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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.

Bondage is in the Mind

RADHA BURNIER

A well-known sentence in the Upanishads states that mind alone is the cause of man's bondage and liberation. Most people believe that they are bound by circumstance and act as if they are its victims, because they do not understand the forces and conditions which exist around them. The primitive man, who observed lightning and thunder, the disappearance of the setting sun and the descent of darkness upon the earth, and various other phenomena felt these were threats and that he had to placate gods, resort to witch doctors, learn incantations, erect totem poles, and do all kinds of things to avert the harm which he believed might fall upon him. The same phenomena, viewed by modern man, do not generate fear in him, for knowledge has made him understand the laws and forces at work behind the phenomena.

There is a web of forces in nature which create the conditions in which people live. They include such forces as gravity, electricity and magnetism. The man who knows how these forces work is able to predict the conditions which will be created. He can control the circumstances around him by altering and regulating the forces. Knowledge enables him to change conditions and not consider himself as a victim of those conditions.

This is the position of man now in relation to that part of the phenomenal world which he understands.

Flights to the moon and communication through satellites with distant parts of the earth are ways of conquering the environment. But, man's knowledge even now pertains to a very limited field. The brilliant men who can manipulate nature and counteract the forces of gravity, etc. are also victims of circumstances in the psychological field. Ignorance makes them fearful and insecure and as enslaved by psychological forces as primitive man was with regard to physical ones.

In the psychological field also, forces create the conditions, and he who would be free and fearless must understand the laws at work. One of the three great truths proclaimed by *The Idyll of the White Lotus* declares:

Each man is his own absolute law giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself, the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

In other words, each man creates the conditions around him, his karma. Bondage is nothing but the prison-house constructed by karmic forces which each one releases. Bondage is said to be

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in the cycle of births and deaths, the compulsion to suffer. These are different ways of stating the same thing.

Most people believe that they can escape the consequences of their acts, mental and physical. There are some who acknowledge theoretically that it is not possible to escape the consequences of the forces which we release. But they do not really believe in this; if they did believe in karma, they would be extremely careful about everything they do, what they think and feel, their relationship to people and so on. The weakness of the belief is made evident by negligence in conduct.

It is possible to escape the consequences of one's acts in the physical world during a particular lifetime. In case a person commits theft, he may be caught immediately or his lapse may remain undiscovered for a few years. He may even get away with it during his entire lifetime. But the consequences cannot be escaped indefinitely, for though the mills of God grind slowly, they grind exceeding small. However, what is more serious is not the discovery of the theft or being put into jail, but the fact that there is an immediate consequence in the psychological field.

He who deceives another and thinks he can get away with it, deludes himself grievously. Many people cover up facts or misrepresent them in relating them to others, pretend to be other than what they are, etc. It is not uncommon to show a different face under different circumstances. All this happens because in the background of the mind, there is a feeling that one can escape. But, actually there

is an immediate effect when there is any act. When there is an act of deception, it gives rise to a certain momentum in the psyche of the person. Deceitfulness becomes a form of energy which is released within. That is the immediate but invisible consequence.

There are many things in the psyche which are unnoticed. There are conscious memories and also many unconscious ones. If you meet someone whom you do not see or think about again for a few years in your conscious mind, there may be no conscious memory of that person; whether he is tall or short, dark or fair, all has faded away. Later, you meet and you 'recognize' him. That recognition means that although the conscious mind carried no memory, the unconscious mind did, and that unconscious memory came to the surface. Recognition implies comparing what he looks like now, his behaviour, gestures or whatever it is, with the past impression and knowing it is the same. All that is involved in recognition or re-cognition.

But there are memories which are deeper down. People have memories of childhood which are beyond recall, except under hypnosis or in moments of crisis. Behind the threshold of conscious memory there is a whole area, like a hidden iceberg. If energy is released in the psyche, the momentum may also sink below the conscious level. When there is a suitable opportunity, it will come into play. For example, when action is deceitful, as said earlier, a momentum is created, which may be hidden and dormant, below the conscious level. At some time, it turns into

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an impulse to do the same kind of thing. This becomes a vicious circle, a circle of bondage: the action which creates the tendency, the tendency which impels action whether it is one of deceit, fear or envy or a mixture of some kind.

In the average human being, there are innumerable tendencies pushing the person indirectly, willy-nilly, whether he knows it or not. When a person suffers from timidity or fear, every shadow makes him feel that there is a hidden enemy. When there is pride, a man imagines there is intention to offend even when a statement is innocent. Further, the unconscious mind connects the feeling with outer characteristics appertaining to another person from whom the danger or insult is thought to ensue. So, people have compulsive reactions against dark people or white people, Jews, Catholics or Protestants and against all kinds of things. Hidden momentums, tendencies and compulsions surface into the field of action not only from the recent past, but from the depths of our animal inheritance. Most people act according to that deep conditioning.

When there is compulsion from within, a momentum over which there is no control, there is no freedom at all. It is the bondage which the mind creates because it is in a state of unawareness, because it

does not take the trouble of finding out what is happening to itself.

The conditionings of the mind create, enormous problems — the problems of colour, nationalism, racial differences, etc. Because of the conditioning which one has undergone, one identifies oneself with family, community, religion, etc. But the mind can free itself if it sees that it is creating circles in which it gets imprisoned. It is not necessary for anyone to be the victim of any circumstance. Instead of creating momentums of deceitfulness or fear through unawareness one can generate other energies, such as patience, affection and calmness. These arise through awareness and have a quality of stability. They are not reactions.

Through watchfulness and care exercised in daily life, one can begin to realize what is the state of freedom. Within the mind, there is the possibility of both bondage and freedom. One has to pray to no god, find no priest, to free oneself but only discover what is deep within. The *Bhagavadgītā* speaks about the stable man who is non-dependent because circumstances do not have power over him. That is what all human beings have to learn. By active watchfulness, one can cease to be the victim of conditions and a source of spiritual energy. ✧

When desires and their cause (which is ignorance) are overcome, then the bond between cause and effect and the vitality which supports the object of desire will be dispelled.

Patañjali

Jñāna Yoga and *The Secret Doctrine*

PABLO SENDER

IT has been 125 years since *The Secret Doctrine* (*SD*) was first published and, looking back, we can see that this book has had an important influence on the world of thought. In its pages, Mme Blavatsky (HPB) promotes some views that were revolutionary in the late nineteenth century, but today are accepted by many. For example, the *SD* offered a synthesis of science, religion, and philosophy, at a time when the chasm existing between these disciplines seemed unsurpassable. This idea, however, gradually took root during the following century, eventually leading to the development of the growing field of ‘science and spirituality’. The *SD* also pointed out to the existence of an *ancient* Wisdom-Religion to a world that, excited about the advance in science and technology, regarded the past as a primitive age of ignorance and barbarism. However, this idea spread and was eventually accepted even by a number of scholars in the field of the philosophy of religions. And, certainly, the *SD* has been a lasting reference source when it comes to the study of the Esoteric Philosophy from which many have drawn, both within and without the

Theosophical Society. However, in spite of all these accomplishments, it is possible that we have not yet taken full advantage of what this book has to offer.

A short time before her passing, Mme Blavatsky pointed out to a dimension of the *SD* that is not so commonly acknowledged, namely, that its study may become a form of yoga — more specifically, of what is known as *jñāna yoga*.¹ On this path, the aspirant studies spiritual teachings in a special way, seeking to raise his consciousness so that he can *realize* these truths, instead of merely becoming acquainted with the conceptual side of the teachings. When we try to approach the *SD* in this way, the first thing we need to keep in mind is that the teachings of the Esoteric Philosophy found there, are said to be ‘secret’. Why? Because, for the most part, they do not belong to the dimension of life we experience in our personal nature, but to realities perceived by our inner self. As Mme Blavatsky said to a student:

Your axioms of logic can be applied to the *lower* Manas [mind] only and it is from the perceptions of *Kāma-Manas*

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[material mind] alone that you argue. But Occultism teaches only that which it derives from the cognition of the Higher Ego or the *Buddhi-Manas* [spiritual mind].²

When having to convey some information about the spiritual realities, most sages have stated that words and concepts are not enough to produce a real understanding of them. For example, Mahatma KH wrote:

The recognition of the higher phases of man's being on this planet is not to be attained by mere acquirement of knowledge. Volumes of the most perfectly constructed information cannot reveal to man life in the higher regions. One has to get a knowledge of spiritual facts by personal experience and from actual observation . . .³

