



THE THEOSOPHIST

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On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

Seeing is an Art

It is necessary to look at ordinary things with new eyes. When we look properly, ordinary things cease to be ordinary. This is part of art, but it can be practised even by people who cannot draw, paint or do the many things that people who are called artists do. This is one of the main points in the article on art (printed later in this issue) written by our former President Mr Jinarājādāsa. He points out that everyone can experience beauty, sense of proportion and so forth, as a real artist does, but to do this he must learn to look. Then he can see better and better than at present.

There is a story told of a religious leader who gave talks. Perhaps many readers may find this story familiar, but all the same it contains a great truth. It is said that the teacher, before he began his talk, heard a bird who sang from the window sill, and the many others who sat in the hall to hear him, heard the song. The teacher did not begin his talk, but listened with full attention. When the singing ended, he said: 'Today's teaching is over; the sermon is finished, and you can go home.' This is the heart of real teaching: to let the listeners hear fully with all their heart and being, and not only with a part of the mind.

When we observe fully — which we do very rarely or perhaps not at all — the mind is no more present and working. Then the person comes into fuller consciousness of what is around him and before him. The beauty which is everywhere is known. The object of beauty is not important in the same way, because everything becomes part of the one beauty which encompasses all things. Alas, we do not generally see beauty, feel it in our heart and lose ourselves in it. Beauty surrounds all things, and is all things. If only we could sense it even for a short time, at that moment the world becomes other than what it is normally — it is part of the Divine Existence.

Relationship is not usually real. It seems real to us at the moment, which moment may stretch over a whole lifetime or into several lifetimes. We imagine that our image-making brings the real to us, but truth is not made of images. It is known in an inner state of silence and of relinquishment of self, of which we do not know yet. But we can know it from perception from a distance. Self-abandonment is silence, the silence within. There may be sounds around us, some uplifting, some penetrating into the heart, and some which are superficial and

not real. Self-abandonment means the deep silence which one experiences within, whatever may be the outer conditions.

We cannot know truth in reality or beauty or love, which are ever present everywhere, simply because we come to know these words. We think we know when we do, but the words can be extremely misleading. Beauty, for example, is used in connection with what a person imagines for the moment; it is a small self-centred feeling. For the time being a slight expansion makes it seem as if there is a great opening of consciousness. That is the magic of these immortal qualities of beauty, truth, love, wisdom, etc. They exist in a timeless state beyond all measurement, but they deceive people into thinking that they know what the words mean. But the vast vista is looked at from the spiritual point of view only by those who have reached a state of deep inner felicity; those who have seen the vista have 'eyes to see'.

As we learn to see more and more, our eyes, both the outer eyes and much more the inner eyes, have to be made sensitive. The word 'brotherhood' can mean many things depending on who uses the word. It seems like an ordinary word, and may mean only comradeship and goodwill towards the people one knows. But when people in general are included, it can convey something much deeper and more real to others. It can lead to spiritual understanding, which is love.

We generally mean by 'love' a sense of comfort, security and friendship,

goodwill and so forth. This is the ordinary meaning which many people accept, but it can also mean a deep and unbreakable bond which in the beginning we call brotherhood (or if you like by some other word). Brotherhood is different from what we are usually attracted to when we speak of this quality. We have to learn to look at it in a different way, to understand its real meaning. The universal brotherhood, that is one of the objects of the Theosophical Society, stated as a preliminary to many other things, is at a certain level, but it can grow into something which comes from the immortal nature of life. If we know this we are indeed blessed.

Perhaps when we really know what Brotherhood means we learn to perceive the universal and divine spirit everywhere. It is one of those words conveying to each person what may be the next step spiritually from where he is. The meaning known from different aspects, includes truth, knowledge, immortality, deep joy, the eternal, etc. These are all terms which arise out of a real knowledge of brotherhood.

Brotherhood is not something which we come to know only by caring for life in certain objects. It is a universal term. This is part of a relationship, for example, which can be felt for the stone. C.W. Leadbeater writes about the feeling that was created in those who were sensitive to a particular rock. Unconscious though they were, a brotherhood developed between them; the stone and the person began to have a new feeling

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when looking at each other. So brotherhood can exist comprehending everything, stone or rock, leaves or trees, birds or fish, human beings, as well as non-human beings and many other things which we cannot mention here.

Vaisākha Full Moon

The month of May usually brings the full moon of Vaisākha to delight the hearts of people. But it is more than a delightful happening. It is for many Buddhists, significant in a very special way. Vaisākha was the Buddha's entry into the realm of higher life and he was the first human being (it was said), to have experienced this wonderful state. But it is open to all human beings. He remains in touch with humanity to a certain extent, and once a year sends out his blessing on the full moon of the month of Vaisākha.

