

A VISION OF FREE INDIA — IS IT A MIRAGE?

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(Summary of Public Lecture delivered on 27.12.2012)

The possible answer to the query appears to have been given by Annie Besant in her Autobiography (1908), wherein she said: *The acknowledged success of the 'great wave of spiritual life of which the Theosophical Society is the crest' is that the 'revival of old faiths has brought with it a new self-respect, a pride in the past, a belief in the future, and, as an inevitable result, a great wave of patriotic life, the beginning of the rebuilding of a nation'*. A century later we face the same dilemma. The fundamental duties of every citizen enumerated in article 51A of the Constitution remind us that we are duty-bound *'to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom'* that realized Annie Besant's faith in the rebuilding of our nation to attain independence.

The Free India visualized during the freedom struggle came to be encapsulated as the Constitutional promise in the directive principles of State policy

which contain the principles fundamental to build a welfare State. Formulated prior to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and later influenced by the US Bill of Rights and the Irish Constitution, there is consistency between the constitutional rights in free India and those envisaged in International Human Rights Law which recognize and reaffirm the global perspective of human rights. At the concluding session of the Constituent Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad prophesied:

'Whatever the Constitution may or may not provide, the welfare of the country will depend upon the way in which the country is administered. That will depend upon the men who administer it It requires men of strong character, men of vision, men who will not sacrifice the interest of the country at large.... We can only hope that the country will throw up such men in abundance.'

Alas, the current scene suggests that the hope is belied!

Amartya Sen echoed that sentiment in 'The Idea of Justice' saying:

'There is no automatic guarantee of success by the mere existence of democratic institutions. . . . The working of democratic institutions, like all other institutions, depends on the activities of human agents in utilizing opportunities for reasonable realization. . . .'

Governance by the rule of law envisages projection of the fundamental principles implicit in that doctrine. Public law enforces performance by public authorities of their public duties. This is the concept of legal control of government under the rule of law, which is the bedrock of democracy. This is firmly entrenched in our constitutional philosophy as an indestructible basic feature.

The goal of free India is the talisman of Mahatma Gandhi who indicated that the acid test of public duty to *'wipe every tear from every eye'*. Jawaharlal Nehru in his emotional speech on the freedom at midnight reeking with national fervor promised to keep the *'tryst with destiny'* and to redeem the pledge substantially. That pledge was made on behalf of all generations of 'We the People of India'.

The current scene is far removed from the Free India envisioned during the freedom struggle. Gurcharan Das in *The Difficulty of Being Good* compares the dilemmas of modern life with those in the episodes of the epic Mahabharata. These indicate that the duty of the good is to act positively and not to remain a passive spectator of evil, and rightly question Bheeshma's inertia when Draupadi was being disrobed, under the

mistaken belief that he was bound by the promise to the Kauravas to be with them. Edmund Burke had also said that nothing more is required for the evil to succeed than for the good to do nothing. The current scene appears a repetition of a similar inertia.

In particular, two areas need specific mention. One is the growing intolerance with arrogance of those in power or with pelf who consider themselves to be above the rule of law; and the other is the rampant corruption with vulgar display of the ill-gotten wealth. The right to freedom of speech of the common man is seriously eroded if it offends the powerful, generating an atmosphere of fear without declaration of Emergency. The threat to the inclusive democratic polity must be arrested forthwith.

The reaction to rampant corruption in public life has resulted in a crusade against it mobilizing the public anger. The means adopted by a section of civil society with no accountability in this crusade is also becoming undemocratic. The frustration of the common man is seen to support even these means. Democratic polity is under threat from this reaction as well, which tends to devalue the democratic national institutions. People taking to the streets could lead to anarchy.

It is no satisfaction that the GNP level has raised or that there are many among the richest in the world, when a large population in the country continues to suffer destitution and indignity. It negates the constitutional promise of an egalitarian ethos with distributive justice. If we fail here, all talk of

honouring the constitutional promise would only sound a verbal jugglery and hypocrisy. These trends need to be reversed. The progress made in certain fields in spite of the malaise indicates the unutilized true potential available to realize the dream of Free India.