While words and concepts are created to describe the material world we perceive through our senses, the spiritual realm cannot be appropriately explained in terms of this experience. How would we teach a blind person what colours are? We can read him the definition from the dictionary; explain the nature of light and colour from a scientific point of view; teach him the colour theory in visual arts; etc., and yet, all this will fail to make him really know what colours are. He will have a true knowledge of this only when he sees them. Something similar happens with spiritual teachings. Even though a person can read and memorize them, the mere accumulation of concepts will not bring a real understanding of what they are trying

to describe. One may ask why, then, there are books written about these subjects. Although concepts about the spiritual will not convey true knowledge of it, they can be useful as a map to assist us in our search for what is real. However, as HPB pointed out, this map has to be read with the spiritual 'eyes':

First let the student clearly realize that he cannot see things spiritual with the eyes of the flesh, and that in studying . . . he must use the eyes of the Spiritual Intelligence, else will he fail and his study will be fruitless.⁴

The mundane life stimulates almost exclusively the 'eyes of the flesh'. It forces the mind to remain focussed on concrete things, so that the person can ensure the survival of his body and psyche, and of those who may depend on him or her. But transcendental realities such as the underlying unity of all things or the purpose of life are beyond the plane of perception of the lower mind. And although within us there exist spiritual eyes, in most people they remain closed because they are not used to paying attention to the spiritual and metaphysical. According to its author, the *SD* was written to assist us in awakening this spiritual perception:

Come to the *S.D.* . . . without any hope of getting the final Truth of existence from it, or with any idea other than seeing how far it may lead TOWARDS the Truth. See in study a means of exercising and developing the mind never touched by other studies.⁵

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It must be remembered that all these Stanzas appeal to the inner faculties rather than to the ordinary comprehension of the physical brain.⁶

The brain is the instrument of waking consciousness and every conscious mental picture formed means change and destruction of the atoms of the brain. Ordinary intellectual activity moves on well beaten paths in the brain, and does not compel sudden adjustments and destructions in its substance. But this new kind of mental effort calls for something very different — the carving out of ‘new brain paths’, the ranking in different order of the little brain lives.⁷

When a person’s attention is always turned towards the mundane, the lower mind remains oblivious to the higher, and even the brain itself is fit only to receive material perceptions and produce concrete thoughts. The earnest study of the *SD* is a way to stimulate the abstract mind and reshape the brain, so that it can become a vehicle of the spiritual wisdom.

For this to happen, the study cannot be reduced to a mere acquisition of concepts. Dr Besant wrote:

The seat of Self-consciousness is moved from the lower mind to the higher by strenuous thinking, by the intellectual travail of the student, the philosopher, the man of science — if the latter turn his thoughts from objects to principles, from phenomena to laws.⁸

We read in the *SD* that the Absolute is ‘An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and

Immutable PRINCIPLE . . . devoid of all attributes and essentially without any relation to manifested, finite Being’.⁹ It is easy enough to read and remember this concept, so that whenever we talk about the Absolute we can repeat it. But this is the work of the lower mind, and even if many concepts are accumulated in this way, we still do not possess *spiritual* knowledge.

How, then, should we approach study so that it becomes something more than the mere gathering of information? The answer given by Dr Besant was ‘by means of strenuous thinking’. It is only through a sincere effort to perceive what lies beyond the concepts that access to the higher mind can be gained. Thus, when studying spiritual truths, we should strive to penetrate the meaning behind the words, to see the implications of what is being said. For example, it is not enough to stay satisfied with the statement that the Absolute is omnipresent. Think deeply about the meaning of it. You may ask yourself, if this Reality is said to be present everywhere, how can it be *beyond* the finite, or without any relation to the manifested? Or how can we say that the cosmos is nothing but this Reality and, at the same time, say that everything we perceive is an illusion? Or if the Absolute, being immutable, is the only Reality during the period of universal rest, what is it that changes when a new cosmos is manifested? Some questions like these may have an (approximate) answer, while others may be utterly beyond response. But it matters not, because the conceptual answer is only of secondary

importance. What matters is the ‘strenuous thinking’ about questions that are not concrete, that are essentially ‘beyond the range and reach of thought’, for it is through this that we stimulate the awakening of a higher perception.

It is easy to see how this special effort can be passed over when we read a very systematic exposition of concepts, even if they are highly metaphysical. If everything is clear to the lower mind, there is the feeling that one understands, and that no further effort is required. The puzzling style of the *SD*, its ‘confusing’ and fragmentary nature, has the specific purpose of inducing the necessary exertion. Dr Besant explained this was the old ‘eastern’ way of teaching:

When we begin to teach a subject, we try to get a grasp of the whole subject, and we try to present it to those we are teaching in a clear form. That is the modern way of teaching. It makes people rather lazy, because too much is done for them, and the result is that the memory is very much more, and the reasoning much less exercised than they ought severally to be. The teachers take all the trouble, and present an already cooked and digested teaching to save the pupils from the trouble of exercising their mental faculties so that they have quite a large amount of second-hand knowledge and very little first-hand knowledge.

The old ways were different. The teacher came along, threw one great truth to his pupils and said: ‘Go and think about it.’ The result is that in the Eastern books you

do not get a clear presentment of a doctrine as a whole. It is scattered over the books. A careful student can gather the whole teachings. But he has not now the patience and industry required for the task. In the old days men had to work out results; so they grew into great thinkers, because they exercised their minds.¹⁰

If a person remains through the years at the conceptual level of study he may amass enormous amounts of information, but this will not make him ‘a great thinker’, that is, somebody who can come to his own insights. In fact, mere conceptual study tends to narrow a person’s views and he frequently becomes somewhat of a fundamentalist, unable to see the truth in presentations that do not agree with the style he is familiar with.

This is why the *SD* was not written as a well-structured philosophical production for the intellect, but as an occult work that intends to stimulate the spiritual intuition. Mme Blavatsky stated this on several occasions:

You cannot expect me to give everything; something must be left to the intuition and to human intelligence.¹¹

The foregoing are all mysteries which must be left to the personal intuition of the student for solution, rather than described.¹²

It may be a parable and an allegory *within an allegory*. Its solution is left to the intuition of the student, if he only reads that which follows with his *spiritual eye*.¹³

An intellectual study of the *SD* will

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provide concepts which, for all we know, may or may not be true. And even if they are true, being just concepts, they fail to bring the living truth into our consciousness. It is for this reason that HPB discouraged too much reliance on other people's interpretation of the *SD*. Robert Bowen, reporting a conversation with HPB, wrote:

It is worse than useless going to those whom we imagine to be advanced students (she [HPB] said) and asking them to give us an 'interpretation' of the *S.D.* They cannot do it. If they try, all they give are cut and dried exoteric renderings which do not remotely resemble the Truth. To accept such interpretation means anchoring ourselves to fixed ideas, whereas Truth lies beyond any ideas we can formulate or express. Exoteric interpretations are all very well, and she does not condemn them so long as they are taken as pointers for beginners, and are not accepted by them as anything more.¹⁴

So, do not go to the *SD* as if you were going to read a story, or expecting to have a neat description of a landscape — cosmic or otherwise. Go rather with the spirit you have when you sit to solve a puzzle. Sit with a notepad, ready to draw diagrams, write down keywords, and consult other texts dealing with the *SD* or with philosophies and religions there mentioned.¹⁵

Be ready to differentiate what is part of the essential teaching from what is just HPB supporting that teaching by referring to concepts and imagery of one religion or the other. As it is to be expected, you

will rarely get the main point in your first reading. Frequently, you will have to read a section, or part of a section, several times. Read it once, to get the general idea, and then again, until you understand the main point being made. Then, retain that idea (maybe by writing it down in the margin) and think about how it relates to what was being said previously. Many times you will find that what seems to be a digression is really making an important point, while at other times it is just a digression that you can disregard, at least for the time being.

If while studying you are trying to understand a certain point and, after due effort, you are still unable to grasp it, you can put that aside for the time being and go on with your study. The effort made will have its effect, even if you do not come to a conclusion. As you continue studying, the ability to grasp these truths will increase, your general understanding will deepen, and eventually, when the subject presents itself to you again, you will be able to understand it better.