It is important that human beings should begin to recognize that they are at the beginning of a grand journey which is enlightenment. They are not at the end as most people are inclined to believe. The average human being passes through life as best as he can. There are many false ideas, conclusions and temptations which hold him down at the human level. Half of him is still at the semi-animal stage, which means wanting the pleasures of the physical world and nothing more. Man has of course extended the idea of pleasure to all kinds of activities and things, which the lesser creatures are not capable of doing. For instance, he creates amusements for himself — the cinema, various kinds of sport and so on.

The amusements often become a form of torture for other creatures, but man does not care. All this is recognized as futile and leading nowhere from the spiritual point of view when he moves on spiritually.

The few who are spiritually inclined at least in theory, though not wholly, realize that these amusements and other activities pulling the human being to the earth are of little value. The Buddha and other truly advanced people demonstrated this in their own lives, and brought to those who had eyes to see a new vision of what man could be. Human beings can become more than human in the ordinary sense of the term. People like the Buddha were glorious examples of what the destiny of man in the future will be. All this is implied in the rising of the full moon on the day of Vaisākha and much more.

The Buddha had of course through many lives shed all the animalistic tendencies and wishes of the human being. Such a pure heart and mind are needed by those who would follow the path and reach that stage even now, which all people must reach when the New Age really begins. Many are led the false way by merely speaking of a New Age, but it is a reality to those who prepare themselves by leaving behind those tendencies, craving and other mental and moral habits which belong to the pre-human stage. They have to rise beyond these to become truly advanced.

We have been given from time to time a glimpse of a different stage, when

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illuminated individuals have taken birth and spoken because of their power to a large number of people in that particular life. But after that is over, the spirit of their teaching remains, so we see now the inspiration of the Buddha and the Christ, and others who have come back to earth to teach men that there is a way

and a path. So at least some are inspired to live a life which is becoming gradually or quickly more spiritual. They will become ready to cross over the boundary. The month of Vaisākha when the full moon shines bright is a sign of the future of all human beings whether they believe in it at present or not. ✧

The World of the ignorant is observed
as the continuation of birth and death,
whereby dualisms are nourished and
because the perversion is not perceived.
There is just one truth, which is Nirvāna —
it has nothing to do with intellection.
The world seen as subject to discrimination
resembles a plantain tree, a dream, a mirage.

The Mind as norm is the abode of self-nature
which has nothing to do with the realm of causation;
of this norm, which is perfect existence and
the highest Absolute, I speak.
Of neither existence nor non-existence do I speak,
but of Mind-only which has nothing to do
with existence and non-existence,
and which is thus free from intellection.
Suchness, emptiness, Absolute Truth . . .
these I call Mind-only.

Lankāvatāra Sutra, 63, 64

Right Action is Creation without Attachment

RICARDO LINDEMANN

THE Sanskrit word *vairāgya*, which is translated as ‘detachment’, has also the meaning ‘colourless’. This could be interpreted as a transparency of the mind, through which alone we can see things as they really are — which is a definition of wisdom. Detachment is a qualification of impartiality needed to develop wisdom.

There is a special exercise to develop detachment in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which is to create beautiful *mandala-s* with sand of many different colours. These demand perhaps many weeks to make, but are destroyed the very moment they are finished. This exercise can be seen as a somewhat meaningless waste of time, but detachment comes naturally in proportion to the transitoriness, because when we are able to see that something is transitory, it becomes easier to be less involved with it.

This capacity to perceive transitoriness is designated by the Sanskrit word *viveka*, generally translated as ‘discrimination’. It is defined in *At the Feet of the Master* as ‘the discrimination between the real [or

lasting] and the unreal [or transitory] which leads men to enter the Path’.¹ In fact, discrimination and detachment are so interdependent that any development of one will produce the awakening of the other, and vice versa.

We can find another similar way to develop detachment in the Christian tradition where, in many countries, there is the custom of creating religious images on the streets, in the form of a big carpet of flower petals of different colours. This can demand much time to make, just to be destroyed when the procession of people participating in the religious festival walks over it. One may ask, what is the meaning of creating or making anything which will be destroyed at the very moment it is completed.

Perhaps the very meaning of life is to create universes, either small or big, only for the development of this faculty of creativeness itself, as well as to be able to see them being destroyed by time with absolute detachment. It should be obvious to us as an inevitable fact that time,

Mr Ricardo Lindemann is a National Lecturer of the Brazilian Section of the TS. Talk given in 2008 at the international Convention, Adyar.

