



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.

Buddhist Teachings on Relationships

RADHA BURNIER

THE Buddhist Temple here at Adyar was constructed at the suggestion of the Mahatma KH who even sent a little sketch to indicate what kind of shrine it should be. The full project was the result of Brother Jinarājādāsa's deep interest in it. It was he, who as Vice-President, and as deputy for Dr Besant got the plan made, the structure put up, brought the original Bodhi tree branch from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and planted it there.

We are told that the Buddha gave useful and helpful teaching to a cultivator who said: 'I cannot understand the profound things that you talk about, please teach me something simple.' The advice which followed about relationships is suggestive. We can all brood over and explore the essentials of relationship. Krishnaji said life is relationship, for we are all the time related.

It is obviously the responsibility of the parent to help the child (maybe a grandchild, an adopted child) to be virtuous, to set an example, and to take opportunities of pointing out what is right and wrong. How to avoid moral pitfalls of life must be included as part of the education which the parent should give to the child. Then, the child, the son or daughter, must take care of the parents, give them due respect,

support them if necessary, and cherish their memory. Even an ignorant parent has done something good.

Then we come to pupils and teachers. The pupil must learn well; he must have the attitude of learning. This is sadly lacking in many schools, and teachers are discussing what to do about it; students are also not ready to heed the advice of teachers. But the teacher, like the parent, must train the student in righteousness, in what is good or not good, which may cover a whole range of life, from looking after the physical body to nourishing the soul. It is the duty of the teacher to encourage students in all that they do which is good, and let them develop their faculties and their talents. We need not take the Buddha's words literally, because we have biological parents, because there are others who are like parents. There are people who have helped us to learn, who are not necessarily teachers in the strict sense of the term. Even small children at times help us to learn because they look at things so innocently.

Then we come to the relationship between husband and wife, and one of the important things to notice is that the husband must respect his wife. Perhaps that was lacking in India in those days, as

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it is now. A good man must respect his wife, cherish her, be faithful to her and so on, and see that she is honoured and not looked down upon. When a husband makes disparaging comments about his wife in front of the servants, for example, he does the opposite. And the wife must run a well-ordered house, be thrifty as a housekeeper, have a very hospitable attitude to friends and kinsmen and be generally a support, and of course, chaste.

Now we come to the other three types of relationships the Buddha dealt with; for example, the relationship between friends and close companions. They must act as true friends, friends who seek the welfare of a companion. This is not just physical welfare, helping him to invest his money or something like that. If the friend perhaps has false notions, it is necessary, gently, affectionately, to point it out and not say 'he is a friend and I support him in everything whether it is right or wrong'. This does not mean that we go round interfering or presuming that we alone know what is right. Advice must be taken with common sense. Also it means the need to share with friends, in prosperity or poverty, be generous, discuss and receive help. Help must be given courteously, acting as one does to a true equal. Friends should watch what is happening to each other, because a person may sometimes be off his guard, may be unaware of what he or she does, and through that kind of inattention be acting foolishly. A true friend should be watching and help the other not to get into difficulties. The Buddha's advice is good

advice; it extends one's relationship a great deal because it is not only one's own family but the families of one's friends whose welfare and prosperity we must have at heart.

As Annie Besant said, more than once, progress in realizing unity through attitudes of affection and responsibility start on a small scale as the individual evolves. So to begin with one should have the right feelings, perform right actions in relation to one's family and one's friends. Then the capacity for affection, for responsibility, for caring, grows. The whole world becomes one's family, and everyone is a friend. This is generally a question with even non-personal problems. As a community can face great problems because of foolish ideas and foolish actions, we see that there is much left for every individual to take care of. The kind of apathy which exists nowadays must be reduced, where nobody bothers what is happening to society as a whole. Although this advice was given to a simple man, in very simple terms, on pondering over it, we can realize that there are much larger implications which we must learn for ourselves.

Then there are relationships between masters and servants. In our present-day society, so complex in comparison with the kind which existed in earlier times, when there are many countries where there are no servants, it does not mean that this category of relationship does not exist. It can be said to include those who are supposed to be superior, dealing with so-called subordinates. To those who have power over others, economic or political

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power or any other kind of power, sometimes even some kind of psychological domination because of being cleverer than the other person, much can happen. Suppose, one is in a position to twist somebody around one's finger because of being cleverer than the other, what can happen?

So let us consider what is right action. Most of our Theosophical leaders gave a wonderful example in their life; for they had a very different attitude from that of the worldly person, with great consideration when the other person was weaker. The master should apportion worth even to the servant or inferior. To ask the servant to do what he cannot, and then blame, scold or punish him, would be wrong, because people have their limitations owing to the inherent evolutionary stage. There are many housewives who shout at a servant, because the latter has been unintelligent, never thinking that if the latter were so intelligent he would not be your servant. So it is just a cruelty. In many relationships we are thoughtless, and we expect the other to be what he might not be or cannot give. My father used to say that Dr Besant (he was very devoted to her like many people who knew her closely) disproved the theory that familiarity breeds contempt. Not all those who came near to her had profound love and respect for her, although she was so exceptionally noble a person. But she, I believe, used to say that you must not demand from somebody more than what that person can do. Give that person some type of work which is suitable to his level

of understanding and capacity. If the wrong work is given, if you put a square peg in a round hole, and blame the other person, the fault is really yours.

Sometimes you see a thin, half-nourished man being asked to carry a big load. The same is done to animals, and there is little consideration of what happens to the other person or animal — a man who has worked all day long, who is half-fed, straining at pedalling when several people sit on the rickshaw never considering what physical strain is put on him; or it may be a factory worker out of whom the last little bit is extracted. Animals and servants are often treated like this. But we must remember that from a spiritual point of view it is completely wrong. All those who are weaker than ourselves must be protected; who is to protect them, except ourselves? We all have that kind of responsibility.

Sometimes a very poor person, and there are many poor people in this world, takes something which is not his right. We take a very serious view about this and say he must be punished. But there may be rich people, who behind the scenes, are doing much worse things and we laugh it off and say this is how these people behave. So we must watch our own attitude in all these relationships. Give suitable food and wages, the Buddha says, but he also says to share your delicacy with them; Krishnaji used to say the same thing; I suppose people who reach a certain level of unity cannot but say similar things. Krishnaji has more than once, in the presence of all of us, said: 'Do you give

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the same food as you eat to your servants?' In many households they give the barest minimum to the servant and that may indicate a general attitude of inequality.

But the spiritual life, which is essentially the realization of unity, brings about a different sense. The respect we feel for someone, possibly an ignorant person, is because he or she is also a human being on the way, on the human journey, perhaps further away from the goal than we are. We also at some time were in that position, and there are people ahead of us who may look at us as we look at them. *Light on the Path* says: Do not think you are apart from the bad man or the foolish man. There may be a difference between you, but the difference between you and the teachers is far greater than that between you and the foolish man. So, treat them with consideration, with respect. You must not address them in a way that we will not at all think of in relations of importance.

The Buddha mentions this and says: Give them holidays. Even now, except for those who are recognized labourers, there are a lot of people working in private homes, etc., who never have holidays, and if they ask for leave they are frowned upon, as if they are deserting. All people require some rest, they have their needs. If it is a man he needs time to shave, women need time to do some work in their own households, and one must not keep them labouring for oneself all the time, but be considerate to them.

One of the things the Buddha mentions is to work cheerfully, contentedly. If the

relationship is good, and if the master is generous, the servant should not go on grumbling. If we think of employees in some companies, however much they get they are not contented; they want still more. To work when conditions are reasonably satisfactory, contentedly, cheerfully, so that society itself functions peacefully, in an orderly way, is very important. We should speak well of the master, not go behind his back and say various things about him.

Brother Raja somewhat changed the wording, but the original Buddhist text speaks about the relationship of the ordinary person to one who is living a religious life, not pretending to be religious like many who are only beggars or rascals in disguise. But presumably it was the custom to honour all those who lived the religious life, at whatever level, who are sincere about coming to know the truth.

Our relationship to all of them must be one of great goodwill and affection in thought, word and deed and they should always be given a ready welcome. This was traditionally done in the Eastern countries, very much so. In the old days to be religious enabled people to follow their religious path without worry.

Nowadays there are some people who have become famous because they make jokes and they know how to entertain their audience. But that is not the real work of the religious people; their work is to put forward certain thoughts in an appealing way, dissuade the people from doing evil things, and guide them to be virtuous, to be kind, and show the way by their own

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example, living very simply, not being greedy for material things. Being gentle, and good and kind, religious people must offer a certain kind of leadership. There are new problems in the present day, for instance the environmental problems. They are man's relationship with the elements, the earth, and so on. But we must think about all these relationships in depth, something reciprocal, because we cannot be isolated; we live in a network of relationships.