By working in this way, the student will little by little create his own system of interpretation of the *SD*. It may or may not be different from that of other students, but if he does his work, it will bear his way of perceiving these metaphysical realities. Now here, he has to be on guard. The insight he may gain, even if it comes from his higher nature, will still necessarily take a conceptual form as it 'descends' to the lower mind. And once made into a concept, it is just a concept. Any definite image or thought is but a limitation of the

more holistic perception of truth on the spiritual planes. This is why HPB said:

Spiritual Occultism forbid[s] the use of figures or even symbols further than as temporary aids. Once define an idea in words, and it loses its reality; once figure a metaphysical idea, and you materialize its spirit. Figures must be used only as ladders to scale the battlements, ladders to be disregarded once the foot is set upon the rampart. Let the Esotericists, therefore, be very careful to spiritualize the *Instructions* and avoid materializing them; let them always try to find the highest meaning possible, confident that in proportion as they approach the material and visible in their speculations on the *Instructions*, so far are they from the right understanding of them.¹⁶

Diagrams, ideas, examples, analogies, are all useful in helping us grasp a truth at a conceptual level. That is the first step. But we should always aim at perceiving the most abstract aspect of them, that is, the supra-conceptual truth they are symbolizing. If we forget that 'truth lies beyond any ideas' and get attached to the picture we form through study we may get stuck there. Clinging to our ideas, we will tend to reject whatever may upset the superstructure built, closing the doors for future insights. Thus, ideas previously acquired may inadvertently become a prison for the intellect.

Some spiritual traditions, aware of this problem, have set up ways to upset the intellectual understanding by the use of paradoxes and contradictions, as is the case of the famous Zen *koans*. Mr A. P.

Sinnett learnt about this method first-hand during his correspondence with two of the Mahatmas. He wrote:

. . . especially is this the case with occult study, in connection with which the traditional methods of teaching, generally followed, aim at impressing every fresh idea on the memory, by provoking the perplexity it at last relieves.¹⁷

The information presented in the *SD* will always provide sources of 'contradiction' to the system we are trying to build. If study is to be a form of yoga, we have to avoid the common tendency of selecting only those ideas that fit in our preconceived structure. By paying attention to whatever contradictions that arise we may discover that we had formed a mistaken conception, or perhaps that our idea, although relatively 'correct', was too narrow or rigid (something very possible, since we will frequently be studying facts that belong to formless realities). Sometimes, after due consideration, we may realize that the statement in question was made in a general sense, or applied in a different way, or perhaps even in a misleading form, thus not being really a contradiction with our previous conception. Whatever the case may be, the earnest consideration of the contradictions will afford the necessary 'upsetting' so that we do not get stuck in fixed views and may always perceive something new.

This upsetting is frequently frustrating because it challenges, and even destroys, the picture we formed with much effort, throwing us again into a state of uncertainty and confusion. But the earnest student

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must be ready to face this, since it is an essential part of the process of raising our consciousness, which was described by HPB as follows:

This mode of thinking . . . is what the Indians call Jñāna Yoga. As one progresses in Jñāna Yoga one finds conceptions arising which, though one is conscious of them, one cannot express nor yet formulate into any sort of mental picture. As time goes on these conceptions will form into mental pictures. This is a time to be on guard and refuse to be deluded with the idea that the newfound and wonderful picture must represent reality. It does not. As one works on, one finds the once admired picture growing dull and unsatisfying, and finally fading out or being thrown away. This is another danger point, because for the moment one is left in a void without any conception to support one, and one may be tempted to revive the cast-off picture for want of a better to cling to. The true student will, however, work on unconcerned, and presently further formless gleams come, which again in time give rise to a larger and more beautiful picture than the last. But the learner will now know that no picture will ever represent the TRUTH. This last splendid picture will grow dull and fade like the others. And so the process goes on, until at last the mind

and its pictures are transcended and the learner enters and dwells in the World of NO FORM, but of which all forms are narrowed reflections.¹⁸

We can see now the importance of realizing that concepts are only provisory garments of the formless truth; steps which, although necessary at the present moment, have to be left behind if we are to keep moving forward. The difficulty with this is frequently not so much the overestimation of the value of concepts, but rather our inability to suspend judgement and feel comfortable with uncertainty until the time when a new and higher view is formed. Here we are struggling against the very essence of the lower mind, whose main feature is to define things and arrive at conclusions. This is why, for example, there is such a strong tendency in us to make judgements about all kinds of things and situations, even when we obviously have no elements to arrive at an intelligent conclusion. But if we are in earnest, we should strive to rise above the concrete mind to more 'abstract' states of consciousness, that is, states of non definition or non-judgement, whenever necessary. Then, little by little, we begin to build a dwelling place in the worlds of no-form. And it is here, in the silent, formless dimension, that the higher reality lies. ✧

References and Notes

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For a perfect understanding both mind and intuition are needed; the mind to survey the form, its parts and particulars, how energies and processes are coordinated and work; the superior intelligence of intuition to sense, enter into, and know from within the life for which the form exists, its nature and quality.

N. Sri Ram

Do Indian Myths Have a Scientific Basis?

P. KRISHNA

Introduction

According to the dictionary the word 'myth' includes several things:

i) Completely fictional stories conjured up by a writer's imagination. These can obviously have no scientific basis.

ii) Stories about supernatural beings usually based on religious beliefs, often referred to as 'mythology'. These are subjective and vary from culture to culture; therefore they are not universal truths and cannot have a scientific basis.

iii) Extra-sensory perceptions: These are not anti-science and may or may not be subjective. These could be unusual records of observations and may therefore be found subsequently to have a scientific basis and be confirmed as universal truths.

2. The Limitations of Science

Science is our quest for discovering the order that manifests in Nature. We find that Nature is orderly and follows certain laws which relate causes and effects. These laws are believed to be independent of space and time. This means they are

eternal and the same everywhere in the universe. It is the purpose of science to discover these laws and thereby explain the entire development of the universe. We have succeeded to a considerable extent in explaining several observed phenomena on the basis of these assumptions; therefore we believe these assumptions to be true. There has evolved a Standard Model¹ of the evolution of the whole universe starting from the assumption of a Big Bang which occurred some thirteen billion years ago. Most scientists (though not all) accept this model to be more or less true.

There are however, two major gaps in our understanding as it stands today:

i) We do not know how life originated in the dead universe of the Physicist starting from the Big Bang. Scientists have not been able to synthesize in the laboratory a living cell or amoeba starting from only dead chemicals or atoms. Many scientists think that life is an emergent property of matter but we do not really know. After assuming the creation of the first life form

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they do have a reasonable theory of evolution to explain the origin of the myriads of living species that exist today.

ii) We do not know what consciousness is. The scientist uses his consciousness to do his science but his science cannot explain what he is using! To pose this question in a more spectacular way, imagine that a scientist is able to synthesize my body in a chemical laboratory and put every atom in exactly the place it is at present, will he get this living person or only his dead body? Our intuition tells us that most probably he will get only the dead body. What is the difference?

What is the difference between a computer and a human being? Computers have memory; they can think and calculate faster than we can in some ways. Scientists are even programming computers to respond with feelings; but a computer is not AWARE. I am aware of my body, my thoughts and my state of consciousness. Science does not know how awareness arises.

What science knows is nearly certain and has been repeatedly tested; so it is unlikely that anything that is anti-science is true. But there is a lot that is still beyond science. Consciousness phenomena like telepathy and extra-sensory perception are as yet beyond science; but we cannot say that they are unscientific or untrue.

3. The Spiritual Quest

The spiritual quest of humanity is a quest for understanding the way our consciousness functions through observations

and perceptions which are freed from the subjective elements of our personality. We all have within our consciousness both the personal and the universal. The personal are our thoughts and opinions since these are based on our memory and knowledge which in turn are dependant on where we are born and grow up; but pure awareness is not so conditioned and is universal. The spiritual quest is a quest for discovering reality through awareness and direct perception freed of the subjective inputs from our personality (thought and memory).

Unfortunately, in the west, religion has come to be regarded as synonymous with belief and inquiry was suppressed as heresy. In the eastern religions there was belief, worship and ritual but there has also been a long tradition of inquiry into what is true and what is false, what is real and what is illusory. The Buddha pointed out that all sorrow (psychological suffering) is born of illusion and can therefore be ended. This liberation from all illusion is the essence of the spiritual quest.

4. Science and Religion

If we consider religion to be belief, then it has no scientific basis since it is personal and not a universal truth. But if we regard the essence of religion to be the ending of illusion then it is a quest for discovering what is true and what is false. One could also call it unlearning the false through direct perception or insight. A mind that is freed of all illusion perceives 'what is' without any distortion and there-

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fore its perceptions are as objective and universal as those in science. Science and spirituality then become two complimentary quests for discovering reality and there is no contradiction between them. Science is the quest for discovering the order that manifests in the world of space, time, matter and energy and religion becomes the quest for discovering order in consciousness (through the ending of illusion).

All great discoveries, even in science, have been the result of such creative insights beyond the known. How does the human mind discover something totally new which was never known before? The unknown is beyond thought and knowledge (memory). The human consciousness has this capacity for perceiving something beyond the known by making a foray into the unknown and such insights have led to great paradigm shifts² even in science. This is what distinguishes us from computers which have no awareness and therefore no capacity for insight.