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sooner or later, will destroy everything in the universe.

Joy can be experienced when a person sings while taking a shower, and we suppose that in such a case there will be no recording or any other result, other than this joy of singing itself. If there is no recording taking place the intangible beauty of music will be destroyed at the very moment that the singing comes to an end. So, it seems that there is a joy in the expression of creativeness itself, without attachment to any other result than to perform that action. The purity of an action can be perceived when it is performed for itself and there is no further demand or search for repetition, result or reward.

In other words, an action is pure when it is performed for its significance in itself without attachment or expectation of possible results. When we are able to love for the sake of love alone, do what is just for the sake of justice alone, fulfil duty for the sake of duty without any attachment or expectation of reward or secondary gain, then our action is pure; it fulfils itself without any other intention. It is, therefore, right action, a perfect action without attachment that has no karmic residues. It is fully in the present moment and therefore, is timeless. As it is not attached to time it generates no anxieties for future results. In that kind of action there is joy because it is an expression of creativeness, a pure act of creation.

This right action can be seen indeed as a kind of skill or a work of art offered to the Supreme, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavadgītā*:

Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of action, always content, nowhere seeking refuge, he is not doing anything, although doing actions (IV.20).²

Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached. . . . therefore cleave thou to yoga; yoga is skill in action (II.47).

On the other hand, if we misuse our creative power by performing action with the expectation of recognition, gratitude or other results or rewards, or for satisfying ambitions, indulgence in the senses, or possession of material comforts in the realm of transitoriness, suffering will come in the same proportion as our attachments. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa also says:

The delights that are contact-born, they are verily wombs of pain, for they have beginning and ending, O Kaunteya; not in them may rejoice the wise (V.22).

Suffering comes every time we are attached to the castles of sand that we create, because sooner or later they will be destroyed by the inevitable transitory effect of time. We find wise advice in *At the Feet of the Master*:

You must give up all feeling of possession. Karma may take from you the things which you like best — even the people whom you love most. Even then you must be cheerful — ready to part with anything and everything.³

In fact, Karma regulates the use or

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misuse of the creative power we particularly have in our minds and actions. According to the Holy Bible, we were created in the image of God: ‘God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’⁴ Indeed, that power of creation is so great that the Holy Bible also says we are all gods: ‘*Dii estis*’ (‘Ye are gods’).⁵ But God is not responsible for the possible misuse of the power of creation He gave to us. As Plato says: ‘The responsibility is with the chooser — God is justified.’⁶ More than that, therefore, we also have the power to create universes and meanings, though generally we are still learning how to use its infinite potential, and Karma protects us from destroying ourselves by its misuse. We find in *The Idyll of the White Lotus* the words:

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit. Each man is his own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.⁷

We are all creating our own future and the quality of the relations that we will have in that small universe we create. As Dr Besant points out:

Thus far we see as definite principles of karmic law, working with mental images as causes, that: aspirations and desires become capacities; repeated thoughts become tendencies; wills to perform become actions; experiences become wisdom; painful experiences become conscience.⁸

Also the Hindu tradition considers the

idea that our human consciousness has the same creative potentialities as the Divine Consciousness, as we find in the *Pratyabhijñā Hṛdayam*:

It is the ultimate reality which becomes the individual soul, involved in worldly illusions, by the simultaneous limitation of divine power and obscuration of divine consciousness, when working through an individualized centre in Reality.

Even under these limitations the microcosmic soul in bondage performs the five divine functions like the macrocosmic Over-Soul.

These five divine functions which are performed by the microcosmic soul in a limited and veiled form are manifestation, attachment or involvement, ideation, proliferation and dissolution.⁹

The power of manifestation is related to the creation of a universe. Proliferation is also related to creation in its factor of multiplication, but the power of dissolution is related more to detachment. According to this scripture, we are all learning how to use these divine powers we inherit, and perhaps this is the objective of life, though we have them now in a limited, potential or latent form proportionate to our still microcosmic functions.