The Buddhists say, because they believe in transmigration, the dog on the street may be your grandmother. These words must not be taken literally; they must be taken in a symbolic sense. All the animals are our grandparents and

great-grandparents, because the physical body which we have inherited has its origin in the beginnings of evolution, and its components are all derived from a vast number of sources. So we owe something of whatever talents, capacities and characteristics we have to almost all of creation. We are related to all, and so we can think of this relationship as universal.

What is our duty in this network of relationships? How should we live our everyday life where we meet with all these different kinds of people? This simple lesson that the Buddha gave can be converted into a profound relationship, and if we can come to the truth of relationship we have come to the truth about life itself. ✧

As the consciousness of human beings developed, flowers were most likely the first thing they came to value that had no utilitarian purpose for them, that is to say, was not linked in some way to survival. They provided inspiration to countless artists, poets, and mystics. Jesus tells us to contemplate the flowers and learn from them how to live. The Buddha is said to have given a 'silent sermon' once during which he held up a flower and gazed at it. After a while, one of those present, a monk called Mahakasyapa, began to smile. He is said to have been the only one who had understood the sermon. According to legend, that smile (that is to say, realization) was handed down by twenty-eight successive masters and much later became the origin of Zen.

Eckhart Tolle
A New Earth

Live the Life and You Will Come to the Wisdom

MARY ANDERSON

WE human beings, as we are now, often tend to be schizophrenic, that is, there is frequently a division, a rift, between our conscious thoughts and intentions on the one hand and our actions on the other hand. Parents are sometimes said to tell their children, 'Do as I say; don't do as I do'.

Some Christians are said to go to church on Sunday and to cheat their neighbours during the week. Then the following Sunday they return to church and pray to God to forgive their sins or, if they are Catholic, they confess these sins to a priest and they do penance and feel the better for it, although a good priest will insist that that is not enough: 'Go and sin no more'.

Good intentions, good theories, are excellent things, but they should be put into practice. Otherwise they are sterile. It is said that the road to hell (which is of course a state of mind) is paved with good intentions, meaning good intentions which are not carried out.

As theosophists we should also remember this. You may have heard the

story of the crossroads where there were two signposts, pointing in two directions, one leading to 'Devachan' and the other to 'A discussion on Devachan'. And all the Theosophists went to the discussion!

Krishnamurti pointed out again and again that we suffer from inner disorder and contradictions between what we are and what we try to be. For example, we are selfish and we try to be unselfish. Thus we create and we perpetuate disorder and disharmony in ourselves.

There are reasons for all this. We are far from perfect.

Mme Blavatsky explains that in each one of us three streams of life are flowing: the physical stream, the intellectual stream and the spiritual stream, and that each of these streams follows its own laws. This accounts for much of the confusion in our lives; for example, the body perhaps wants to enjoy eating beyond its appetite, while the intellect, on the other hand, may recognize that overeating is harmful. Or the spiritual stream in our nature may suggest, through the still small voice of conscience, that we should do some good deed, but

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the body objects that it is tired and the intellect says: 'What will I get out of it? What benefit will it bring me?' So we are in conflict. We hesitate. We do not act or we act foolishly.

When we speak of the seven principles of man, we may tend to see them as separate: the physical body; vitality; the vehicle of that vitality; desire or emotion; intellect with its two aspects; *buddhi* or spiritual insight, Wisdom and Love; and *ātmā*, Spirit.

But are they really separate? Each principle is the instrument or the vehicle of the next finer principle. For example, *ātmā* or spirit, which is universal, cannot be active in us individually except through *buddhi*. *Buddhi* can be active only through a purified mind, known as *buddhi-manas*. *Manas* or the thinking principle, again, could develop in the Third Root Race only when *kāma* or desire, its vehicle, had developed. And the physical body with its vitality is the instrument or the vehicle of all the other principles. So these principles cannot be said to be separate.

Annie Besant points out that, although we speak of seven principles or aspects of our nature, we are really only one being, *ātmā* or Spirit. But *ātmā*, our true being, can be compared to a diver who puts on a diving suit — indeed, in this case, many diving suits! — in order to plunge deeper and deeper into the ocean — in this case, into the ocean of ever denser matter. These 'diving suits' enable us to function in material environments which are increasingly coarse or stifling for Spirit, our true being. (Today,

instead of diving suits, we might speak of spacesuits in which astronauts walk in space!)

Sri Ram compares the human being to a rope hanging down vertically, with seven knots. Each knot represents a principle or a focus for consciousness. As we human beings are today, we are focused above all at the outermost, the coarsest of those knots, the physical body with its finer counterpart, and *kāma-manas*, the desire-mind; that is, we identify ourselves with those of our diving suits that form the personality, our present conscious self.

Mme Blavatsky points out that in each of the vast periods in evolution called 'Rounds' only one principle is developed in most of humanity, and, as we are in the fourth round, we are only just developing the fourth principle, *kāma*, our desire nature; and — as a kind of apparent exception — we are developing *manas*, the fifth principle, but above all, that coarser aspect of *manas* that works through *kāma*; *kāma-manas*, the desire-mind. So we are incomplete. We still have far to go.

What is developed in us is of course what is called the personality or the mask that we wear, like the 'persona' or mask worn by the actors in ancient Rome. We identify ourselves with that mask just as good actors identify themselves with the role they are playing.

Even so, the personality is important. Its role is to be a vehicle for the Higher, for the subtler principles, as far as they can express themselves through it. The

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four principles of the personality are the servants of the three higher principles: the spiritual self, and if the servants do not agree with each other and do not heed their master, the result is a house divided against itself.

How can we — the real we — be masters in our own house? The *dharma* of the personality is like that of the Virgin Mary, who exclaimed: 'Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy will.' Only when the master is in control and that control is joyfully accepted by the servants can the latter be happy and work in harmony. Or we might compare them to pupils in a nursery or primary school or to little children in a family, who are happiest if the teacher or the parents are harmonious, are spiritual, which means loving and wise, and are in control. If that Spirit which is our true nature is in control, this means that WE are in control, and not an impostor which we have created through *avidyā* or ignorance of our true nature. Happiness and harmony and a good life can result only to the extent that our nature is aligned and in harmony with ourselves in the highest sense.

When we speak of unity, we often think of what we might call 'horizontal' unity between different human beings, between others and ourselves, but unity can be understood vertically, meaning unity within our own being. The more our spiritual nature is in control, the more this vertical unity will be achieved, the more the elements of the personality will be in harmony with our true selves, our Higher

Nature. And from such vertical harmony horizontal harmony or harmony with others will result.

This is illustrated in the story of two monks who came to Lord Buddha. They said they had quarrelled and felt bitter against each other. He told them how hatred creates more hatred and how only love can end hatred. Under his influence the monks were reconciled and they left him in harmony with each other, hand in hand.

Similarly, if we can listen to the voice of our inner spiritual self, as the monks listened to Buddha, then the different elements of the personality will be in harmony, will be reconciled: The mind and the emotions will not pull in opposite directions or oppose our better nature. They will not prevent action nor will they lead to foolish action or selfish action, but they will further right action.

What is action? What is right action?

We act not only with our bodies. Our words, our thoughts and our feelings are also actions. We might say that right action is service. Service means help to others, especially to those in need. But right action is not only action that is outwardly helpful but such action as is unselfish and self-forgetful in motive and intent. So if the higher nature is active in us, all our actions will be service in this sense.

The corollary is also true: We must act and we must act rightly — we must serve — if we would open the channel to our higher nature, which is Wisdom and also Love. As has often been said: 'Lead the

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life and you will come to the Wisdom.’ Our right action, our service, may take the form of good thoughts and good words as well as good deeds. These are our output. Only if we produce output can there be more input — input in the form of Wisdom.

We can compare this with a drainpipe. Our good actions are the water that pours out from the drainpipe below. And only if that water pours out below can more water pour in above in the form of Wisdom. If we never create output in the form of right action, if we simply try to keep the Divine Wisdom for ourselves in the form of pleasant theories, the drainpipe will be blocked with water which will finally become stagnant (perhaps taking the form of dogmas and superstitions) and no further input of Wisdom will be possible. If we do not act or do not act rightly, lovingly, wisely, no fresh insights, no more water of Wisdom will flow in from above.

This is clearly stated in *The Voice of the Silence*: ‘Shalt thou abstain from action? Not so shall gain thy soul her freedom. To reach Nirvāna, one must reach Self-Knowledge, and Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child.’

Concerning service, whom or what should we serve? If we are to serve others, whether humans or animals, we should not pander to the demands of their temporary, outermost nature, although we should understand and sympathize with these, but we should serve the Divine Life in them.

If we are to do so, that divine life must

be active in us: Our spiritual nature must pour itself forth in our actions, even if we are not aware of what is happening. Indeed, if we are or if we think we are aware of it, we may be wrong. It may be the little self, puffing itself up in spiritual pride. Our best and most spiritual actions are often spontaneous. If our spiritual nature, *buddhi*, which is Wisdom and also Love, can express itself, that Wisdom will speak through our intellect and our actions will be intelligent and helpful. And that Love will speak through our emotions, and our actions will be understanding, tolerant and kind. Perhaps we can say that we shall also be impelled to act spontaneously through the will power stemming from *ātmā*, Spirit itself. At the same time, the very fact of our acting thus and providing an outlet for our spiritual nature will strengthen the link between our everyday self and that spiritual nature and will enable us to come to deeper spiritual insights.