Ramanujam³ often 'saw' answers to questions in mathematics without knowing the proof. Einstein perceived the truths of relativity before he proved them mathematically and Beethoven said, 'I do not think out my music' How such perceptions come into consciousness is a great mystery.

5. Extra-sensory perceptions

Since the human consciousness is capable of objective extra-sensory perceptions, these have sometimes led to

unusual discoveries which now seem to be corroborated by scientific investigations. Some examples of these are cited below:

i) The Age of the Universe/earth⁴

In the ancient Hindu scriptures the age of the universe/earth is divided into yugas, which occur cyclically, according to the following scheme:

Kritayuga (Stone-age) 1.728×10^6 years
Tretayuga (Bronze-age) 1.296×10^6 years
Dwaparyuga (Golden-age) 0.864×10^6 years
Kaliyuga (Iron age) 0.432×10^6 years
Total = 1 Mahayuga = 4.320×10^6 years

It further says that 1000 such Mahayugas make 1 Kalpa which is one day in the life of Brahma, the creator. This means

1 Kalpa = 4.32×10^9 years

This value is very close to the present scientific value for the age of the earth which is 4.6×10^9 years and not too far from the present scientific value for the age of the universe which is about 13×10^9 years.

How did those ancient sages come to a figure which is at least of the same order of magnitude? Was it a myth or a perception?

ii) Occult Chemistry: Mrs Annie Besant and Mr C. W. Leadbeater⁵ who were Theosophists working in Adyar, Madras, published a book in 1908 called 'Occult Chemistry' in which they wrote that they placed various minerals in front of them, made themselves smaller than the smallest particles in them and are writing what they actually 'see' as the structure within each

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element. They mentioned that those were 'records of observations' and not a product of their imagination.

The findings reported in this book have been compared with modern scientific knowledge about the structure of the nuclei in various elements and though they do not agree in entirety, there are uncanny parallels between them which have been documented by modern scientists: Arnika⁶, Phillips⁷.

Apparently, there are other means of arriving at truths through extra-sensory perceptions which are not known to us in science. Indeed one of the great modern scientists named Schrödinger who founded Wave mechanics, which was the precursor of modern Quantum Mechanics, studied the Vedas and commented that all thinking ended on the banks of the Ganges and modern science is merely re-discovering what those sages already knew! This may be an exaggeration but it is perhaps not without some grain of truth in it.

iii) The discovery of J. Krishnamurti⁸

In our own times, in the 20th Century, Mr C. W. Leabeater 'saw' an unusual aura (a combination of colours around the brain) of a poor, young, emaciated 13 year old boy named Krishnamurti while he was playing on the sea beach in Madras. From this observation he predicted that this boy has an extremely rare aura with almost no trace of

selfishness in it. He predicted that this boy will become a World Teacher. The boy was adopted by Mrs Besant and brought up in the Theosophical Society. Though the boy was dull and could not pass any examinations, they never changed their mind. The boy later left the Theosophical Society, but he did become a World Teacher. The Buddhists choose a new Dalai Lama in the same way, by locating a boy with a highly developed spiritual consciousness.

Is this based on myth or on perception?

iv) Ayurvedic Herbs & Acupuncture

How did the ancient sages in India discover the effect of various ayurvedic herbs and how did those in China discover Acupuncture? The efficacy of both these is now tested scientifically but the sages did not use scientific double-blind experiments or trial and error to make these discoveries. Were these based on myth or perception?

6. Conclusion

Insights such as these do need to be tested by scientific methods since they can get mixed up with subjective elements in the consciousness, such as desires, ambitions or dreams. But pure insights are perceptions of facts beyond the known and do occur in science, in art, in spirituality and they can be as pure and objective as scientific observations. ✧

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How insensitive we are, how lacking in swift and adequate response, how little free to observe! Without sensitivity, how can there be pliability and a quickening perception; how can there be receptivity, an understanding free of striving? The very striving prevents understanding. Understanding comes with high sensitivity, but sensitivity is not a thing to be cultivated. That which is cultivated is a pose, an artificial veneer; and this coating is not sensitivity, it is a mannerism, shallow or deep according to influence. Sensitivity is not a cultural effect, the result of influence; it is a state of being vulnerable, open.

Sayings of J. Krishnamurti

The Foundation of the Future Religions

KIRAN SHAH

WHEN we look at the subject, a question arises in our mind — in spite of so many religions in the world, do we need another religion?

Most of the present religions were started by the followers of enlightened persons who according to the needs of the time, condition and place, guided the people to the path of virtuous, altruistic and spiritual living that leads to internal peace and happiness, which people have been seeking since time immemorial.

Unfortunately, with the passage of time, their followers, with the weaknesses of the human mind, such as egotism, selfishness and greed for power, divided themselves into groups, sects and creeds.

Some of them, taking advantage of people's fear and ignorance, turned themselves into institutions, amassing huge wealth in the name of doing charitable work. They introduced beliefs, dogmas, rituals, blind faith and superstitions, and preached that theirs is the only religion which would take people to salvation. Enlightened persons after whom the religions were founded never wanted to claim that

theirs was the only path. Mahtma Gandhi used to say that different religions are like different paths leading to the top of a mountain. The fundamental doctrines of all religions are identical in meaning.

It appears that in spite of many religions, humanity has not changed much. History is full of conflicts, wars, terrorism, violence, cruelty, misery, poverty, hunger, and so on. One wonders why human beings want to kill each other with their most sophisticated weapons and why they have invented weapons of mass killing. They enjoy seeing men fighting each other in the boxing ring in the name of sport. In the name of sports, pleasure and medicine, animals are being hunted and killed. Many species of wild animals like the tiger, cheetah, leopard, and rhino are on the endangered and extinction list. It is said that fifty million whales have been killed and are still being killed.

J. Krishnamurti in his public talks, often remarked that for millennia the human mind has not changed. It is the same human mind and the problems faced in different parts of the world are the same.

Mr Kiran Shah is a member of the East African Section of the TS. Talk given at the international Convention, Adyar, 2012.

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With the prevailing situation in the world, it appears that religions have not been able to reduce many problems facing humanity. The teachings and message of Theosophy — oneness of life — gives hope and is the foundation of the future religions. More effort has to be made to make people realize the Brotherhood of humanity. The oneness of all creation — in nature, that is, humans, animals, vegetables, plants and minerals — is a fact and this realization can bring peace and happiness to the world.

Theosophy, the Divine Wisdom, has been in existence since time immemorial, and its foundation is the cornerstone of all religions. More effort is needed to put into the hearts and mind of men that we all are one, sparks of the same divinity, and are all linked together with the golden thread of Divinity. We all come from the same source and our happiness, peace and salvation lies together.

We are like different parts of an orchestra. If the sound coming out of one instrument is not in tune with other musical instruments, it distorts the soothing and melodious music coming from the whole orchestra. A man cannot be safe and happy if all the other people around him are unhappy, suffering from fear, conflicts, terrorism, poverty, hunger and disease. Only by removing inequalities in the world can a lasting peace, happiness and harmony can be found. Since the founding of the Theosophical Society 137 years ago, it has played a very important role in influencing people's thinking. Many years ago very few people used to

talk about Brotherhood. There was class distinction, a feeling of superiority and inferiority. Now the word Brotherhood has become common; and many organizations and people refer to 'Brotherhood'. Theosophy refers to Brotherhood with a deeper meaning.

In 1875, when the Theosophical Society was founded the population of the world was about 1.4 billion and now it is over seven billion, five times an increase in 137 years. The increase in the world population has made a tremendously adverse impact on the environment and natural resources. We are destroying the earth, forests, air and sea on an unprecedented scale. We have no right to destroy the future of our children, the future generation, by exploiting nature on such a large scale. The future religions should also pay special attention to the preservation of the environment and natural resources for the future of humanity and nature.

Our lifestyle has completely changed. We do not get clean and pure nutritious food. Our food contains a lot of chemicals which are harmful to the body. These are passed on to the body through artificially manufactured fertilizers; even though some of them have been banned, they are still used in the developing countries. It is difficult to get even clean air and water. The future religions should embrace the total well-being of people — physically, emotionally and spiritually by emphasizing a pure balanced diet, exercise, yoga, art, music and meditation.

Clara Codd refers in *Theosophy as the Masters See It* to *The Mahatma Letters*

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to A. P. Sinnett. Though this book was written many years ago, the views expressed are very valid today.

Is the Original Inspiration Still Flowing?

The question sometimes arises in the minds of some members as to whether the Masters are still continuing to work through the TS, now that their original agents have passed into life on the other side. The obvious answer to that question is the steady increase in vitality and growth of the Society all over the world. If the Masters had withdrawn their gracious protection of the Society established to do their will on earth, the lifeless body would have finally disintegrated long ago. Always the Masters have their chief link or channel between the Society and themselves.