The constitutional vision to be realized and preserved needs a vigilant 'People', who perform their participatory role in the governance of a democratic polity. This statement is based on the profound exhortation in Aristotle's *Politics* who writes, '*To live by the rule of the Constitution ought not to be regarded as slavery, but rather as salvation.*'

One clear message is for the good to do their duty and prevent or undo a wrong whenever necessary. Faithful adherence with commitment to the values in the fundamental duties is the remedy to overcome the cynicism and frustration set in the civil society. To realize the vision of Free India, we have to honour the advice of Mahatma Gandhi: 'Be the change you want to see in the world.'

The object and work of the Theosophical Society has been towards this

direction. The need is to accelerate that work. This method is of lasting impact and consistent with the democratic ethos, as against any extra-constitutional or undemocratic means of devaluing the democratic institutions.

To convert the mirage in the desert into an oasis, the vision of Free India encapsulated in the constitutional promise must be realized with the means indicated — Renaissance of Values, which is the constitutional mandate and also theosophical philosophy. The answer to the problem was given by Annie Besant a century back (1908) that the 'great wave of spiritual life of which the Theosophical Society is the crest' and the 'wave of patriotic life' is the solution. The debate can be resolved by every citizen practising their fundamental duty 'to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom.' Renewal and honour of the pledge to realize the constitutional rights of every citizen, by every citizen, would be a fitting tribute to the memory and contribution of Annie Besant.

RECEPTION

The reception was held at 3.30 p.m. near Administration Building open area on 26th December 2012, an opportunity for informal meetings with old and new brothers from India and Overseas. All the delegates moved freely, enjoying snacks and tea as well as having group photos in cheerful mood and realized what was said in President's message.— 'It is important to come together, and meet each other informally in the right spirit'. This will enable us to feel the spiritual atmosphere and vibrancy of the Convention.



Number of delegates registered by noontime on Tuesday, 28 December: 1168

THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

The Internet presence of the TS in America is said to be growing. The General Secretary says: 'It is common knowledge today that the internet is a premier research tool for the global population.' This information is not exactly correct because there are countries in the poor regions which do not have the facilities of the American Section and therefore it is not correct to say that the internet presence is the most notable area of growth.

It has also been stated that the TSA has been working with other National Sections in North, Central and South America. The TS in America has developed some material in the Spanish language which is a good thing. Mr David Bruce is working with several provisional study centres. It is reported that *The Secret Doctrine* has enabled, through its symposium in the Section, to increase membership by 105%. The symposium is intended to continue for two years. The lady in charge of the 'Member Services Department' reports that the downward trend in membership seems to have levelled out. The total was 3357.

The Department of Information has been successful in recruiting volunteers from the local community. The Department of Education continues to help prisoners for various courses, using Wallace Slater's *Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga* manuals. They have 197 audio-visual programmes, twelve of which have been added this year. They have a video programme with His Holiness

the Dalai Lama, which adds to their pleasant compilation. They continue to encourage branches and study centres. The Olcott Memorial Library has gone through a major transition in staffing. Its doors have been opened to children, and young students from some schools have been visiting. The Archives Department continues to answer requests. On Thursday evenings a lecture series is arranged by web-casting many of these. They hope to have the possibility of reaching national and international audiences. The activities of the Olcott Drama Troupe and the Order of the Round Table, also work to communicate involvement and study.

On the whole we can say that the American Section has taken on new life with the new General Secretary, Mr Tim Boyd. Quest Books has also exhibited at the American Library Associations Conference at Arnheim and also at some of the other book distribution centres. The Quest journal continues to be published on a quarterly basis and provides a lively forum for discussion. The Maintenance Department has undertaken many improvement projects. On the whole, members seem to be happy about changes that have been made.