When the little self is an instrument of the Higher, then our actions will be an instrument facilitating ever deeper insights from within. Let us remember Ramana Maharshi’s reply to an enquirer who asked: ‘How can I help others?’ He answered with another question: ‘Who are the others?’ Indeed, the more our consciousness is at a deeper lever than usual, the more we shall realize the Unity of all and the more we shall be a channel for Wisdom, not for ourselves but for others, and the more able we shall be to act rightly.

‘Live the life and you will come to the Wisdom’ because the life that is meant —

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the good life, the just life, the orderly life — inevitably implies Wisdom, and Wisdom inevitably implies living.

* * *

How does this apply more specifically to theosophists, whether they are members of the Theosophical Society or not (for many people are theosophists without knowing it), and to Theosophy, in whatever context it is taught?

Dr Hugh Shearman distinguished between 'Primary Theosophy' and 'Secondary Theosophy'. He was certainly not referring to what some call 'the original teachings' on the one hand and 'second-generation teachings' on the other! But by 'Secondary Theosophy' he meant teachings which are theosophical and by 'Primary Theosophy' he meant theosophical living, a life based on these teachings.

What are theosophical teachings? We could say that, whatever their origin, they are teachings directly resulting from certain great principles, above all the principle of Unity — the Oneness of the inner nature of all that is: beings (whether human or animal), plants, minerals, matter itself. Other principles directly related to and stemming from that Oneness are ultimate absolute justice and constant movement. The workings of absolute justice and constant movement are not always visible to us, because they occur too slowly or too swiftly for our senses to observe or in matter invisible to us. We do not see the workings of the great law of Justice, Karma, for, to quote *The Light of Asia*, it will judge 'tomorrow . . . or after many days' — or ages — but 'Equal

retribution must be made, though Dharma tarry long'. We cannot observe the swift movement of atoms or the slow movement of the erosion of mountains. Although we can follow the pendular motion of night and day and of the seasons, we cannot follow the pendular motion of life and death and rebirth, because we have existed and will exist partly in states of matter of which we are at present not normally conscious.

We may reject such theosophical teachings or we may find them reasonable and accept them as hypotheses or we may feel instantly convinced, even transformed, by them.

If they remain theories for us, they are 'Secondary Theosophy'. If they so convince us that our whole nature is transformed and we cannot help but act according to them, then our lives will be 'Primary Theosophy'. Primary Theosophy means leading a life that is theosophical. As Mme Blavatsky says, 'Theosophist is as Theosophy does'. A theosophist is one who lives theosophically, whether that person is a member of the Theosophical Society or not, whether he or she is aware or not of theosophical teachings. A theosophical life would be, in the light of the few fundamental teachings we mentioned, a loving life, a contented life, a life of service. It would be Theosophy in practice. Most of us, I think, lead such a life only partially and sporadically.

Secondary Theosophy is theosophy in theory. But we must not despise theory. Theory is the practice of the mind. It should lead to understanding, to certain

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convictions, not because some theories are imposed dogmatically on us, but because they seem reasonable and they convince and even inspire us.

Can there be Primary Theosophy without Secondary Theosophy? Can there be practice without theory? Can one act and feel and think without the foundation of certain teachings? How can we know that, even if there has been no specific study of Theosophy, there is not some intuitive grasp of certain important principles which are facts to the person concerned? Great sages and saints have lived in ages and in regions where specific theosophical teachings were unknown or their expression forbidden. Yet the words of such sages and saints as well as their actions have reflected, perhaps unknown to themselves, the unity of life in that they suffered with those who suffered, hungered with those who hungered, in that they felt convinced of the ultimate justice of life and knew somehow that, when things go well or go badly, 'this too will pass', an attitude which is reflected in a certain peace of mind. As St Julian of Norwich expressed it: all shall be well, all *is* well, all is very well (*The Perennial Philosophy*).

So, in such a life, we could say that theory, unconsciously affecting one's whole attitude, plays a part in living. Perhaps we can say that behind Primary Theosophy there is always Secondary Theosophy, even if the one concerned is not aware of it.

On the other hand, one who does not practise Primary Theosophy can never come to more than a theoretical grasp of Secondary Theosophy. That person may know all the theories, may be able or think he or she is able, to explain the intricacies of rounds and races, what actions produce what karma, etc. But does such theoretical knowledge help him or her to live a life that is compassionate, tranquil and fundamentally intelligent? Knowledge — even theosophical knowledge — is not Wisdom. Wisdom is insight into the foundations of life and it is also love. And it can be accessed only if one lives accordingly, even if one's intellectual grasp is rudimentary.

Theory and practice are two sides of the same coin. Without the one the other cannot exist. True Wisdom is alive and can express itself in us and through us only to the extent that *we* live it. ✧

Test for yourself your capacity for the good man's life; the life of one content with his allotted part in the universe, who seeks only to be just in his doings and charitable in his ways.

Marcus Aurelius
Meditations

Coordination of Science and Human Values

C. A. SHINDE

WE are aware of the fact that classical science reveals time-based laws and spirituality reveals eternal laws which are beyond time. We also know that Science is objective and spirituality is subjective. This is because Science can make bulldozer robots and human clones; but cannot train the emotions of the operator or driver and he is liable to harm nature. Spirituality on the other hand can train the emotions of the operator or driver so that he will not do harm to the natural environment around him. The coordination of both brings happiness to humanity.

Science is not separate from man. Actually, machines are extensions of his senses and organs of action.

– Telephones and mobiles are extensions of his ears.

– The microscope and telescope are extensions of his eyes.

– The microwave and washing machine are extensions of his limbs.

– The television and internet are extensions of his mind.

In this sense, he needs to know that at the sensory level there is no place for values. They manifest from a higher

level. Real enquiry is needed in both the scientific and spiritual fields.

In the field of spirituality man usually asks questions like: Who am I? What is the purpose or significance of life? Is it possible to bring about order within one's consciousness? What is death? These are questions he asks when he enters the field of spirituality. He also comes to know that there were great enquirers who have brought order within their consciousness, and that order is *love, compassion, humility* — which are all human values.

Scientific enquiry is lost as science and the scientist are caught in materialism and technology. The utilitarian mind of man develops technology, but neglects human values. Human understanding is incomplete unless we coordinate science and human values. Both the objective field and subjective field must go hand in hand. Otherwise, as we know, technology becomes a double-edged weapon. If correctly applied, it is a boon to mankind while self-indulgence leads to bad effects like immoral and unethical practices that pollute the Earth to suit man's egoistic purposes, and ignorance of the fact that

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Earth does not belong to him but man belongs to Earth.

Science and Values

Man today is caught in a psyche of his own creation and has lost freedom. Paraphrasing T. S. Eliot we can say: Where is Life? We have lost it in mechanical living. Where is Wisdom? We have lost it in knowledge. Where is knowledge? We have lost it in information.

On the one hand, we see science and technology are moving quickly, but on the other there is no corresponding advance in our economics and politics, which is leading to unemployment. If humanity really wants to have enlightenment, it must try to *let go of its worldly attachments*.

In the past one hundred years or more, the world's population has increased from one billion to six billion. War and capitalism have dominated the planet. We are not able to detach ourselves from our desires; the opposite has become true. Each one's desires have grown, and therefore very few people have been able to attain enlightenment. Science is realizing the power of mind over matter, but human beings need to know that enlightenment is beyond the mind. Spirituality means to have a living faith in the goodness of all and that comes only if we have a living faith in values and learn to tune into matter, force and consciousness.

It is time for scientists to probe into that dimension of science which leads man to develop morally and spiritually, that makes him not only happy but helps him to put to the best use what he has achieved.

A new dimension of science will be opened by commencing the coordination of science and human values, by remembering that the human constitution is not a house or a vehicle but the man residing inside. The man in us is the pure consciousness, and his constitution is mainly matter, force and consciousness. All these need to be tuned and it is possible through values like love, compassion, humility, concern for others, the search for truth and *a spirit of selfless service*.

Science and Communication

The medium through which we communicate has become important to modern man. Because the same message conveyed by various media has many different effects, we receive diverse responses. A message received by letter, by email, by television and by a mobile phone have different effects and one can observe these diverse responses.

We need to remember that science and society are linked together and therefore science cannot operate without values. It is also difficult and complex to separate values from fact in science. Science has transformed healthcare in many countries and improved living standards for millions — one cannot deny this. But it has led to massive destruction, the thinning of the ozone layer, and the poisoning of wildlife by pesticides and other chemicals. It is said the life of honeybees has become endangered because of mobile phones, as they emit radiation. It is said humans will have only four more years after bees disappear: no bees — no pollination —

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no plants or crops — no animals, and then — no more humans.