In one of the letters a Mahatma has stated:

Though separated from your world of action, we are not yet entirely severed from it so long as the Theosophical Society exists.

In another letter it is stated:

The Society will never perish as an institution, although branches and individuals in it may.

Why the Masters Founded the Theosophical Society

We boast of our civilization; we claim that no prior age has ever reached the level of knowledge, discovery, technology and material comfort that ours has reached, and from which it is still advancing. We look down on the ancients, we despise less

‘progressive’ nations, yet in the midst of all our increase of knowledge and invention, luxury and wealth, exist the most hideous human misery, poverty, and disease, and crowning it all, the appalling horror of universal wars, more squalid, more hopeless, more devilish than the imagination of man could have compassed, involving millions of helpless innocent lives. We stand convicted at the bar of eternal justice, and the best brains and heart amongst us are searching anxiously for light in the darkness, for some clue to guide them in the tangled human affairs.

That Brotherhood is the Masters’ leading principle of action and ideal is clear from the following words of the Master:

The term ‘Universal Brotherhood’ is no idle phrase. Humanity in the mass has a paramount claim upon us. Universal Brotherhood is the only secure foundation for universal morality. . . . It is the aspiration of the true adept.

It was gradually to instil this great ideal into human minds, to provide the world with this great principle for *sound* and *efficient action*, that our two great Masters founded the Theosophical Society. Again and again they emphasize the fact that it is to spread their great philosophy, to stir to action for human betterment on these principles that the Society exists; not for helping individuals to acquire occult powers, nor for the production of extraordinary phenomena permitted as these were for a time to draw attention to the movement in the beginning.

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And again the Master says:

Men, who join the society with the one selfish object of reaching power, making occult science their only, or even chief aim, may as well not join it — they are doomed to disappointment. . . . How many times had we to repeat, that he who joins the Society with the sole object of coming in contact with us, and if not of acquiring, at least assuring himself of the reality of such powers and of our objective existence — was pursuing a mirage? I say again then. It is he alone who has the love of humanity at heart, who is capable of grasping thoroughly the idea of a regenerating, practical Brotherhood who is entitled to the possession of our secrets. He alone, such a man — will never misuse his powers, as there will be no fear that he should turn them to selfish ends. A man who places not the good of mankind above his own good is not worthy of becoming our chela — he is not worthy of becoming higher in knowledge than his neighbour . . . We are in the midst of conflicting people, of an obstinate, ignorant people seeking to know the truth, yet not able to find it, for each seeks it only for his own private benefit and gratification without giving one thought to others. Will you, or rather they, never see the true meaning and explanation of the great wreck and desolation which has come to our land and threatens all lands — yours first of all? It is selfishness and exclusiveness that killed ours and it is selfishness and exclusiveness that will kill yours. The world has clouded the light of true knowledge and selfishness

will not allow its resurrection, for it excludes and will not recognize the whole fellowship of all those who were born under the same immutable natural law.

This attitude of mind, conscious, or unconscious, to attain material benefits, honour or money, colours the thought atmosphere of the whole civilized world, and those who would ‘disentangle’ their minds from it and live in a freer, nobler air, acting from deeper and more universal principles, have to put the whole of their individual strength against this united thought-current of materialism of the world. This might seem an almost impossible task, were we not to remember that spiritual power is irresistible and inexhaustible, and that the spiritual centre in each one of us is part of the mighty, ultimately victorious *Whole*, and destined to become ever more and more a channel for the Light.

The Master says:

Thrice fortunate are they who can break through the vicious circle of modern influence and come up above the vapours.

The Masters founded the Theosophical Society as a direct agency in their work for the regeneration and reclamation of the world. They, the embodiments of the Force of Evolution, work for that unceasingly, and at certain intervals decreed by the Hierarchy and in accordance with Karmic law. They send their human agents among us and invite those of us whose inner intuition is sufficiently awake, to cooperate in the humble spheres

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of our own earth-lives, with Them in their mighty endeavours.

The inculcation of these broader, truer principles, and the knowledge of the deeper facts of life upon which they are founded, is the first and paramount duty of the Theosophical Society. For, as a Mahatma has stated:

‘Ideas rule the world’, and, as men’s minds receive new ideas, laying aside the old and effete, the world will advance, mighty revolutions will spring from them; institutions, aye, and even creeds and powers . . . will crumble before their onward march crushed by their own inherent force. . . . It will be just as impossible to resist their influence when the time comes as to stay the progress of the tide.

These principles and the deeper truths of life upon which they are founded, constitute some part of the Ancient Wisdom which used to be taught in the Lesser Mysteries of every Faith and era of the world. And just because they are concerned with such universal and eternal facts of being, they are the deepest practical import to the world at large. It is this view of them which looms paramount in the minds of the Adept Community.

So high an official in the occult Hierarchy which governs this planet as the Maha Chohan very clearly voices the desire of the Adepts that Theosophy shall prove of practical benefit to the masses of mankind. In a letter written by him in 1881, which we might well call the Magna Carta of the Theosophical Society, this great Adept, of whom the Master KH speaks as

‘One to whose insight the future lies like an open page’, says:

For our doctrines to practically react on the so-called moral code or the ideas of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc., we have to popularize the knowledge of Theosophy.

There are four points to be particularly noticed in this one sentence alone:

1. The Master calls the teachings of Theosophy ‘Our doctrines’.
2. He wishes them to have a practical effect.
3. Our moral code He stigmatizes as ‘so-called’.
4. He wishes Theosophy to be made popular.

As far and as widely as possible the Master wishes TS work to spread. He knows humanity’s need, its hunger for truth and light, and teaching.

Yet with the flawless impartiality of the Adept, the Master can see the faults upon the other side too.

As for human nature in general, it is the same now as it was a million of years ago: Prejudice based upon selfishness; a general unwillingness to give up an established order of things for new modes of life and thought — and occult study requires all that and much more — ; pride and stubborn resistance to Truth if it but upsets their previous notions of things, — such are the characteristics of your age, and especially of the middle and lower classes.

The Maha Chohan says that the intellectual portions of mankind seem to

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have been fast drifting into two classes: the one by deliberate surrender of their intellect imprisoning themselves in the narrow grooves of bigotry and superstition, the other unrestrainedly indulging its animal propensities. He says:

These intellectual classes, reaching upon the ignorant masses which they attract, and which look up to them as noble and fit examples to follow, degrade and morally ruin those they ought to protect and guide.

Between degrading superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism, the white dove of truth has hardly room where to rest her weary unwelcome foot.

Thus by the teaching of the multitude, by the gradual infiltration of true and pure ideals, the Masters hope to inaugurate a new social religious era.

All this seems at first sight a gigantic and well-nigh impossible task for the little Theosophical Society to undertake. But we must remember that the crisis of its early probation having passed, the Society will now endure and flourish, going down the centuries which lie ahead of us with ever-increasing stability and power. Its immediate objectives will alter, adapt themselves, and increase, while its main

objects remain ever the same, for behind it is the force and purpose of the Adept world that bless and use it. In another letter it has been stated:

So long as there are three men worthy of our Lord's blessing in the TS, it can never be destroyed.

If the three are loyal to the teachings revealed to them by the Adept Brothers, then the destiny of the Theosophical Society, so decrees the Maha Chohan, is to be:

the cornerstone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity.

One of the foremost of the pioneering bands working for the New Age is the Theosophical Society. The Master KH once called us a 'Forlorn Hope'. He says:

What I mean by the 'Forlorn Hope' is that when one regards the magnitude of the task to be undertaken by our Theosophical volunteers, and especially the multitudinous agencies arrayed, and to be arrayed in opposition we may well compare it to one of those desperate efforts against overwhelming odds that the true soldier glories to attempt. You have done well to see the 'large purpose' in the small beginnings of the TS.

As practical Theosophists, our way is not so much to try to convert a person as to remind him of the truth and awaken the wisdom which is within himself.

C. Jinarājadāsa

A Matter of Attitude

VIRGINIA HANSON

THERE are few human attitudes not touched upon in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. If one persists through the initial difficulties created by the fact that the letters are grouped in the volume under subject headings rather than in sequence, one becomes aware of the power and wisdom, the rocklike truth, which they contain; as well as of that beautiful human quality which adds so much to our conviction of their authenticity. One cannot escape the conclusion that this inexhaustible fountain of spiritual wisdom is the fulfilment of humanness, as (to use a time-worn metaphor) the butterfly becomes a butterfly by successfully completing the caterpillar stage.