Madame Blavatsky also emphasized that: ‘Man is the MICROCOSM. As he is so, then all the Hierarchies of the Heavens exist within him. But in truth there is neither Macrocosm nor Microcosm but ONE EXISTENCE. Great and small are such only as viewed by a limited

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consciousness. . . . As is the Inner, so is the Outer; as is the Great, so is the Small; as it is above, so it is below: there is but ONE LIFE AND LAW, and he that worketh it is ONE. Nothing is Inner, nothing is Outer; nothing is Great, nothing is Small; nothing is High; nothing is Low, in the Divine Economy.¹⁰

Similarly, Dr Annie Besant says about our responsibility in relation to the small universes that we are creating around us:

If we cannot do great things, let us do small things perfectly: for perfection lies in the perfection of every detail and not in the size of the act. There is nothing great, nothing small, from the standpoint of the Self. The act of the king whose will shapes a nation is no more great from the standpoint of the Self than the act of the mother who nurses a crying child. Each is necessary, is part of the divine activity. Because necessary, it is great in its own place, and the whole, not any part, is the life of the Self. It is like a mighty mosaic, and any fragment which is not in its own place makes a blot on the perfection of the whole. Our lives are perfect as they fill the appointed gap in the great mosaic, and if we leave our work undone while we yearn after some other, two places may be left empty, and the whole ill-done.¹¹

It is only through right action and so fulfilling our duties and using our power of creation in action that we really progress in spiritual learning. That is why service is so important on the spiritual path. We find in *At the Feet of the Master*: ‘Yet remember that, to be useful to

mankind, thought must result in action. There must be no laziness, but constant activity in good work.’¹²

This quality of right action is our compass giving the right direction on the spiritual path to Nirvāna, according to the Noble Eightfold Path that Lord Buddha taught us. Our failures are the consequences of a temporary lack of attention to the challenge of the present moment, created by the escape into fancy or imagination into a non-existent future situation projected by the mind. Therefore, another way to consider right action is through awareness, which is related to that divine power of involvement mentioned before. Awareness or full attention gives life to what we are doing, which is another form of creation. Awareness in the actions of the present protects the mind from any deviation, and therefore is the path to Nirvāna or to the Supreme.

Krishnaji said ‘the first step is the last step’, and the direction taken with the first step is what matters. The first step must have in itself the nature of the last one; otherwise we will mistake the path to the goal. It is not possible to reach the Supreme Truth walking in falsehood. It is not possible to reach the peace of Nirvāna walking in contradiction and conflict. The quality of peace must be present to some extent from the very first step if we want to reach Nirvāna; such affinity with the nature of the goal we wish to reach should be our compass, otherwise we will lose the path. This is also why J. Krishnamurti said: ‘the means determine the end’.¹³ If there is no coherence among

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the steps taken, i.e., the means used, and the goal to be reached, we will lose the goal. Indeed, we will reach only another destiny determined by the nature or quality of the means used. The common saying so often used in the world nowadays, that 'the end justifies the means', is the very road to lose the real goal and to find suffering. It indicates deep ignorance of the Law of Karma, for we always reap only that which we sow.

In the Vedānta philosophy as well, we find that through right action we may reach the Supreme. For an action to be right it must have a quality of detachment, and to develop detachment we must have developed some degree of discrimination. This is the way to develop joyfully the creative powers in our nature. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in beautiful and inspiring words:

Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform action which is duty, for, by

performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the Supreme.¹⁴

Once this blessed illumination is attained, man becomes a Mahatma, as 'a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out',¹⁵ as the Holy Bible says of the splendrous triumph over all human suffering. According to *Pratyabhijñā Hṛdayam*, then there would be no further limit to this Divine Power of Creativeness latent in us. The text says:

Then is attained that all-inclusive awareness of ultimate reality which is the essence of consciousness and bliss, in which is inherently present the integrated power of sound capable of creation and destruction of any kind, anywhere and at any time, which confers lordship over the hierarchy of deities functioning in the particular manifested system, which, in short, is the ultimate reality referred to as Śiva.¹⁶ ✧

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The Religion of the Artist

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

MANY people when they hear the phrase, 'The Religion of the Artist', ask: 'Have artists any religion at all? In what way can the religion of the artist be considered different from what we know as religion?'

The answer to this question depends very largely on what we mean by religion. If by religion we mean some particular creed which an individual professes, then Art cannot be said to have any special religion of its own, because artists belong to all nations and to all times. But if by religion we mean the way a man bodies forth, in his thoughts and feelings and deeds, his realization of the universe, then the artist has a religion of his own. There is only one universe in which we all live; it reveals itself to us as facts and events. But this changing universe must always be translated by each one of us in some term of intelligibility. We are not mere mirrors of what is happening outside us, we are rather transformers of the energies of the universe.