This is the web of life. If scientists claim credit for improving our world, then they must also agree to their share of responsibility for various kinds of pollution and for corrupting the world in various ways. Why is sixty-five percent of money worldwide being spent on research and development for the military? Is it not time now to bring about a coordination of objective and subjective values? How can anyone get involved in the production of technologies and not consider the consequences? How can science be value-free when it is linked with society?

No one can deny the success of science over the past four hundred years. It has advanced human understanding of the world and human prospects in it. But day by day man is becoming materialistic rather than altruistic by such advancement. Science, by its nature, has never been and could never be value-free because it is done by scientists; it does not happen without them and as we know scientists are human. No one can help but behave with a sense of values rather than habits. Value-based living is the call of the time to prevent further depletion of the ozone layer that protects us. Man needs to act in an ozone-friendly manner. A few scientists realized this when they came to know about quantum phenomena.

Science and Quantum Phenomena

They were tremendously mystified when they reached the inside of the atom, and when they realized the behaviour of

electrons, neutrons and protons — because they were behaving in a way that defied all the logic, mathematics and science that we had developed until then. It is because the moment they are observed, the constituents of an atom start behaving differently. Scientists were not ready to believe that watching can make a difference to matter.

Secondly, they became aware of the shocking fact that an electron can take a quantum leap; when a jump happens from say place A to place B it does not travel the distance between A and B but disappears at point A and suddenly reappears at point B. What happens in the space between is a mystery. So fast is its speed it simply dematerializes at one point and materializes again at another. The discovery was very shocking in the beginning but slowly eminent scientists like Einstein could see a tremendous possibility in it.

This quantum leap opened a new vista. Through scientific study it has been revealed that the entire nervous system functions through generation and propagation of electrical impulses. But, scientists are not sure how exactly this is perceived because different stimuli have the same electrical impulse, and how they are perceived rightly is a mystery.

Secondly, biologists are arriving at the discovery of a subjective, invisible but energetic field. Take for example subjective therapy in medical science. This shows

1. The same medicine has different effects when prescribed by different doctors.
2. The same medicine has different effects

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on different patients although prescribed by the same doctor. It is because man's interior is not the same from person to person. This interior subjectivity from which human values come forth is more powerful than the outer physical nature.

Science, Industry and Government

An important aspect we need to consider is that most science today is funded by industry rather than the government. As per the report for research and development, 60% is paid by private companies whose primary motive is profit but not *humanity* or being environment-friendly. Science is thus increasingly driven by corporate values which are likely to favour a handful of shareholders over the mass of humanity. Is it not wrong on the part of scientists to avoid their responsibilities?

And as far as the government is concerned, it has to play a decisive role, besides being involved in conservation, by realizing ideals through practice. Especially is this true in the exploration of space, in the development of biotechnology, in the conservation of biodiversity and in the preservation of a culture that promotes brotherhood and the inculcating of human values. It is he alone, who has the love of humanity at heart, who is capable of grasping thoroughly the idea of regeneration. Then he will never misuse power, says a Master of Wisdom in a letter to A. P. Sinnett.

Science and Environment

Global warming is at once the most

alarming challenge but also for some, controversial, because the scientific mind doubts and needs evidence for the different events. These events occur simultaneously like the loss of ice mass in both the polar regions, the increased acidification of the ocean and the potential for widespread crop failures in many equatorial regions. In spite of all these, the way science works and the way scientists communicate about climate conditions are all about probabilities and not certainties. However, the human heart feels and accepts without evidence that as long as we pour CO₂ into the atmosphere faster than Nature's natural drains, the planet will definitely suffer, so why does man misuse forces? Developments in science and engineering proceed at a fast rate but development in ethics and spirituality is very slow and that is the reason why man misuses Nature's forces. When science and engineering are fast and economics, ethics and spirituality are slow, then there will be destruction of food and goods, leading to starvation in the midst of plenty. Humanity needs to realize now that natural resources get depleted when they are used. But human resources get depleted when they are not used. The tragedy of life is not the ultimate death but the resources that die within us; this needs to be realized.

In 1881, India killed 9000 tons of frogs to export their legs which are served at certain restaurants that stockpile them in their freezers — and for such an export India got Rs 12 crores. But as a result there was a population explosion of insects. (It

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is because man disturbed the biological control of the insect population by killing frogs). The frogs could have eaten 9000 tons of insects every week. Therefore, India had to import insecticides for twelve crores of rupees to kill the insects. The frogs would have killed them without any cost. It is the need of our time to understand the web of life. The coordination of science and human values is necessary to manage the energies of nature for the good of all living creatures. Scientists are aware of 'nuclear night'. If there is a nuclear bomb blast, then the whole earth will turn into dust and the sun will not be seen through it for innumerable years together and no life will be there on earth.

Science is like a bird that flies high in the vast space of the sky and *Spirituality*

is like a fish that dives deep in the waters of the ocean. In the light of Theosophy, one can bring about the coordination of science and spirituality on the basis of human values — they are means that help us to fly and dive in search of truth. But human values teach us that sacrifice and selfless service are important in order to hasten the evolution of man. This is the era, as far as human evolution is concerned, where science and spirituality could merge; this could come about through the investigation of the science of living, which includes human values. Man would come to know that visibly different expressions are nothing but the outflow of the hidden light and love which embrace man and nature alike — as invoked by us in 'O Hidden Life' in order to bring about that creative altruism. ✧

The Tathāgata, O Vaccha, is *free from all theories*. But this, Vaccha, does the Tathāgata know — the nature of form, and how form arises and how form perishes. . . . Therefore the Tathāgata has attained deliverance and is free from attachment, inasmuch as all imaginings, or agitations, or false notions, concerning an Ego or anything pertaining to an Ego, have perished, have faded away, have ceased, have been given up and relinquished.

Majjhima Nikāya

Some Difficulties of the Inner Life — II

ANNIE BESANT

ONE of the most distressing of the difficulties which the aspirant has to face arises from the ebb and flow of his feelings, the changes in the emotional atmosphere through which he sees the external world as well as his own character with its powers and its weaknesses. He finds that his life consists of a series of ever-varying states of consciousness, of alternating conditions of thought and feeling. At one time he is vividly alive, at another quiescently dead; now he is cheerful, then morbid; now overflowing, then dry; now earnest, then indifferent; now devoted, then cold; now aspiring, then lethargic. He is constant only in his changeableness, persistent only in his variety. And the worst of it is that he is unable to trace these effects to any very definite causes; they 'come' and 'go, impermanent', and are as little predicable as the summer winds. Why was meditation easy, smooth, fruitful, yesterday? Why is it hard, irregular, barren, today? Why should that noble idea have fired him with enthusiasm a week ago, yet leave him chill now? Why was he full of love and devotion only a few days since, but finds himself empty now, gazing at his ideal with cold, lack-lustre eyes? The facts are

obvious, but the explanation escapes him; he seems to be at the mercy of chance, to have slipped out of the realm of law.

It is this very uncertainty which gives the poignancy to his distress. The understood is always the manageable, and when we have traced an effect to its cause we have gone far on the way to its control. All our keenest sufferings have in them this constituent of uncertainty; we are helpless because we are ignorant. It is the uncertainty of our emotional moods that terrifies us, for we cannot guard against that which we are unable to foresee. How then may we reach a place where these moods shall not plague us, a rock on which we can stand while the waves surge around us?

The first step towards the place of balance is taken when we recognize the fact — though the statement of it may sound a little brutal — that our moods do not matter. There is no constant relation between our progress and our feelings; we are not necessarily advancing when the flow of emotion rejoices us, nor retrograding when its ebb distresses us. These changing moods are among the lessons that life brings to us, that we may learn to distinguish between the Self and the

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not-Self, and to realize ourselves as the Self. The Self changes not, and that which changes is not our Self, but is part of the transitory surroundings in which the Self is clothed and amid which it moves. This wave that sweeps over us is not the Self, but is only a passing manifestation of the not-Self. 'Let it toss and swirl and foam, it is not I.' Let consciousness realize this, if only for a moment, and the force of the wave is spent, and the firm rock is felt under the feet. Withdrawing from the emotion, we no longer feel it as part of ourselves, and thus ceasing to pour our life into it as a self-expression, we break off the connection which enabled it to become a channel of pain. This withdrawal of consciousness may be much facilitated if, in our quiet times, we try to understand and to assign to their true causes these distressing emotional alternations. We shall thus at least get rid of some of the helplessness and perplexity which, as we have already seen, are due to ignorance.