To become truly human, and thus to raise — even if imperceptibly — the quality of human consciousness is a task that faces every individual. *The Mahatma Letters* are a rich source of instruction and guidance in carrying out that task. Far from consisting of platitudes and pontifications, they concern the intimate business of living. ‘It is not as a mere addition to the tangled mass of speculation in the world of science’, says the Mahatma KH, ‘that the truths and mysteries of

occultism are being given to you, but for their practical bearing on the interests of mankind.’

Wanting to know is a necessary attitude on our part. One emphasis in the letters which seems particularly important in these times is a clear directive to study and explore, and to act on the new insights we have gained. This does not mean just reading the books, although that is essential, for we need to know what the theosophical world view is if we are to do our part in making it available to others. But most importantly it means to study the philosophy as it applies to life itself. And here we find hints in many statements in *The Mahatma Letters*. If we test these hints we find that they meet the test of living in an almost uncanny way.

We know that we have not yet been given the whole of the occult knowledge. Again and again the Mahatmas say that some truths cannot yet be revealed. Perhaps, in part, this is because there is no language with which to communicate some of the truths of the spirit and of nature in terms that would be comprehensible to us, as we could not find language to explain to a child in kindergarten, for instance,

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some of the knowledge we possess as adults. Some of it is without language in any case. It is no new statement that truth has to be discovered by each of us individually through study and experience.

As the Mahatma KH says at one point, 'It was never the intention of the occultists really to conceal what they have been writing from the earnest determined students, but rather to lock up their information for safety-sake, in a secure safe-box, the key to which is — intuition.' This kind of knowledge, then, comes only through direct insight, which can be tested by experience, not through passive acceptance of anything and everything we are told, even by a Mahatma. It has to be real to us. They insist upon this.

'Some of the highest secrets', says the Mahatma KH, '. . . might sound to you insane gibberish. . . . This is the real cause of our reticence. In the same letter, he comments: 'The truth is that till the neophyte attains to the condition necessary for that degree of illumination to which, and for which he is entitled and fitted, most *if not all* of the Secrets are incommunicable. . . . The illumination must come from within.' The American sage, Ralph Waldo Emerson, echoes this concept in his essay on 'Spiritual Laws': 'We are shielded evermore from premature ideas. Our eyes are holden so that we cannot see what lies all about us until mind is ripened, then we see, and the time when we did not see is like a dream.'

This is not to say that every new and deeper insight is necessarily, or even possibly, final, or that there will not be

other and deeper realizations. We do not know the depths of ourselves or what future light might be yielded from those depths. The moment of comprehension may not coincide with the deep pondering of some truth; it may come later in a sudden flash of knowing. But perhaps we had to be in some way made ready to receive that knowing.

Thinking and knowing seem to be two different aspects of the intuitional experience, different but intimately related. Thinking is a process, even when we are thinking so deeply that we are not aware that we are thinking, which is meditation. Knowing is not a process; it is a miniature absolute. It is the clear awakening to the reality of some truth of which we have not previously been aware. It has a quality of wholeness, of all-at-onceness. Whether the thinking leads to the knowing, or the knowing draws the thinking is one of those subtle questions to which we perhaps cannot yet know the answer. It is totally an inner experience.

'The world — meaning that of individual existences —', says the Mahatma KH 'is full of those latent meanings and deep purposes which underlie all the phenomena of the Universe, and Occult Sciences — i.e., *reason* elevated to supersensuous Wisdom — can alone furnish the key wherewith to unlock them in the intellect. Believe me, there comes a moment in the life of an Adept, when the hardships he has passed through are a thousandfold rewarded . . . [he] is accorded an instantaneous implicit insight into every first truth. . . . Absorbed in the

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absolute self-consciousness of the *physical Self* . . . above care, above sorrow, above sin and worldliness . . . such is the culmination of the *Spiritual Wisdom*.’

Obviously we cannot reach this state without individual effort — the ‘self-induced and self-devised effort’ mentioned in the Third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky. Again, attitude is all-important. We do not sit slackly expecting spiritual truths to fall like plums into our laps. Spiritual, like physical, muscles atrophy if they are not exercised.

Again, the Mahatma comments: ‘. . . nor are we especially anxious to have anyone work for us except with entire spontaneity. We want true and unselfish hearts, fearless and confiding souls.’

The use of the word ‘confiding’ in this context is somewhat puzzling. We know that both of the Mahatmas who engaged in correspondence with the two Englishmen, A. P. Sinnett and A.O. Hume, occasionally used words in a way slightly different from our own usage. Also, as pointed out several times, the letters were frequently dictated to Chelas not entirely familiar with the English language. My own feeling here is that the intended word is ‘confident’: fearless and *confident* souls, a necessary attitude if we are to go forward. This may be incorrect, but it seems more meaningful and more in consonance with the general tenor of comments by the Mahatmas.

At one time the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society found itself in great difficulties when Mrs Anna Kingsford

was serving as its President and the question of her attitudes arose. The Mahatma KH commented on her ‘latent sense of Messiahship’ and warned that if this was encouraged, ‘you will have obstructed the cause of free and general independent inquiry’ which we wish to see promoted.

This says clearly enough that the Mahatmas do not ask for blind acceptance of any teaching, but rather that we think for ourselves; that we weigh even *their* comments, taking them before the bar of our inmost sense of truth; that we study without fear and hesitation; that we know what is going on in the thought world, and that we evaluate according to our own best judgement. Someone has said, ‘Live as though you were going to die tomorrow; study as though you were going to live forever’ — a valuable attitude. This is not simply to encourage amassing a multitude of facts. The information explosion in the world today is already overwhelming. Facts are meaningless, sterile, until we have done something with them in that inner chamber of our being where truth and untruth stand revealed. Nor should we fear to challenge a fact. It will be remembered that Albert Einstein said that he challenged every axiom until he knew whether or not it spoke truth to him. And his insights have tremendously enriched and illumined the consciousness of humankind.

Whether or not we realize it, we are agents of evolution. That may come about by natural processes, so far as the physical evolution of the planet is concerned. But intellectual and spiritual evolution come

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only through the mind and spirit of the beings who inhabit the planet. This is the realm of activity, of purposefulness, which must find expression through us as members of the human family. Our attitudes, our intentions, our discrimination, play basic roles in such development. Every individual, not just members of the Theosophical Society, carries the same seed. Through the past century — a watershed century in evolution — this seed has been especially productive. In spite of the appalling evil in the world, in spite of the influences which seem to be moving humanity in the opposite direction, evidence keeps cropping up that a spiritual awakening of considerable magnitude is well under way. So hungry for this awakening is humankind that sometimes it lacks discrimination concerning what steps to take. It is not easy to separate the wheat from the chaff. But it seems, too, that where there is true and genuine aspiration the truth reveals itself sooner or later. We have to do something about our awakened souls.

Another example comes to us from the situation in the London Lodge which was of such concern to the Mahatmas. This was at a time when a kind of underlying antagonism seemed to exist between A. P. Sinnett and Mrs Kingsford in the matter of the presidency of the Lodge. ‘Antagonism’ is not precisely the right word; it was more a confrontation between two strong individuals with different attitudes and with opposing ideas of methods — a confrontation which perhaps was not met with the wisdom and

understanding which would have resolved it more quickly.

Mrs Kingsford and Mr Sinnett are both useful, wrote the Mahatma KH, ‘both needed and appreciated by our revered Chohan and Master — just because they are the *two* poles calculated to keep the whole body in magnetic harmony, as the judicious disposal of both will make an excellent middle ground to be attained by no other means; one correcting and equilibrizing the other . . .’

Difficulties arise when one energy denies the right of another to exist. But even the disturbance was better, said the Mahatma, ‘than the old paralytic calm’. The views of the two (*minus* the details) were identical. ‘Let the members . . .’, said the Mahatma, ‘resolutely try to live down the unpopularity which all esoteric teaching and all reform are sure to attract at the outset and they will succeed.’

A little further along in the same letter, the Mahatma says: ‘It is only in the absence of this generous consideration that even the faintest shadow of difference arms seekers after the same truth, otherwise earnest and sincere, with the scorpion-whip of hatred against their brothers, equally sincere and earnest.’ It is always useful to examine one’s own attitude in such a situation.

Then comes a rather surprising statement:

Deluded victims of distorted truth, they forget, or never knew, that discord is the harmony of the Universe . . . each part, as in the glorious *fugue* . . . ceaselessly

A Matter of Attitude

chases the other in harmonious discord on the paths of Eternal progress to meet and finally blend at the threshold of the pursued goal into one harmonious whole, the keynote in nature . . . Every . . . Theosophist should learn and remember, especially those . . . who would be our followers — that in our Brotherhood, all personalities sink into one idea-abstract right and absolute practical justice for all.