Now, the way that the individual transforms the changing universe is his religion. If that definition of religion is

true, then there are as many religions as there are individuals, and I think that is perfectly the case. Nevertheless, since mankind can be grouped into various types, we can say that there are types of transformation. There is a type of transformation which we recognize under the term Religion, and that is the transformation under the force of character of a great personality. The true Christian is he who transforms life according to the technique of Christ, for Christ had a technique — the way He felt, thought, surveyed and acted — and the Christian is he who accepts that technique as his highest model. Similarly is it with the Buddhist, for when a man becomes a Buddhist he accepts the technique of the Buddha. And so religion after religion teaches us the technique of a great Personality.

But, quite apart from the particular transformation which we make of life through the spirit of religion, there is another transformation, adapted to another type of soul, and it is that which reflects itself as Science. The scientist is interested in grouping facts and laws, and in stating that grouping through his personality,

A lecture delivered in Sydney in 1922. Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, March 1923.

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because there is no such thing to be found in practice as abstract theoretical science. It always comes to us through individual scientists. The great scientist is one who has a great personality, who gives us his vision of Nature, grouped into categories and laws which fascinate the mind.

There is another group still, of those who transform life, and that is composed of souls whose keenest interest is in modes of Organization. These are those who are drawn to political science; and in the political sciences, with their branches of economics and statecraft, and so on, we have an expression of the way the universe transforms itself through a type of personality. Similarly is it with regard to the philosopher. He is more interested in the relation between the individual and the whole of which he is a part; and the expression of his power to transform comes as his philosophy. But life is always one, and in its finalities indivisible; all these statements — religion, science, philosophy, political science — are statements of one Reality.

Now another statement of reality, other than religion or science or philosophy, is Art. But what is Art? What do we mean by Art? For it is only when we have some general ideas of what Art is, that we shall be able to conceive of the religion of the artist. I can only here give you just a few definitions of what Art is, which you will find in the writings of great artists. Goethe called it 'the magic of the soul'. Schiller called it 'that which gives to man his lost dignity'. I think perhaps we can see the conception of Art best in the stages

through which Wagner went, as he began to realize his work more and more profoundly. To him, at first, Art was 'the pleasure one takes in being what one is'. In other words, it was a joy in living. But, as he lived and created and transformed, he began to see deeper, and then to him Art was the 'highest manifestation of the communal life of man'. It was, as it were, a synthetic manifestation of our common humanity. As he lived and felt his work more, he came to the conclusion that Art was 'the most powerful momentum in human life', that is, something within the soul of man which, when once started, goes on with undiminishing vigour for eternity. Art can best, I think, be thought of as the only form of expression which, even if only inadequately, tells us something of the

Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

There is no other form of transmutation which brings us so near to the inmost heart of humanity, in its travail, as Art.

It is quite true that we have in Art many branches — painting, sculpture, music, the dance, and so on. All these branches of Art have an intensely ethical meaning. That unfortunately is something not realized today by the artists themselves. It is the fashion for many of them to talk of 'Art for Art's sake', as if Art could be conceived of as some kind of transmutation of sensation or imagination, irrespective of its relation to the welfare of mankind. You will find, if you study Art in any one of its branches, that when

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that department of Art is at its highest, it is most ethical. That is to say, it has a direct message to man.

Take, for instance, the most glorious period of Greek Art, just at the time when Phidias created the Parthenon. Greece was then full of the statues of the gods. Each of these statues was created from a living model, but to the artist each statue embodied a cosmic concept. Pallas Athena, the maiden Goddess of Wisdom, was not to the artist merely a beautiful maid, but an intensely ethical concept of a Divine Wisdom that was militant, the wisdom which 'mightily and sweetly ordereth all things'. Apollo at that epoch was not just a handsome youth, but rather the Divine Inspiration in the heart of man. The great artists of the time, when they worked in stone, attempted to embody ethical concepts in stone. That is why the Greek civilization of that period stands out still in such a unique fashion. That is why, as we read the plays of the time, the philosophies, as we look at the sculpture, we feel that we are moving in an age where men seem to be larger than they are today. Soon after this great climax, when Art was seen in its ethical revelation, we have the decline, beginning in a sculptor like Praxiteles. Though Praxiteles is intensely graceful, yet in him the ethical concept gives place to individualized figures; mere sentiment is emphasized, and the artist does not dream of expressing a cosmic concept through his sculpture.

Ethical concepts are inseparable from Art, when Art gives its true message. That is why we can in some ways truly define

Art as the 'soul of things'. Wagner well expresses this quality of getting at the soul of things through music, when he says that what music expresses is eternal, infinite and ideal. It does not tell us of any one individual's passion, love, or regret, in this or that particular situation, but it tells us of Passion and Love and Regret themselves.