These alternations of happiness and depression are primarily manifestations of that law of periodicity, or law of rhythm, which guides the universe. Night and day alternate in the physical life of man as do happiness and depression in his emotional life. As the ebb and flow in the ocean, so are the ebb and flow in human feelings. There are tides in the human heart as in the affairs of men and as in the sea. Joy follows sorrow and sorrow follows joy, as surely as death follows birth and birth, death. That this is so is not only a theory of a law, but it is also a fact to which witness is borne by all who have gained

experience in the spiritual life. In the famous *Imitation of Christ* it is said that comfort and sorrow thus alternate, and 'this is nothing new nor strange unto them that have experience in the way of God; for the great saints and ancient prophets had oftentimes experience of such kind of vicissitudes. . . . If great saints were so dealt with, we that are weak and poor ought not to despair if we be sometimes hot and sometimes cold. . . . I never found any so religious and devout, that he had not sometimes a withdrawing of grace or felt not some decrease of zeal' (Bk. 2, IX). This alternation of states being recognized as the result of a general law, a special manifestation of a universal principle, it becomes possible for us to utilize this knowledge both as a warning and an encouragement.

We may be passing through a period of great spiritual illumination, when all seems to be easy of accomplishment, when the glow of devotion sheds its glory over life, and when the peace of sure insight is ours. Such a condition is often one of considerable danger, its very happiness lulling us into a careless security, and forcing into growth any remaining germs of the lower nature. At such moments the recalling of past periods of gloom is often useful, so that happiness may not become elation, nor enjoyment lead to attachment to pleasure; balancing the present joy by the memory of past trouble and the calm prevision of trouble yet to come, we reach equilibrium and find a middle point of rest. We can then gain all the advantages that accrue from seizing

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a favourable opportunity for progress without risking a slip backwards from premature triumph. When the night comes down and all the life has ebbed away, when we find ourselves cold and indifferent, caring for nothing that had erst attracted us, then, knowing the law, we can quietly say: 'This also will pass in its turn, light and life must come back, and the old love will again glow warmly forth.' We refuse to be unduly depressed in the gloom, as we refused to be unduly elated in the light; we balance one experience against the other, removing the thorn of present pain by the memory of past joy and the foretaste of joy in the future; we learn in happiness to remember sorrow and in sorrow to remember happiness, till neither the one nor the other can shake the steady foothold of the soul. Thus we begin to rise above the lower stages of consciousness in which we are flung from one extreme to the other, and to gain the equilibrium which is called yoga. Thus the existence of the law becomes to us not a theory but a conviction, and we gradually learn something of the peace of the Self.

It may be well also for us to realize that the way in which we face and live through this trial of inner darkness and deadness is one of the surest tests of spiritual evolution. 'What worldly man is there that would not willingly receive spiritual joy and comfort if he could always have it? For spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world and the pleasures of the flesh. . . . But no man can always enjoy these divine comforts according to his desire; for the time of trial is never far

away. . . . Are not all those to be called mercenary who are ever seeking consolations? . . . Where shall one be found who is willing to serve God for naught? Barely is anyone found so spiritual as to have suffered the loss of all things' (Bk. 2, X; XI). The subtle germs of selfishness persist far on into the life of discipleship, though they then ape in their growth the semblance of virtues, and hide the serpent of desire under the fair blossom of beneficence or of devotion. Few indeed are they who serve for nothing, who have eradicated the root of desire, and have not merely cut off the branches that spread above ground. Many a one who has tasted the subtle joy of spiritual experience finds therein his reward for the grosser delights he has renounced, and when the keen ordeal of spiritual darkness bars his way and he has to enter into that darkness unbefriended and apparently alone, then he learns by the bitter and humiliating lesson of disillusion that he has been serving his ideal for wages and not for love. Well for us if we can be glad in the darkness as well as in the light, by the sure faith in — though not yet by the vision of — that Flame which burns evermore within, THAT from the light of which we can never be separated, for it is in truth our very Self. Bankrupt in Time must we be ere ours is the wealth of the Eternal, and only when the living have abandoned us does the Vision of Life appear.

Another difficulty that sorely bewilders and distresses the aspirant is the unbidden presence of thoughts and desires that are incongruous with his life and aims. When

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he would fain contemplate the Holy, the presence of the unholy thrusts itself upon him; when he would see the radiant face of the Divine Man, the mask of the satyr leers at him in its stead. Whence these thronging forms of evil that crowd round him? Whence these mutterings and whisperings as of devils in his ear? They fill him with shuddering repulsion, yet they seem to be his; can he really be the father of this foul swarm? Once again an understanding of the cause at work may rob the effect of its sharp poison-tooth, and deliver us from the impotence due to ignorance.

It is a commonplace of Theosophical teaching that life embodies itself in forms, and that the life-energy which comes forth from that aspect of the Self which is knowledge moulds the matter of the mental plane into thought-forms. The vibrations that affect the mental body determine the materials that are built into its composition, and these materials are slowly changed in accordance with the changes in the vibrations sent forth. If the consciousness cease to work in a particular way, the materials which answered to those previous workings gradually lose their activity, finally becoming effete matter and being shaken out of the mental body. A considerable number of stages, however, intervene between the full activity of the matter constantly answering to mental impulses and its final deadness when ready for expulsion.

Until the last stage is reached it is capable of being thrown into renewed activity by mental impulses either from

within or from without, and long after the man has ceased to energize it, having outgrown the stage it represents, it may be thrown into active vibration, made to start up as a living thought, by a wholly external influence. For example: a man has succeeded in purifying his thoughts from sensuality, and his mind no longer generates impure ideas nor takes pleasure in contemplating impure images. The coarse matter, which in the mental and astral bodies vibrates under such impulses, is no longer being vivified by him, and the thought-forms erst created by him are dying or dead. But he meets someone in whom these things are active, and the vibrations sent out by him revivify the dying thought-forms, lending them a temporary and artificial life; they start up as the aspirant's own thoughts, presenting themselves as the children of his mind, and he knows not that they are but corpses from his past, re-animated by the evil magic of impure propinquity. The very contrast they afford to his purified mind adds to the harassing torture of their presence, as though a dead body were fettered to a living man. But when he learns their true nature, they lose their power to torment. He can look at them calmly as remnants of his past, so that they cease to be the poisoners of his present. He knows that the life in them is an alien one and is not drawn from him, and he can 'wait with the patience of confidence for the hour when they shall affect "him" no longer'.

Sometimes in the case of a person who is making rapid progress, this temporary revivification is caused deliberately by

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those who are seeking to retard evolution, those who set themselves against the Good Law. They may send a thought-force calculated to stir the dying ghosts into weird activity, with the set purpose of causing distress even when the aspirant has passed beyond the reach of temptation along these lines. Once again the difficulty ceases when the thoughts are known to draw their energy from outside and not from inside, when the man can calmly say to the surging crowd of impish tormentors: 'You are not mine, you are no part of me, your life is not drawn from my thought. Ere long you will be dead beyond possibility of resurrection, and meanwhile you are but phantoms, shades that were once my foes.'

Another fruitful source of trouble is the great magician Time, past-master of illusion. He imposes on us a sense of hurry, of unrest, by masking the oneness of our life with the veils of births and deaths. The aspirant cries out eagerly: 'How much can I do, what progress can I make, during my present life?' There is no such thing as a 'present life'; there is but one life — past and future, with the ever-changing moment that is their meeting-place; on one side of it we see the past, on the other side the future, and it is itself as invisible as the little piece of ground on which we stand. There is but one life, without beginning and without ending, the ageless, timeless life, and our arbitrary divisions of it by the ever-recurring incidents of births and deaths delude us and ensnare. These are some of the traps set for the Self by the lower

nature, which would fain keep its hold on the winged Immortal that is straying through its miry paths. This bird of paradise is so fair a thing as its plumes begin to grow that all the powers of nature fall to loving it, and set snares to hold it prisoner; and of all the snares the illusion of Time is the most subtle.

When a vision of truth has come late in a physical life, this discouragement as to time is apt to be most keenly felt. 'I am too old to begin; if I had only known this in youth', is the cry. Yet truly the path is one, as the life is one, and all the path must be trodden in the life; what matters it then whether one stage of the path be trodden or not during a particular part of a physical life? If A and B are both going to catch their first glimpse of the Reality two years hence, what matters it that A will then be seventy years of age while B will be a lad of twenty? A will return and begin anew his work on earth when B is ageing, and each will pass many times through the childhood, youth and old age of the body, while travelling along the higher stages of the path of life. The old man who 'late in life', as we say, begins to learn the truths of the Ancient Wisdom, instead of lamenting over his age and saying: 'how little I can do in the short time that remains to me', should say: 'how good a foundation I can lay for my next incarnation, thanks to this learning of the truth'. We are not slaves of Time, save as we bow to his imperious tyranny, and let him bind over our eyes his bandages of birth and death. We are always ourselves, and can pace steadfastly onwards through the

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changing lights and shadows cast by his magic lantern on the life he cannot age. Why are the gods figured as ever-young, save to remind us that the true life lives untouched by Time? We borrow some of the strength and calm of Eternity when we try to live in it, escaping from the meshes of the great enchanter.