No one can read the *Mahatma Letters* without becoming aware that even the Mahatmas do not always agree among themselves with respect to methods, although they are one with respect to principles.

‘Know then, my friend’, says the Mahatma KH, ‘that though we may differ in methods we can never be opposed in *principles* of action, and the broadest and most practical application of the idea of the Brotherhood of Humanity is not incompatible with your dream of establishing a nucleus of honest scientific enquirers of good repute . . . who would serve as a shield against the ferocious and idiotic attack of the skeptics and materialists. A united, purposeful attitude is certainly essential here.

In another letter, the Mahatma comments: ‘We never . . . quarrel.’ They leave that behaviour ‘to those who, unable to take in a situation at a glance, are thereby forced before making up their final deci-

sion to . . . analyze and weigh one by one, and over and over again every detail’.

How often do we find ourselves bogged down in all this weighing and analysing, however inevitable this may be — and however useful at times — at our stage in evolution. We can never know the whole of any situation and often could not explain it even if we knew it! What, then, should be our attitude?

‘You must know and remember one thing’, the Mahatma KH maintains early in the correspondence, ‘we but follow and *servilely copy nature* in her work.’ It seems that, in some of the statements quoted, the Mahatma is saying simply: ‘This is the way it is. Live it — if you can.’ There is no denying that it is rugged; it is undoubtedly the most difficult task we have ever attempted. Fortunately, we do not have to meet it all at once. Time itself is a mystery and a paradox, but nature is generous in allowing it to us, along with repeated opportunities to meet and deal with situations as they arise.

Probably we cannot do better, in considering some of the statements made by the Mahatmas in their letters, than to remember the last message received by A. P. Sinnett. It sums up what should be the triumphant attitude of every true aspirant, and it is surely said in all truth to each:

‘Courage, patience, and hope, my Brother.’ ✧

There is one Mind. It is absolutely omnipresent, giving mentality to all things.

Giordano Bruno

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

IT is by means of tranquillity of mind that you are able to transmute this false mind of death and rebirth into the clear Intuitive Mind and, by so doing, to realize the primal and enlightening Essence of Mind. You should make this your starting point for spiritual practices. Having harmonized your starting point with your goal, you will be able by right practice to attain your true end of perfect Enlightenment.

If you wish to tranquillize your mind and restore its original purity, you must proceed as you would do if you were purifying a jar of muddy water. You first let it stand, until the sediment settles at the bottom, when the water will become clear, which corresponds with the state of the mind before it was troubled by defiling passions. Then you carefully strain off the pure water . . . When the mind becomes tranquillized and concentrated into perfect unity, then all things will be seen, not in their separateness, but in their unity, wherein there is no place for the passions to enter, and which is in full conformity with the mysterious and indescribable purity of Nirvāna.

Surangama Sutra

Our Gift to the Future

DIANNE K. KYNASTON

IN Eastern Philosophy and Theosophical Teachings we have the twin concepts of Karma and Dharma, the Law of Cause and Effect, and Duty or the Law.

Most of the time we tend to look at Karma from a personal perspective: When events happen around us we tend to say it is either ‘good or bad karma’, but of course karma itself does not have such qualities; it is our own perspective that colours it. We also tend to see it as ‘instant karma’ or else as ‘karma from actions in another life’ and of course this may be so, but there is a much broader view of karma.

We, as individuals, are part of humanity, and part of the Being which is Earth — Nature constructs us and flows through us constantly. Therefore, everything we do affects the Whole, *all of the time*, and this creates both the present and the future.

Dharma can be seen as the duty we have, to fulfil our particular lot in life — the Law that moulds and constrains us within certain parameters of our place and time of birth. However, it can also be expressed as the pattern of our life; the qualities we are to acquire through the efforts of living. It seems to me that a large part of our dharma is to develop new

qualities and skills or to bring to a fuller expression capacities we have been working on for a number of lives.

Ianthe Hoskins once replied when asked ‘Who am I?’, ‘You are an unrepeatable experiment in the evolution of consciousness.’ Each one of us is unique in who and what we are, and it is this gift of our uniqueness that we have to give to the whole.

In living our individual lives we are fulfilling our dharma and creating and working through our karma. The effects of each life resonate not only in our current world but well into the future.

We can research through historic documents and look at the lives of the famous and powerful, and recognize the long-term effects of their lives. However, it is not just in the big acts but also in the smallest of actions that long-term effects resonate throughout time and space.

Warrior leaders such as Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar, may have been brilliant military tacticians, but they were still reliant on the skills and stamina of their men to win their battles. Philosophers such as Plato and Pythagoras certainly set new keynotes in the way we think and

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view life, but the continuance of their body of knowledge is still dependent on the students and scholars who kept their teachings alive and vital throughout the ages.

During the past twelve months I have been exploring the life of a Chinese Buddhist monk named Xuan Zang who lived in the seventh century. He was a very scholarly monk who realized that the Buddhist Teachings he had access to in China were both incomplete and often badly translated, so he set off on an incredible journey to India to find the source of the Mahāyāna Teachings. This journey took over sixteen years to complete, and he covered something like 10,000 miles, travelling through many kingdoms and interfacing with many people. When he returned to China he spent the rest of his life translating and teaching, so one could say that this was his dharma — to enrich the Buddhist Teachings of China.

However the kārmic consequences of his life are still resonating in the world today. The Emperor commanded him to write the story of his epic journey, which was published as '*Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*', and this book is still in print today. Through it the Chinese learnt of the world outside their strongly guarded kingdom, and historians, even to this day, still use the knowledge he gathered on the kingdoms of Central Asia, and the subcontinent of India.

A good example of this is the Buddhist world of India which flourished for many centuries, with many monasteries, temples and sacred sites. However, most of this was lost due to the various invasions of

the Middle Ages by Persians from the west and Mongolians from the north. It was not until the eighteenth century when a British officer started exploring a strange mound outside Varanasi and discovered that it was a sacred Buddhist site, that he was then to explore further the Buddhist world of India.

This he did, using the travel notes of Xuan Zang, who had described in detail the various sacred centres he had visited. Today a temple dedicated to Xuan Zang stands near the site of the ruins of the Nalanda University.

There are many other areas where the kārmic consequences of the life of Xuan Zang can be measured, but one in particular is in the area of culture. His life inspired not only the practitioners of Buddhism, but he became part of the cultural life of China, with many poems, plays, songs and artwork written about him. In the sixteenth century a poet named Wu Cheng'en wrote a book called *Hsi Yu Chi*, 'The Journey West', which is a mythical story of a monk, Tripitaka, who goes to India to obtain the Buddhist Teachings under the guidance and protection of the goddess Kwan Yin. She provides him with four companions — beings who had already entered heaven, but had behaved so badly that they were thrown back to earth in semi-animal forms. These were the dragons that became his horse, Pigsy, Sandy and Monkey. This book is one of the four major classic books of China, and is still widely read, not just in China but throughout the world. However, in the West it became particularly well known through a Japanese television

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series called *Sayuki* but known in the West as 'Monkey'.

The Dharma of Xuan Zang is still having kārmic consequences resonating throughout the world, thirteen centuries after he lived. Chinese author, Sun Shuyun, was so fascinated by the life of Xuan Zang that she set off on her own epic journey to India, following as best she could the route he took. Her book, *Ten Thousand Miles Without a Cloud*, provides both a record of the two journeys as well as many insights into Buddhist Teachings.

In more recent history we can see that the actions of various people have changed the world we live in. Their actions started off as small events, but were soon magnified into actions that reverberated through the lives of many people.

In the 1950s, in the USA, the Civil Rights Movement for Black Americans was smouldering, but it was not until one woman, Rosa Parks, took one simple action in her life that the flame of the Civil Rights Movement began to burn intensely. In the southern states, Black Americans were segregated from the Whites in public places, schools, and even on buses. White people sat in the front and Blacks at the back, and if more white people boarded the bus the driver would ask the Black people to vacate their seats for the Whites. Rosa Parks, who was simply on her way home from work, decided to refuse to move, a simple act of defiance in the face of racism. She was eventually removed from the bus and arrested for 'civil disobedience', and even though she was not the first person to resist bus

segregation, the NAACP organizers believed Parks was the best candidate for seeing through a court challenge, and as a result the insidious nature of segregation was highlighted. It still took a number of years for segregation to be removed from the southern community (under the regime of the Kennedys). However, when Rosa died in 2005, her funeral was attended by many people in high places, including Oprah Winfrey and Condoleezza Rice, who at the time was the Secretary of State, one of the highest positions in the land. She stated that she would not be where she is today if it were not for that one simple action of defiance by Rosa Parks. The US Congress has called Rosa 'The First Lady of Civil Rights'.

