. It does not take too much thought to see her point.

Shirley Nicholson's subject matter is well researched. For example, her treatment of evolution includes a number of interesting scientific references. The discussion on holons and hierarchy is illustrated with references to various thinkers such as the philosophers of science Alfred North Whitehead, L. L. Whyte, the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin and others, as well as H. P. Blavatsky. Holism is brought to life in a very practical fashion using the example of a modern city and the many

Books of Interest

interconnections between its internal systems. Then again, subjects such as time, boundless duration and timelessness are well explained, the latter being brought more into the reach of human consciousness with some insights into the mystical experience.

Aspects of pertinent contemporary scientific thought appear throughout the text. With books on science abounding today, it is most convenient to have such handy references alongside a number of significant theosophical teachings. After exploring this book, one cannot but acknowledge just how pervasive certain concepts from the Ancient Wisdom

tradition have become in today's global culture.

Containing 224 pages, plus notes and a useful index, *Ancient Wisdom — Modern Insight* is a most engaging read, best digested a chapter at a time. It is recommended for anyone who has some basic familiarity with the Wisdom teachings and who is interested in understanding them further, within the context of world thought. The book can provide a very useful basis for group study and many serious Theosophical students will find it a welcome addition to their library.

LINDA OLIVEIRA

And the Almighty said to Moses, 'I am One and Eternal, so you, too, shall be united as one and you will be an eternal people.' He further said, 'Thus shall you say to the Children of Israel, "The Eternal, who is determined to remove cruelty from all human existence, has sent me to you."'

Torah Yesharah, Exodus 3:14

Theosophical Work around the World

United States

The American Section hosted three appearances in Chicago by His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet on 17–18 July 2011. The theme was ‘Bridging the Faith Divide: Compassion in Action’. At the first day’s event, the Dalai Lama addressed a crowd of over 8,000. The National President of the TS in America, Mr Tim Boyd, who introduced him, noted that the Dalai Lama’s first contact with the TS came during a visit to the Society’s Headquarters in Adyar, India, in 1956, during his second visit out of Tibet. The Dalai Lama confirmed this, saying that the Adyar Headquarters was both ‘spiritual’ and ‘respectful of all religions’.

During his talk His Holiness observed despite crucial differences all religious traditions have the same goal. ‘Spirituality is like medicine for illness. Although there is a variety of medicines for different illnesses, medicine as a whole has the same purpose — to bring better health to humanity. Religion can be seen as a medicine for the mind.’ One reason for Buddhism’s popularity in the West, he mentioned, was that ‘modern people love something new, but it is better to keep your own traditions — it is much safer’.

His Holiness also met religious leaders from the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. In the afternoon, there was a special event — a question and answer session — only for members of the Theosophical Society. The Dalai Lama’s

book *The Opening of the Wisdom-Eye*, published by Quest Books in 1966, is still in print. The Dalai Lama praised the TS highly, citing the organization’s open-minded approach to the study of religion, science, and philosophy.

Karachi (Pakistan)

A report about the Karachi Theosophical Society has been received and we are happy to have this contact. All efforts are being made to bring peace and goodwill in Karachi, according to the message.

The members of the Karachi Theosophical Society meet occasionally at the residence of one of them and *The Theosophist* is read, after which discussion presumably takes place. White Lotus Day was celebrated at the residence of Miss Roshan Bagharia at the Parsi Colony. Fortunately, the Library has been reopened for public use, with security measures at the gate, and a peace meeting was held there on 7 August 2011 by members.

The TOS is functioning well and helping local children. The Montessori School named after Jamshed N. Mehta is carried on in the first and second floors of the building. It is hoped that slowly full meetings as usual can be held.

Mr Ibrahim Toyo, President of Hyderabad Lodge (Sindh), is looking after Besant Hall in Hyderabad. It is occasionally given on rent to Oxford University Press for sale of books.

Theosophical Work around the World

Members are hoping that public meetings too will be possible soon and meetings are held regularly. The Mahtani Foundation has renovated the Lecture Hall.

Brazil

Theosophical work in Brazil has shown great vitality. They have had a large number of members attending both national events — Summer Schools in January, which are held in different locations in order to strengthen the local work, and International Schools of Theosophy, which take place in July in the Theosophical Institute.

The Theosophical Publishing House has reached its hundredth book, and *Sophia* magazine keeps going to the newstands in a print of 10,000 copies, presenting the Theosophical teachings to the public in an accessible language. Every issue features an article of the international President.

In Brasilia, Theosophical lectures are transmitted by a channel over cable TV, for twelve hours daily. This TV has more than three hundred thousand subscribers. Public lectures are transmitted on TV also in some other cities.

The School of the Wisdom

The next sessions of the School of the Wisdom will take place as usual between early November 2011 and February 2012.

The theme for the first session is ‘Meditation and Its Practice’, to be conducted by Prof. V. V. Chalam, former National Lecturer of the Indian Section of the TS. Daily practice of meditation will be an essential component, in addition to talks. From 14 November to 2 December 2011, Prof. C. A. Shinde, National Lecturer for the Indian Section, will speak on ‘The Path of the Spiritual Aspirant’. The path to spiritual perfection is the process of becoming what we are and this session is meant to be an in-depth exploration of the subject. Mr Ricardo Lindemann, former National President of the TS in Brazil and a serious student of Astrology for many years, will conduct, from 5 to 16 December, classes on ‘Astrology and the Wisdom Tradition’, including What is Astrology; The Twelve Signs and their Correlation with the Apostles; The Law of Cycles and the Second Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*.

From 9 January to 2 February 2012 Dr Ravi Ravindra, who has directed the School of the Wisdom several times in the past, will speak on ‘Explorations in the *R̥g Veda*’, exploring the most significant sections of the *R̥g Veda*. Particular attention will be given to the *Purusha Sukta* and the *Nāsadiya Sukta*.

Information about the School of the Wisdom classes is available on the TS website <http://ts-adyar.org/>. ✧

We are visitors on this planet. . . . During this period we must try to do something good, something useful with our lives. Try to be at peace with yourself and help others have peace. If you contribute to others’ happiness, you will find the true goal, the meaning of life.

The Dalai Lama

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