Many another difficulty will stretch itself across the upward path as the aspirant essays to tread it, but a resolute will

and a devoted heart, lighted by knowledge, will conquer all in the end and will reach the Supreme Goal. To rest on the Law is one of the secrets of peace, to trust it utterly at all times, not least when the gloom descends. No soul that aspires can ever fail to rise; no heart that loves can ever be abandoned. Difficulties exist only that in overcoming them we may grow strong, and they only who have suffered are able to save. ✧

Nothing over which the firmament of heaven revolves maintains an unchanged existence, but every hour assumes some new form. Every moment a fresh picture is presented to the view; and one appearance is scarce complete ere another supervenes, obliterating all traces of the first, as wave follows wave upon the shore. No wise man would seek to build his house upon the waves, or hope to find a foundation for it there. . . .

The wisest of mankind are those who have renounced all worldly desires, and chosen the calm and peaceful lot of a recluse's life. Behind every pleasure lurk twenty pains; far better is it then to forego one fleeting joy and spare oneself a lifetime of regret.

‘Aziz ibn Muhammad al-Nasafi

The Roots of Modern Theosophy

PABLO D. SENDER

THE word ‘theosophy’ is one with a long history. It has been used in different traditions and contexts, and consequently acquired a multiplicity of meanings. The term derives from the Greek *theosophia*, which is composed of two words: *theos* (‘God’, ‘gods’ or ‘divine’) and *sophia* (‘wisdom’). According to the context and tradition in which this term has been used, *theosophia* can be translated as the ‘wisdom of God (or the gods)’, ‘wisdom in things divine’, or ‘divine wisdom’.

The person in touch with this *theosophia* (variously called *theosophos* (Greek), theosopher, or Theosophist) acquires a knowledge that is not the product of his or her rational faculty. The source of this divine knowledge has been variously considered to be God, a divine being, or a state of inner illumination attained through purification and spiritual efforts.

In its deeper meaning, the concept of *theosophia* implies that there is in human beings a faculty higher than reason — an ‘interior principle’ or spiritual intuition through which we can reach the Divine Wisdom. In HPB’s words:

But all [sacred] books it [Theosophy] regards, on account of the human element contained in them, as inferior to the Book of Nature; to read which and comprehend it correctly, the innate powers of the soul must be highly developed. Ideal laws can be perceived by the intuitive faculty alone; they are beyond the domain of argument and dialectics, and no one can understand or rightly appreciate them through the explanations of another mind, though even this mind be claiming a direct revelation.¹

History and Development of the Term

The word ‘theosophy’ has been used in connection with a number of religions and philosophical schools. Although the Neoplatonic, Christian, and modern Theosophical traditions have used this term more prominently, we can also find references to a Hermetic theosophy, a Jewish theosophy (found in the Kabbalah), a Muslim theosophy (mainly among the Sufis), a Persian theosophy, etc. In this article we will limit ourselves to examine briefly the use of this term among the Neoplatonists, Christians, and members of the Theosophical Society.

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a) *The Neoplatonist theosophos*

The origin of the term *theosophia* is unknown, but it is likely to have been coined by the Neoplatonists (a philosophical school founded by Ammonius Saccas, who was born ca. AD 175). Based on the writings of the famous Platonist Prof. Alexander Wilder, Mme Blavatsky suggests that the term was commonly used by all Neoplatonists.² However, researches made in the late 1980s by scholars James Santucci³ and Dr Jean-Louis Siémons⁴ showed that it is only with the third-generation Neoplatonist Porphyry (AD 234–305) that we find the term in writing for the first time. In Porphyry's view, the divine wisdom is a state of illumination that can be attained by self-exertion. The *theosophos* tries 'by himself, to elevate himself, alone to alone, to a communion with the divine'. With Iamblichus (AD 250–325), the pure mystical meaning given to the term by Porphyry acquires a more occult or magical significance. He proposed that the *theosophia* can be attained through *theurgy*, a series of religious rituals and magic operations aimed at elevating consciousness. Proclus (AD 412–485) uses the term in yet another way to denominate specific spiritual doctrines, making reference to a local 'Hellenic theosophy', but also to a foreign or barbarian (that is, non-Greek) theosophy, referring to Chaldean doctrines.⁵

b) *The Christian theosopher*

Many early Christians, including a number of Church Fathers, were students of Neoplatonic teachers. They also

adopted the term *theosophia*, but used it in a more Christian sense to mean 'the Wisdom of God'. Clement of Alexandria (AD 150–215) talks about a *theosophos* as one who writes 'driven by divine inspiration', and thus in time this term came to be used to refer to the prophets of old. An important difference between the Neoplatonic and Christian concepts of *theosophia*, is that in the former view no one is a born *theosophos* — he becomes such by long exertion, application to philosophy, self-purification and contemplation of the divine.⁶ In the Christian view the divine wisdom is bestowed by God — as He chooses — upon the prophet, in the form of a revelation. After the Neoplatonists disappeared in the sixth century, the term *theosophia* continued to be used in Christianity during the Middle Ages, but frequently in a lower sense as a synonym of *theologia*.⁷ In the ninth century, after the rediscovery of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius (a Christian Neoplatonist who lived ca. AD 500) the term regained a lofty meaning among great mystics such as Meister Eckhart, J. Tauler, John of Ruysbroeck, and others. It was through their writings that seventeenth to nineteenth century European mystics such as Boehme, Saint-Martin, Swedenborg, and others, inherited the term *theosophy* and adopted it as their own. With these 'theosophers' (as they came to be known) the term became popular, being on the title of a number of books during the 1700s.⁸ There continued to be publications on Christian theosophy until the middle of the nineteenth century.

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c) *The modern Theosophist*

At the opening of the last quarter of the nineteenth century a committee formed by Mme Blavatsky, H. S. Olcott, W. Q. Judge, and others, founded what they called the Theosophical Society. According to Col. Olcott, the choice of the name of the newly formed Society was a subject of discussion in the committee, and several options were suggested, such as the Egyptological, the Hermetic, the Rosicrucian, etc. However, none of them seemed the right one. 'At last,' he recalls 'in turning over the leaves of the Dictionary, one of us came across the word "Theosophy", whereupon, after discussion, we unanimously agreed that that was the best of all.' Olcott explained this name was appropriate because it expressed 'the esoteric truth we wished to reach' and covered the ground of 'methods of occult scientific research'.⁹

It does not seem likely that the name for the Society was chosen merely out of a dictionary search, since Madame Blavatsky had already connected her knowledge with the term *theosophy* a few months before, in a letter to Hiram Corson:¹⁰

My belief is based on something older than the Rochester knockings [that began the Spiritualistic movement in 1848], and springs out from the same source of information that was used by Raymond Lully, Picus della Mirandola, Cornelius Agrippa, Robert Fludd, Henry More, et cetera, etc., all of whom have ever been searching for a system that should disclose

to them the 'deepest depths' of the Divine nature, and show them the real tie which binds all things together. I found at last, and many years ago, the cravings of my mind satisfied by this theosophy taught by the Angels and communicated by them that the protoplast might know it for the aid of the human destiny.

As shown in a previous article ('What is Theosophy?', *The Theosophist*, December 2007), Mme Blavatsky used the term Theosophy with the following meanings:

a) As a state of illumination where the theosophist is in touch with the Divine Wisdom. This, as we have seen, is the meaning used by Porphyry.

b) As a universal Ancient Wisdom, similar to the *perennial philosophy* of the Renaissance. This idea has been present under different names through a number of philosophers since the beginning of recorded history. Marcelo Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, whose writings influenced Christian theosophers, called this Ancient Wisdom *prisca theologia*. Essential elements of this *perennial philosophy* are shared by the different theosophies, the term being applied here as a name for different doctrines, much as Proclus did.

Regarding the word 'Theosophist', although today it is commonly used to refer to a member of the Theosophical Society, since the beginning of the organization its leaders established a difference between a real Theosophist and a member of the TS. While a Theosophist is in touch with the Divine Wisdom, members of

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the Society are students of the teachings of Theosophists, with the aspiration to develop their 'inner senses' so to eventually become a real Theosophist.