We go behind then, in Art, from the particular-in-time to the general-in-eternity. You will note that same quality of eternity with regard to landscape painting, when you contemplate a great painting. You look through that painting into a vision of Nature, which is still, in eternity, which reflects the mind of a cosmic Creator. The painter looks at the view, but he selects from it as paintable only what his imagination can grasp of that particular conformation of light, shade and form which as a mirror reflects a divine ideal.

It is the same with regard to great poetry. Take one of the greatest poems which the world contains, the Divine Comedy of Dante. Carlyle says of that magic structure that it is 'a great supernatural world cathedral, piled up there, stern, solemn, awful; Dante's world of souls'. However small be the size of the thing the true artist creates, there is in that thing something of the totality of the universe. It is because of this quality of Art that Blake so truly said that the whole creation 'groans to be delivered', for the artist is in many ways he who helps to bring forth the newer Humanity. Therefore it is that Carlyle, who was not an artist, but a profound philosopher who could

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understand the message of Art, thus speaks of Art: 'In all true works of Art wilt thou discern Eternity looking through time, the Godlike rendered visible.'

Because the artist is dealing with the totality of things, therefore his particular transformation, which may be a poem, or a statue, or a symphony, is related to all possible transformations. A poem is expressible in a song, in a statue, in a painting, in some rhythmic music. The dance and music are related as many know by experience. There is a subtle unity underlying all Art's various branches. So in Art, then, we have another revelation of what life is, other than the revelation which religion gives, or which science gives, or which the philosophies give. It is a revelation unique to Art itself.

How is this particular revelation to be sensed by the artist? He can only sense it by grasping the reality. He must train himself to know 'things as they are'; he must visibly and invisibly see the relation of the part to the whole. The artist's judgement must be the *truest* judgement, if he is to be a real artist. To the artist, before he can create, the outer universe must pour in through his senses. It must pour into him in a larger measure than with ordinary men. It is for the artist to see shades of colour that the ordinary eye does not see, to see beauty in line which passes unnoticed before the ordinary man's eye. He has to have a keener sensitiveness; the sensorium of the artist must be more delicately organized than that of the ordinary man. But you do not make the artist merely by refining his senses. His mind

has to come into play, for the artist must transform, he must not merely reproduce. A camera with the help of a lens can reproduce a scene in Nature more accurately than the artist; but the artist has to transform what he sees with the faculty of the emotions, the mind, the imagination, the intuitions, the Spirit itself. The whole nature of the artist has to be brought to bear on the work of transformation. That is why the artist, if he is to do his work rightly, must see that his mind is trained, that his emotions are delicate, sensitively balanced, that his intuitions are awake, that the power of the Spirit within him is not dormant, but quick and active.

Therefore, if the artist is to do his work of creation, he needs to have an openness of mind to science, to philosophy, to religion, to all the problems as they are transmuted by the various great departments of life. For all these are related. The more there is of religion, the more fully the message of science can be understood. The more a man knows of science, the higher and nobler is his conception of religion. I know no one among the poets so in touch with the scientific conception as Tennyson. He was intensely scientific in his observation of Nature, and that is why, before Darwin formulated some of his ideas, Tennyson intuited them and told us of Nature that was 'so careful of the type', but 'so careless of the single life'. Tennyson describes flowers as the botanist sees them, and yet his exquisite imagination throws prismatic colours round his description, till we get, not the flower, but the soul of the flower.

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You can be intensely realistic, without losing anything whatever of the quality of Art. All of the departments of life are related, so that as you have more of the life of God within you, you have a larger love of man. And especially are Religion and Art inseparable. Almost all the greatest periods of artistic creation have been only when there have been great spiritualizing influences from religion. Religion was a vital thing to the Greek in the time of Pericles; it was powerful in the Middle Ages when the great artists of Europe created.

The artist, then, if he is to do his work rightly, must be a rounded being in his inner nature. He must be sensitive, not only with his sensorium, but also with the intuition, the mind, the emotions. Especially must he be sensitive to all kinds of ideas. Hence, therefore, one can say that each artist must profess all the Faiths and philosophies in the world, and yet none. He must have a warm sympathy for every form of human discovery in the domain of religion, science, philosophy. Yet, because he is going to discover for himself something which was never discovered before, he cannot be identified as the believer exclusively in any one religion or cult. He must belong to the world, to life as it is in its totality.