The Italian Section is the largest of the Sections in Europe with more than a thousand members. In fact, this year we are bringing your attention to the Sections which have really good membership first, and later to the others. The

Italian General Secretary quotes from the conclusion of *At the Feet of the Master*: 'The wisdom which enables you to help, the will which directs the wisdom, the love which inspires the will — these are your qualifications. Will, Wisdom and Love are the three aspects of Logos; and you who wish to enroll yourselves to serve Him, must show forth these aspects in the world'. They try to do that. They say that Universal Brotherhood without any distinction is and will always be the Pole Star on the path towards awareness. There are thirty-six groups and sixteen centres which have some members' meetings only and some other public talks. In big cities the Italian Section owns seats in libraries, and elsewhere meetings are held in rented places or private houses. An important role is played by the website, which is constantly updated and has at present about 3000 viewers. The Section publishes the monthly magazine *Rivista Italiana di Teosofia*, which is printed in 1300 copies. The monthly newsletter is sent via e-mail to about 2000 contacts, chosen for their interest in Theosophy even if they are not members. During the last year the following books were published in translation: *Esoteric Christianity*, *The Seven Principles of Man*, *The Voice of the Silence* and Annie Besant's *Reincarnation*, all of which have been in high demand. A traditional Spring seminar took place in March 2012 at the Congress Centre of a hotel in Rome. The Mayor of the city sent a messenger with greetings. In April a seminar was

organized in collaboration with the Swiss theosophical body in Ascona, Switzerland. Some representatives of the Swiss Section attended the Latin Countries Summer School organized at Naarden by the Belgian Section.

An important seminar was arranged on Art and Theosophy at Grado with several Italian academicians present. The Section has always tried to maintain a connection with Adyar.

A Cuban report says that they had their annual Convention on the theme 'The Mahatma Letters and the Theosophical Movement'. The Section lost the presence of Mr Gaspar Torres who is now in Krotona. Ms Barbara A. Farinas Pina is the present General Secretary. The studies of the Lodges are as usual on theosophical subjects. They continue to celebrate Adyar Day and White Lotus Day. They are going to submit a national decision to the international Society to optionally change the word 'religion' in the motto to the word 'dharma', which they find is more meaningful.

The English Section has seen the first fall in membership in eight years. They are attempting to reverse this trend. This year's Summer School, it is said, was again a great success. The Blavatsky Lecture was given by Mrs Erica Georgiadis from the Greek Section, who spoke on the Olympian Ideal of Universal Brotherhood. The School was apparently very inspiring. Lodges across the country are working hard.

There are four lodges in Slovenia, all of which have regular meetings. One new member was added. It was decided to dedicate this year particularly to

brotherhood and harmony and all the lodges can become living fires shining to members in the world. The lodges continue studies in the path of occultism, and all TS memorial days were attended by members. All the members gathered on the 16th February despite it being the coldest winter of the year. The Summer School went off well with about thirty members attending. Two mini schools were held: 'Understanding' and 'Annie Besant — Great Servant of Humanity'. Krishnamurti's talk 'On Knowing One-self' was also screened. The annual gathering was held in Celje and four public lectures were given by Mrs Damjana Gec. They continue to give financial support to the Social Welfare Centre in Adyar.

In Austria there are three lodges with fifty-six members and all the lodges conduct weekly lectures on one of the theosophical classics. Members regularly receive the Adyar magazine. In the Austrian annual meeting Mr Albert Schichl was elected as the Organizing Secretary.

The Icelandic section has conducted weekly talks on Fridays and Saturdays from October 2011 to May 2012. In total forty-six meetings were held this year. The talks were printed in the newspaper free of charge, and the usual attendance was forty to sixty persons. During refreshment people get the opportunity for personal contacts. The head of each lodge is responsible for organizing lectures from eminent scholars, professors, psychologists etc., on various subjects. Although the talks vary, they are still

linked to the aims of the TS. *Gangleri* is published biannually in addition to the triannual newsletter *Mundilfari*. The Summer School was held in June and was reportedly enjoyable and useful. There are seven active lodges in Reykjavik and in two other places outside the capital. All European countries have had financial difficulties because of the general monetary situation. The Annual General Meeting was held in May and Halldor Haraldson was elected as the General Secretary.

In Netherlands there were eight meetings of the National Board. The National Headquarters in Amsterdam is open during the week and the membership is 371. We are told that there is a close and brotherly cooperation with the team at the Naarden European home of the TS. The quarterly magazine *Theosofia* is published regularly. There are ten lodges and nine study centres and all the lodges and centres are more or less active.