On the Modern and the Christian Theosophies

The modern and the Christian theosophies differ in their language, style, and reference books they use. Modern Theosophy is outside any religious framework. It does not teach the existence of a personal God and does not accept the idea of vicarious salvation. Blavatsky never claimed the Theosophical Society to be a direct continuation of the Christian current. As seen in an earlier quotation, the first time that HPB associates herself to the word *theosophy* she does not mention Christian theosophers but refers to Alchemists, Kabbalists, and Platonists.¹¹ It is with them that she claims to share the same 'source of knowledge'. This does not mean, however, that she identified modern Theosophy with the medieval European esotericism either:

But *real* Theosophy — *i.e.*, the Theosophy that comes to us *from the East* — is assuredly Pantheism and by no means Theism. Theosophy is a word of the widest possible meaning which differs greatly in Eastern and Western literature. Moreover, the Theosophical Society being of Eastern origin, therefore goes beyond the narrow limits of the medieval Theosophy of the West . . .¹²

Some scholars feel that H. P. Blavatsky *et al.* unduly appropriated of the term

when they used it for a world view that was not based on the Judeo-Christian religions. This feeling cannot be justified unless we refuse to recognize its earlier use within a non-Christian philosophy by the Neoplatonists. As a matter of fact, HPB did claim the Society was a successor of what Prof. Wilder called the 'Theosophical Eclectic School' of Neoplatonism:

The chief aim of the Founders of the Eclectic Theosophical School was one of the three objects of its modern successor, the Theosophical Society, namely, to reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities.¹³

The most important of [the Society's objects] is to revive the work of [the Neoplatonist] Ammonius Saccas, and make various nations remember that they are the children 'of one mother'.¹⁴

Since we can argue that modern Theosophy is closer to the original Neoplatonic system than Christian theosophy is, Mme Blavatsky seems justified in having used the term for her teachings.

This being said, we have to keep in mind that HPB was not so much concerned with the 'academic' aspect of a word that has been used with a multiplicity of meanings. Just as the term 'gnosis' can be used in a universal way, with no reference to a particular school of philosophy or religion, she employed the term 'Theosophy' more based on its meaning than on the traditions that had previously used it:

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The Theosophical Society, then, does not derive its name from the Greek word *Theosophia*, composed of the two words ‘God’ and ‘wisdom’ taken in the dead letter, but rather in the spiritual sense of the term. It is the Society for searching into *Divine Wisdom*, occult or spiritual wisdom . . .¹⁵

Common Elements in the Various Theosophies

One feature that strikes us when reading the teachings of those ‘possessed of divine wisdom’ is that there is no doctrinal unity among them. Jacob Brucker (AD 1696–1770), one of the first historians of Western philosophy, wrote about Christian theosophy: ‘There are as many theosophical systems as there are theosophers.’¹⁶ This statement is applicable to other theosophies as well. There is a marked difference between the approaches of Plotinus and Iamblichus, while some people call ‘Neo-Theosophy’ the teachings of Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater because they differ in some aspects from those of H. P. Blavatsky.

If this is the case within the particular traditions, what happens when we compare different theosophies, with differences in language and in their religious or philosophical background? Do they share any common elements?

Jacob Brucker identified some doctrines present in all of the Christian theosophical teachings. These principles, when expressed in a more religious-neutral language, are also to be found in Neoplatonism and in modern Theosophy. They include the idea that everything

emanates from a common source and must return to it; that one can get an immediate revelation of the soul by divine means or faculties, and not by philosophical reason; that the universal spirit resides in all things and we can find ‘signatures’ of the divine everywhere; that the forces of nature can be manipulated by magical means; and that human beings are threefold, being composed of a divine spark, an intermediary spirit or soul, and a physical body.

But perhaps what *theosophoi*, theosophers, and Theosophists have in common cannot be found so much at the doctrinal level, but rather at the level of attitudes of mind and general notions. For example, modern scholar Antoine Faivre (again in relation to the Christian theosophy, but applicable to the Neoplatonic and the modern ones) describes three common notions found in most theosophical systems: The interest in the relationship between Man, God and the Universe; the use of myths to explain reality; and the possibility of direct access to higher worlds.¹⁷ Working on this line of thought, we can add some other common features:

i) The lack of doctrinal uniformity. This fact discussed earlier is not merely a negative quality but an important common feature of all theosophical teachers. Given the fact that their knowledge is not the result of reading and reasoning, but of a supra-conceptual wisdom, those in touch with it have to find their own words in an attempt to describe their original spiritual perceptions. Since the spiritual realities cannot be appropriately expressed through

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words created to describe the material world, their teachings will be different, and even seem to be opposing in many points, without necessarily being really so. This is also a reason why many of them chose the fluid language of symbols and allegories to transmit their wisdom.

ii) Knowing by personal experience about the limitations of language to describe spiritual realities, they are not literalists, and usually advocate for an *esoteric understanding* of sacred scriptures and myths.

iii) Theosophical authors tend to be eclectic, being inclined to integrate different elements (even from other traditions) within a general, harmonious whole. Theosophy is essentially holistic, frequently aiming at offering 'a synthesis of Religion, Philosophy and Science', as described in the subtitle of Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*.

iv) Those in touch with *theosophia* seek union with the divine, becoming at the same time spectators of the 'mysteries of creation'. These new perceptions and images are not created by the activity of the intellect, but by divine revelations. Therefore, theosophical teachings are not only mystical, but also metaphysical, including a cosmology, a theogony, and an anthropogenesis.¹⁸ Due to the rich intellectual aspect of the theosophical teachings there is the danger of forgetting the real purpose of its metaphysics. It is not meant to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of the student. In the theosophical view, human beings (microcosm) are an expression and reflection of the universe (macrocosm), containing in them

every element present in the cosmos. By knowing the universe we get to know our true nature and potentiality, as well as our relation to the whole. This knowledge becomes thus an important element of the theosophical spiritual practice.

v) All theosophies encourage an inner path, which is to be trodden individually. The 'battle' between the spiritual and the material takes place inwardly, and produces the soul's transmutation and a spiritual awakening. Man does not find God or the Divine in a temple but in his heart. However, although this intimate experience is independent of any external framework, many of those 'wise in things divine' have created spiritual societies, orders, or communities to encourage and assist people in this individual change. These organizations were neither lay nor clerical. They were composed of people who maintained their outward place in society, but who were inwardly devoted to the spiritual practice. They existed in the boundaries between institutional religions and the lay populace.¹⁹

vi) The direction of this inner path is from the bodily consciousness towards an illumined, spiritual one. In other words, the psychological ego and its desires must be transcended. Here lies an important difference with the New Age. Although this movement shares many doctrinal elements with theosophy, its approach is typically the opposite one, focusing on the personal ego, and regarding the universal laws as means to produce personal satisfaction, which is mistakenly taken as a 'spiritual state'. ✧

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References and Notes

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17. Faivre, op. cit., p. xvi.
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In future times, when the impartial historian shall write an account of the progress of religious ideas in the present century, the formation of this Theosophical Society, whose first meeting under its formal declaration of principles we are now attending, will not pass unnoticed. This much is certain.

Henry Steel Olcott, Inaugural Address, 17 November 1875

The Life-Path of a Theosophist

VINAYAK PANDYA

LEARNING teaches us equanimity, i.e., not to be overjoyed or not to be too sorrowful. The principles of the TS are about Universal Brotherhood. This is easier said than practised. It means that whenever we are dealing with people we must keep in mind that the other person is also part and parcel of us. We have learned that the Soul is one unit. From one soul many souls are created and then again it becomes one. If all of us are one, then why do I fight with someone? We also know that when we die we do not take anything with us. In spite of this, in the material world people go on accumulating wealth and spend their energy on this and remain in tension, and do not enjoy what they have. One should devote oneself and make efforts in daily life to practise Theosophical teaching. It helps one's own self more than anyone else.

Control Anger and Help Others

To illustrate some practical examples which our other members have undergone and what they did: One of the late members of our Lodge used to tell us that we should have control over ourselves in general and over anger in particular. No one should

take that control from us. It means that by the acts of others I should not become angry and lose my temper. It will harm me more than the other person. If we control anger, it helps keep our blood pressure and heart conditions normal. It is expected that we should remain cool and calm and do what is expected of us as members of the TS. It is expected that one should help others. Service should be the motto of every person. What I understand helps another understand and this is service. As J. Krishnamurti says: you are the world and the world is you. What I understand by that statement is that irrespective of what others do to me, I shall do what I am expected to do and not as the others are doing to me or to anyone else. Somebody might have misbehaved with me but if he is in need I must help him and forget anything wrong done to me by him. I should do what is expected of me. If I misbehave in the same way, then there is no difference between him and me.

Appreciate Good Things

We must learn to appreciate good things about and good qualities in others.

Mr Vinayak Pandya is a member of Vasanta Lodge, Mumbai, Indian Section of the TS. Talk delivered at the Indian Section Convention, Adyar, December 2010.

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We should ignore their bad qualities. We should not gossip about someone's bad qualities with others; rather we must address them politely with the concerned person only. We should never praise our own selves. We should rather let others praise us. We should avoid taking credit for ourselves. What we have done is what has been expected of us to do. The Law of Karma teaches us this. What I am, is part of my karma. Needless to say, it is very clear that karma does not spare anyone. In karma there is nothing like net; i.e., if my good karma-s are hundred in number and bad ones, sixty, then I will have to undergo hundred good karma-s and sixty bad karma-s. It will not be forty good karma-s.

TS teachings help us understand the evolution of the human race. They teach us that one begins progress from the mineral to animal stage, to a human being and from there to a Mahatma. Everyone wants to be good. Even a terrorist or murderer at some time repents for having done something wrong. We have been told that in the evolution of the human race there is no going back. It is only a going upward or remaining in the same place.