The religion of the artist, then, is to accept the universe as it pours into him from all the avenues of religion, science, philosophy, political organization, and ideals of service. With all these things he must identify himself, if in his own particular branch he is to give a message

which is to remain in eternity. Now the artist's message is not to the universe in the abstract; it is distinctly to mankind. Therefore the artist has to take as his motto what Carlyle so well described: 'Wouldst thou plant for Eternity, then plant into the deep infinite faculties of man, his Fantasy and Heart.'

The work of the artist is not the work of the scientist, which appeals to the reason, nor the work of the philosopher, but his own work, whereby he appeals to the infinite faculty of 'fantasy', as Carlyle calls it, which is inseparable from the inmost heart of man. But if the artist is to appeal to this infinite faculty of man, the first thing necessary for him is a serenity among his ideas. In all the great periods of Art there is a serenity. There was a serenity of ideas in the generation of Phidias. Men were then sure of themselves, of their own drift to the end of time. There are no doubts befogging the mind of an artist like Fra Angelico; there is balance and serenity in him, and that is the reason he stands as one of the greatest painters. Unfortunately in our days there is little serenity in ideas for anyone. The average man, busy with his ordinary interests in life, can afford to go about with an uncertain mind, with many problems unsolved; but not the artist. So long as the artist goes on from year to year, uncertain as to what he is himself, and what is the purpose of the world, the transformation which he bodies forth in his art has only a temporary merit, a meaning which is for his generation or century only. If he is to create something

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which is to last for eternity, then he must find serenity among his ideas. It is not for me to point out how he is to do it. I can only point out to you that without serenity in ideas you cannot have this eternal quality in the thing which you are going to create.

Everything which the artist is, as an individual, is reflected in the thing which he creates. This is not realized by all artists today. They think that they can paint a picture, and think and feel what they like about the world. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Ruskin, who pointed out the intensely ethical relation between the thing created by the artist and what the artist is as man. The narrowness of mind of an artist is reflected in the phrases of his music, in the colours which he lays on; everything which the artist creates reflects his smallness or bigness of soul.

There is no such thing as an art which can be separated from the artist as a man. He is a transformer, but if his character is coarse his art is coarse. It may not be recognized as such, in his own generation. You may have profligates creating in music or in painting, and commanding success; but, when the world passes on a generation or two, and profligacy is no longer seen in the old light, but as something derogatory to the dignity of the soul, then all those creations are seen as mere empty forms without an eternal life. Because of this intimate relation between the artist's nature as a man, and what he creates, there can be nothing in the artist's life which is not important. A violinist's thoughts, his words, his deeds, his

ambitions and his jealousies are reflected in the tones which he brings out from his violin. You cannot separate the personal nature of the artist as he bodies forth. That is why sometimes you get a purer message of Art from some boy or girl who is playing or singing some simple thing, than when the same thing is played by a virtuoso or sung by a prima donna. You are nearer to the heart of the thing, because the boy or girl is less spoiled by life; the personality which bodies forth, which reflects it, is purer, and so you come one step nearer to the eternal realm of Art.

So close is this relation between Art and the artist's own personality — what he calls his 'private life' — that I would say distinctly that, much as most Western artists are meat-eaters, they would be better artists if they were vegetarians. The very fact that a cruelty is imposed upon animals through one's eating meat reflects itself in one's art. You may not be 'found out' in this generation, but you will certainly be found out when the whole world is vegetarian, for it will then say: 'This picture was painted by a meat-eating artist.' I am putting this forcibly, so that you may understand the subtle relation which exists between every cell of the artist's body and the thing which he creates.

The artist's religion is a very wonderful one, unique, telling us of something which we did not know, either through religion or science or philosophy. What that message is, I cannot reveal to you. The beauty of Art is that each one of us can get Art's own message, suited to our needs, and suited to the occasion and our

stage in growth. You will observe, then, from this standpoint of Art, what an intimate relation Art has to the individual. It is quite true that few of us are creative artists, in the technical sense; but all of us are transmuters of life. So, if we can learn to transmute a little also through the faculty of Art, our realization of life is fuller than it was when we were merely religious, or when we were religious and scientific, or religious, scientific and philosophical. Add to your nature a sensitiveness to Art, and then you can understand life with a fuller meaning.

Obviously there is a very close relation between Art and the community, and this close relation has been very strikingly put in a Chinese proverb. In China they put things in a quaint way, but what they say you never forget. The proverb is this: 'If you have two loaves, sell one and buy a lily.' That is a magnificent saying; it is a statement of the greatness of a nation. Our modern statesmen think of the greatness of a people merely by the worldly possessions, the 'loaves and the fishes', which the nation has for its own. But in a true ideal State, where every man is at his best, the ideal which a statesman will have before him for his country is that the State's organization should be such that every man is given an opportunity to be at his best.