The French section has been in the same position as last year. There have been problems in 'Marseille' Lodge. A few of the lodges seem to be active and the magazine *Le Lotus Bleu* has been published regularly. The healing group meets once a week to serve humans in sorrow and pain, as it has been doing since several years.

In the Southern African Section lecture programmes are conducted at Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban Lodges. The layouts and indexing of the lodge libraries have been made more user-friendly.



INDIAN SECTION COVENTION — I

The 122nd Indian Section Convention was held on 27 December, 2012. Inaugurating the convention the International President, Dr Radha Burnier, said that we have to think in terms of what we have to do. Being a member of the TS, one should not think and work in terms of personal likes and dislikes. We must go for the values which are more lasting. It is not easy when we are entangled in physical world. We have to learn first to think and work beyond personal welfare, desire and so forth. We have to proceed towards glorious future and that is what the TS is working for. Help oneself to help others. It is part of

a great work. We have to be aware of the Good, True and Beautiful.

The Federation Secretaries conveyed greetings on behalf of their respective Federations.

The General Secretary presented the Annual Report for the year 2011-2012 giving the general survey of the work done during the year under review. It was followed by the Treasurer's Report presented by Bro. P. S. Panchakshari.

Bro. M. P. Singhal, International Vice-President, chaired the Convention and in his Presidential remarks he gave suggestions for the vitality and continuity of membership.

DEVOTIONAL MEETING

The Devotional Meeting at this year's Convention was conducted on 28 December at the Bharata Samaj Temple by Ms Chandrika Mehta from Bangalore. The songs selected for the session were from saints like Thyagaraja, Purandaradas, Kanakadasa, Gurunanak and Brahmananda preaching the Bakthi Marga. It was a serene and melodious rendition with beautiful narration uplifting the atmosphere.

DANCE PERFORMANCE

On the evening of 27 December, Tapasya Kala Sampradaya presented Dance performance entitled *Narayaneeyam*, produced by Indu Varma. This work has been edited by late Kunjunni Raja, former Director of the Adyar Library. The show depicted some of the avatars of Lord Vishnu and their stories. Indu and her troupe of dancers have performed this dance drama in several temples and towns in India.



The Purpose of the School of the Wisdom

The aim of the School of the Wisdom is to enable the individual to cease from being one who gives intellectual adherence to a particular school of philosophy, and become one who learns to survey the problem of life directly by himself or herself. The essential search is to discover life as it is, life being inseparable from consciousness.

The School of the Wisdom aims at bringing each student to survey things 'from the centre' which is intuitive awareness. An intense sense of Life must always accompany every true student. There can be no Wisdom without an ever-increasing sense of Wonder.

The aim of all studies in the School of the Wisdom is not the perfection of the individual but to enable the individual to use every faculty of his or her being for 'lifting a little of the heavy Karma of the world'.

Essential in the progress towards Wisdom is a growing intimacy with all aspects of Nature. The message which each tree, flower, animal, meadow, sea, sky and cloud has, must be listened to and understood.

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

9 January to 1 February 2013

Theme: **With Krishna in the Battle of Life —
Life Lessons from the Bhagavad Gita** Director: **Dr Ravi Ravindra**

The Bhagavad Gita is perhaps the single most important text to originate from India. People with a variety of interests — from the sanyasi-s who have renounced all worldly concerns to the politicians — have sought wisdom and guidance from this great text. In this Course, our effort will be to derive lessons from the *Bhagavad Gita* relevant to our daily lives. How can we be engaged in the world while at the same time being true to our spiritual life?

Prof. Ravi Ravindra is a retired Professor of Comparative Religion and Physics from Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada, and the author of many papers in Physics, Philosophy and Religion, and of several books, including *Whispers from the Other Shore*, *The Yoga of the Christ* and *Science and the Sacred*. He has conducted a number of sessions at the School of the Wisdom in the past.

Applications, providing membership details and a recommendation from the General Secretary, or main Officer of the Theosophical Society in the applicant's country of residence, to be sent to: The International Secretary, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India. Tel: (+91 44) 2491-2474 & 2491-7198 or Email: study.hq@ts-adyar.org

The Application Form may be downloaded in Word or PDF format.



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