Between 1983 and 1985 Ethiopia and other areas of northern Africa suffered a terrible drought which resulted in widespread famine and death. A BBC reporter photographed the tragedy and aired his documentary on BBC television. Rock singer, Bob Geldof, was so moved by the plight of the starving people that he said: 'I've got to do something about this', and he did. The work he did, to not only gather funds to feed the starving but to arouse compassion on a global scale and make us all feel responsible for those in need, has been well documented. But it was not a 'one off' event. Bob continues to work for this cause, and has inspired many other people to take global action for many different issues.

On the political front we have Mahatma Gandhi, who was inspired by Theosophical Teachings to demand National Independence for India, not

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through violent confrontation, but by passive resistance. His actions have been of great inspiration to many peacemakers in the world. Such an example is Aung Sun Suu Kyi of Myanmar, who took a passive stance against the military regime of Myanmar, encouraging her followers not to 'fight' the soldiers who attacked them. It has taken twenty years of resistance, but Aung Sun has now succeeded — she is now free and elected into the government.

Another great peacemaker is Nelson Mandela of South Africa, who started his life as a warrior, fighting violently against apartheid for which he spent many years in gaol. However, on his release he re-entered the fight for the freedom of his people, not through violent action, but through peaceful negotiation.

The gift that each of these three people have given the world is the example of how to deal with confrontational issues without anger or resentment, but with love and harmony. They are not perfected beings, and so may have frailties of the personality. However, the kārmic resonances they have initiated will reverberate not just in current times, but well into the future, and will provide shining examples for all freedom fighters.

In the current world today, we are inundated with the many facets of the world on the internet, which has many good aspects and a certain amount of bad aspects. One of the great features, though, is the amazing way it links people together, all around the world. One organization I am connected with through the internet is Avaaz, (a word that means 'voice' in

several languages). Avaaz calls for people to sign petitions via e-mail on a great range of issues, from social to environmental, and now has over seventeen million people from 194 nations linked into its petition network.

A recent successful petition was to support Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan in her struggle for the rights of the education of girls. The petition of 886,000 was presented to President Zardari, who himself signed the petition, and he has now approved the funding to get three million more children into school in Pakistan.

This event shows how the actions of one teenage girl can bring about change and how providing people not only with information but with an avenue through which they can voice their concerns can actually change the world. Often, when one signs the petition a box is displayed on the screen showing who else is signing, and their country, within seconds of your own signature, making you aware that many people are having the same response as you. Our thought-forms are being interlinked in an activity which will contribute to solving world problems.

Our Theosophical Teachings tell us that being Human is about developing the Mind. We have to move away from a process of thinking that is based on instinct and reaction and move into a state of thinking that encompasses the broad spectrum of All the Life that is around us. This quality of thinking is the Gift Humanity has to provide to the Evolution of Life.

However, for the individual the gift is

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the essence of his/her own essential nature — the skills and qualities we develop and share with all around us. This is our Dharma or Duty — to develop to the best of our ability our own individual uniqueness which we give to the whole. Our Karma is the resonance of fulfilling our Dharma, a resonance which echoes not only around our own individual world, but throughout both the time and space of Life on Planet Earth.

So remember, every thought we have, every emotion we feel, every action we take, is moulding the world of tomorrow.

Let us all give, both heartily and happily, of our own inherent uniqueness, as we explore all the possibilities of being human in this incredible world. For as Ianthe Hoskins said, each life is unrepeatable, and each life is an experiment, but we are all part of that amazing process called ‘The Evolution of Consciousness’.

What we need to experience, and can experience, is a saner and gentler state of mind. This experience is not something found outside of us. We must work with ourselves and on ourselves. Every step forward is an extension of consciousness and a transformation of consciousness. For every birth, a death is required and the great arc of life, even in a single incarnation, contains many rebirth moments if we are willing to face and to endure the countless deaths the little self must experience if it would become transformed into the vehicle of the One Self.

Give up thy life if thou wouldst live...

Is a message found in every tradition that speaks of the journey of transformation.

Joy Mills

Books of Interest

THE DALAI LAMA'S CAT, by David Michie, Hay House India, 2013, pp. 218.

'The true cause of happiness is the sincere wish to give happiness to others and help free them of all forms of dissatisfaction.' This, the definition of love and compassion, is the underlying thread of this book, together with the importance of applying it in every thought, word and deed.

The Dalai Lama's Cat, a fictitious novel, is a delightful story told from a cat's viewpoint — a privileged cat blessed with opportunities to learn deep spiritual lessons from its position in the Dalai Lama's household. Through its beautiful blue eyes, we are permitted a glimpse of the Dalai Lama's residence and office rooms, of the bantering cooperation of the people who work there and of the compassion and wisdom of His Holiness himself. Page by page we are led to appreciate the special relationship that develops between an undernourished kitten rescued from death in the slums of New Delhi and the Dalai Lama, who is one of the world's best known spiritual leaders.

'How do I describe the first moment of being in the presence of His Holiness?' asks the kitten, and answers it thus: '... you become aware that your own true nature is one of boundless love and compassion.'

In a gentle lesson on loving kindness, His Holiness remarks to one of his visitors: 'Professor, this stray kitten and you have one very important thing in common ...

Your life is the most important thing in the world to you ... Same for this kitten.'

Through the struggles of the little cat, torn between its natural worldly tendencies towards envy, greed, vanity and so on, and the inner urge to rise to sublime spiritual heights; and through its observations of human nature during its exploratory peregrinations into the surrounding areas and town, and revealed also by the many visitors seeking His Holiness' audience — film stars, academicians, businessmen *et al*; we are made aware of our own contradictions and weaknesses, our own successes and tumbles from the spiritual ladder. 'Sometimes our instinct, our negative condition, can be overpowering,' says the Dalai Lama. 'Later we regret very much what we have done. But that is no reason to give up on yourself — the buddhas, they have not given up on you. ... learn from your mistake and move on.'

Of particular interest is the description of a meeting between His Holiness and another great Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, wherein we are given an entertaining lesson on the undesirability of reacting to changes in our circumstances. Reaction is termed by them as 'egocentric melodrama'!

The Dalai Lama's Cat is a tender story, told with humour and lightness, and abounding with lessons of significance to help all of us on the spiritual path on our way.

SUBHA NILAKANTA

Theosophical Work around the World

Africa East and Central

The 46th Theosophical Convention of East and Central African Section was organized from 17 to 19 May 2013 at Blavatsky Hall, Nairobi. About 55 delegates including members from Tanzania, Zambia and Uganda, attended the convention. The Convention theme: 'Integrity and Moral Values in Today's World'. Prof. Yashpal Ghai delivered the keynote address. Lady Chief Justice Kalpana Raval gave a impressive talk. The General Secretary, and the Asst. GS of Kenya Nairobi lodge organized this successful convention.

Italy

The 99th Congress of the Italian Theosophical Society took place in Aosta, from 24-26th May 2013. The theme was 'Karma and Theosophical Commitment'. The outgoing General Secretary of the Italian Theosophical Society was re-elected with 96% of the votes for the year 2013 to 2016.

India — Bhowali Study Camp

The premises at Bhowali is now ready for organizing study camps in the renovated building complex with all facilities. Bharat Samaj Pooja was performed in the new Building Hall by Dr T. K. Nair and Bro. S. M. Umakanth Rao on 11 May 2013, followed by the meeting of the Executive

Committee of the Indian Section 11-12 May. Rajayoga Retreat was held from 14-16 May, directed by Prof. C. A. Shinde and attended by twenty-seven members.

Two Study Camps were conducted in Bhowali. Dr N. C. Ramanujachary, Jt. General Secretary directed the first study camp from 20 to 26 May 2013 on the theme 'New Radiance in Divine Reflection'. Nineteen members attended. The second study camp was directed by Bro. P. K. Jayaswal, National Lecturer on 'Atmavidya'.

Federation Centenary

The Centenary celebration of Kerala Theosophical Federation was held at Trichur, the cultural capital of Kerala from 25 to 26 May, 2013. The General Secretary of the Indian Section gave the Inaugural Address on the theme of the Conference 'Theosophy — The Dawn of Renaissance' and delivered a public lecture on 'The Essence of Revolution'. The programme also included short lectures on the impact of the Theosophical movement in Kerala in hundred years in various fields like Education, Literature, Religion and Culture. In the afternoon delegates' session, Questions and Answers was held. A special session was also devoted to celebrate the 125th anniversary of *The Secret Doctrine*, the magnum opus of H. P. Blavatsky. A special centenary Souvenir was released on the occasion. ✧

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