Unwritten Laws of Nature

The TS tells us about understanding the unwritten laws of Nature. Often we wonder how something has happened. A few years ago, when I was at the Convention, a tsunami hit the southern part of India and many parts of Chennai. It was surprising to all who came to Adyar that nothing happened to our campus. It is a known fact that our campus is

the Masters' chosen place. One finds immense peace when visiting Adyar. Even the dogs in Adyar do not bark as dogs normally do outside. Adyar sends a message of goodwill to all creatures in the world.

Responsibility of TS Members

As members of the TS it is our duty to behave properly. It is indeed an added responsibility for members of the Society. We know what is to be done. In spite of this, if we do not do service to fellow human beings then our offence is more severe than that of others who do not know the Theosophical teaching.

Understanding others, i.e. putting oneself in the shoes of others

One must put oneself in the other's position before criticizing him or her. Often one does not think of the hard work undergone by another although it may not give our desired result. I come across many delegates who say this should have been done or that; I have not come across a person who says that he or she will come and help improve things here at Adyar either during the Convention or otherwise.

Image of the TS

People know the TS through its members. To me, a Theosophist is one who practises its principles. One need not be a member of the TS. It is how one behaves that is more important in life.

Thoughts

If we think good thoughts, they send positive vibrations. A thought can do

wonders. It can travel miles without any vehicle. I have learned that change is the only constant in life. Every character we come across in life will change. Most relations in life are selfish. If we can avoid a selfish motive, we will be happy. To illustrate this: when there is a competition and my child is participating in it, I would naturally feel my child should win. If I have that thought, and my child does not win, I will be disappointed and sad, and find excuses and say my child has not come up to my expectation. However, if I feel that the person best deserving to win should win, then whosoever wins that competition, I will be happy. I would also tell my child that the deserving person won the competition and this would help him to develop his personality and not be unhappy.

‘I’

Can we keep the ‘I’ away from our action and behaviour? We must make a conscious effort to avoid the ‘I’. It is very dangerous and plays a major role in the downfall of any person. It will harm the journey towards becoming a Mahatma. We must learn how we can help others. We pray in the Bharata Samaj Puja: *sarve vai sukhina santu sarve bhadrani paśyantū*, which means let all the power of the *puja* be for all in the universe. When everyone’s well-being is taken care of, I am one of them too. Teachings and philosophy such as these when practised help one to go on the path towards becoming a Mahatma.

Confession

One good quality is to accept our own mistakes. In Christianity, this is called confession. Confession may be to oneself or to others. When we confess, it reduces the heaviness in our mind and thoughts of guilt arising from doing something wrong.

How to proceed

Many a time I feel it is easier for people to say or write something than do it. How do I start? The TS tells me there is no Guru who can make you a Mahatma. Then how do I proceed? It is important to be a good listener, to understand what others are telling us and what we should accept out of that. This is called discrimination. One can take advice from others. Even a child can teach us something new. One must have an open mind to accept new things in life.

Satsang is the sharing of the experience of others who are practising how to become a good person. I am not saying we should follow someone blindly but to understand what others have done and how it can help us in achieving our goal. If one analyses one’s own action and can realize the wrong one has done, it will help one avoid the same mistake. Meditation, music and anything which improves concentration should be practised. A thought-free state of mind cannot come overnight. One has to practise initially by taking the help of someone rather than do it on one’s own. Reading and analysing, understanding and correlating to our own situation, also help improve our journey to become a good

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person. Further, we can gain from non-TS members and other literature.

Ten Points for a Happier and Joyful Life

1. *Drop the mighty Ego of 'I'.*

The 'I' is the most dangerous Ego of all egos. 'I' is always associated with false pride and is the main cause for one's downfall in life. The 'I' distances one from pious people and attracts the negative vibrations of others. It also binds us to new karma (deeds), thus binding us to the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

2. *Avoid 'Tit for Tat'.*

Give love for love, help for help but never give hatred for hatred and violence for violence (even if you are subjected to unjustified trouble). Anybody who is unjust to you is unjust because of your past karma; hence reacting in the same manner will bind you once again to the same vicious cycle.

3. *Reduce Expectations.*

Expectation is the major cause of our anger, disappointment, irritation, frustration, stress and other negative emotions. Your happiness increases in direct proportion to the reduction in your expectations.

4. *Increase Acceptance.*

Life is full of ups and downs, peaks of pain and pleasure and favourable and unfavourable situations. These variations are the result of our past karma; hence let us accept every life situation as it is without resistance. Resistance, in any case, will not change the course of life. At least, acceptance will give one enough

strength to face the situation and attract the good things in life.

5. *Forgive and Seek Forgiveness.*

Whatever we remember with intense emotion has the power to repeat itself, and as we normally remember unpleasant incidents more than the pleasant, especially those connected with hatred and enmity, these impressions recreate more and more unpleasant incidents. It is advisable to carry good memories rather than bad ones. Forgive all those whom you think have been unjust to you and seek forgiveness from all those to whom you think you were unjust. The idea is not to carry forward any unpleasant impressions in one's mind, and in any case, for not more than twenty-four hours.

6. *Make Positive Affirmations.*

Every morning, afternoon and night say to yourself with strong feelings these positive affirmations as they have the power to change your mood, attitude and personality: 'I am happy, I am healthy, I am peaceful, I am Divine, I am *purna ānanda* (complete bliss).'

7. *Give and Spread Happiness.*

Whenever you give anything selflessly to anybody, the cosmos gives you the same thing back in a multiple of 1000. Hence, try always to find an opportunity to give happiness to others and be blessed with bountiful happiness.

8. *Offer Gratitude.*

There are many people who have contributed to our well-being in this life, starting from our parents to our siblings, friends, guru and God. There may be

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many more people who have, or have had, a direct or indirect contribution in this birth or previous births. Offering gratitude to them connects us to the 'happiness-providing cosmic energy', thus attracting happiness in the present as well as future.

9. Meditate Regularly.

Through regular meditation we can break the chain of thoughts emanating from the mind, and experience peace, tranquillity and inner bliss. This is the state which helps us to cross over the difficulties of life effortlessly, increase our efficiency, improve decision-making, avoid confusion and bring about overall positive changes in our personality.

10. Realize your Divine Self.

The ultimate aim of this human life is to realize our own Self and establish ourselves in an eternally blissful state. We are an entity beyond the limitations of the physical body, mind and senses, which is eternal, omnipotent and blissful. In ignorance we consider ourselves as a physical body and become bound to its karma, thus experiencing the peaks of pain and pleasure. By transcending the limitations of these experiences, we can realize our true Self. Once the true Divine Self is realized, nothing in this universe can bring pain, sorrow or frustration. Every moment would be blissful and one would experience the life of a liberated soul. ✧

Too many of us become enraged because we have to bear the shortcomings of others. We should remember that not one of us is perfect, and that others see our defects as obviously as we see theirs. We forget too often to look at ourselves through the eyes of others. Let us, therefore, bear the shortcomings of each other for the ultimate benefit of everyone.

Abraham Lincoln

Theosophical Work around the World

Adyar — Vegetarian Day

On 2 October an interesting programme took place at Adyar. This marked the anniversary of Gandhiji's birthday, which is celebrated throughout India.

From quarter to nine until the time arrived, people gathered at the Banyan Tree where a temporary arrangement was made for a few people to sit. At the specified time of nine the proceedings began, with remarks made by three people, including the President, before a gathering standing all around. It was remarked that it is important for people to take action which would make the future progress of humanity safe and according to plan.

In the US many people are even now becoming vegetarian, because in the future they will reduce the damage done by slaughtering a large number of animals. Many of them are used just to throw away the meat in the restaurants and other places, for too much is served on each plate. This kind of waste of living beings and the procedure necessary to keep up the same is extremely harmful, and slowly this is being realized. Many are becoming vegetarians.

Secondly, non-vegetarianism in India, is increasing and even some traditionally vegetarian communities have become

non-vegetarian, which is against both ancient and modern thought. In an interesting book of ancient teachings, *ahimsā* and non-violence were held up as important virtues (*ahimsā paramo dharmah*). Killing other creatures does harm to the whole of evolutionary, as well as ethical, consciousness. This, and modern knowledge of the likelihood of what will harm evolution are extremely important. We must remember all this and work for non-killing of even small forms of life.

After the speeches, including one in Tamil for those who do not understand English, the second part of the day's happenings began. This was the procession which took people from the Banyan Tree to the Main Gate, led by small boys dressed in the well-known style of Gandhiji. It was a lovely and good sight to see and to enjoy. The young ones were followed by a large number of other students and older people, carrying placards with the motto: 'Be Veg(etarian); be Non-Violent'.

The whole programme was useful, amusing and theosophical and was called 'Ahimsā Walk' on this non-violence day. We congratulate heartily the Vegetarian Congress which was the organizer and inspirer of this unusual event in the compound. ✧

I stand before you in the fear of God and therefore of nothing else.

Gandhi

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