Now, science cannot do that. Science can never appeal directly to the individual, but Art can. It is Art which moulds the soul of a people and creates and civilizes. Science comes merely to crown a civilization, but the moulding, the

fashioning, the creating of a civilization is done through Art. So powerful is this subtle influence of Art, to awaken the hidden best in the individual, that I go so far as to say what may seem nonsense — that the more Art there is in a nation the more business there is too. For when each individual is artistic, and responds to the message of life which Art can give, he is a bigger individual, he is a more powerful dynamo of the forces of life. When thereafter he turns his mind to the development of the nation's resources, he sees the problem of business in a larger way. At once you can see what an utter calamity you are courting if you let your State Orchestra disband, for want of money. The wealth of Sydney is not in its Wool Exchange alone, it is also in this place, the Conservatorium of Music. Thousands come here to find a little bit of themselves as souls, and a little discovery of yourself as a soul, even if it is only once or twice in three months or so, is quite enough to last you for the rest of the year. For all must grapple with the problem of life in a more dignified and grander way as they grow. We have to realize a new ideal with regard to prosperity. The prosperity of a nation is not to be judged by its bank balances, but by the 'soul force', as we say in India, which the nation contains, by that spiritual content which is in each individual in the nation. The true contribution to his nation's strength by a citizen is not the taxes which he pays, but the quality of artistic appreciation which he has. Indeed, when we begin to see the true values in life, then a well

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nurtured child, singing, dancing, playing, reveals more of the universe than a powerful savage who carves out for himself a kingdom. Indeed, such a 'little child' shall lead mighty empires.

To each one of us Art has its message, even though not all of us are creative artists. In this life which we are living, there is a curious duality, of the totality and the unit, of the general and the particular, of God and man. And these two parts of existence are as two great deeps calling to each other, and when the great deep from above sounds and the great deep down here, which is man, responds, then begins real life. We delude ourselves in thinking that we are now living; many of us are but as shadows flickering through life. But the time comes when we can take hold of life in a true and forceful way; then we do not doubt, we do not need to go from creed to creed; and, instead of looking for the meaning of life, we know we are ourselves that meaning. Indeed, Wagner, a great creative artist, sensed all this, for thus he describes Art: 'Art is the accomplishment of our desire to find ourselves again among the phenomena of the external world.'

We are the source of power in the universe, but we have to find ourselves, and Art enables us to find. It is there that Art joins hands with the profoundest Mysticism. In India we have said from the beginning of time that the only religion which a man should profess is — *So'ham*, 'I am God'. That is the proclamation of Hinduism. But it is the proclamation of all genuine Art, for the individual finds

himself again as that permanent, unchangeable spiritual Entity, as he bodies forth Art.

Creative Art, in other words, is a new way of stating what life is for ourselves. To us, as we create, it will seem a novel way, though the critics may say it is an old way; but it is a way which starts from whatever is our interest. Are we religiously minded; then we can find Art in religion. Are we interested in political work; then we can find Art in the higher ideals of statecraft. Are we busy housewives; we can then find Art starting to erect its wonderful structure from the home.

When we find these structures beginning, then we understand life with a new meaning. And what is that meaning? Who shall say? That is the glory of Art, that each one of us can state what is the meaning of Art. We are indeed all creative artists, because into us the whole world of Art is pouring, and we can transmute it, if we only understand how. We can be dull diamonds straight from the mine, reflecting very little, or we can be 'cut' diamonds with many facets which flash out the many colours of the one light. What Art can do for us is to 'cut' and polish our natures, and bring out facet after facet from the hidden qualities within ourselves of thinking and intuiting. Art can make us centres of serenity.

I hardly know how to conclude this lecture on a subject about which I feel so profoundly, because to me, who am not an artist in the ordinary sense, Art means so much. It supplements every other phase of knowledge or being which I have

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found in life. It leads us ever onwards; it is that screen on which one throws the lights and shadows of one's own nature. It is a wonderful thing to add to one's knowledge of life even a little bit of the way of feeling life as the artist feels it. I only wish every child in our schools could be taught to feel life in this new way. We tell them now of science, we tell them of history, but we do not yet tell them of that subtle new way of sensing life and transmuting it which is Art.

I close by pointing out to you once more that it is worth your while to develop that part of yourself which is the artistic instinct in you. You do not need to be a creative artist, in the ordinary sense of the term. Be at least an appreciative artist, and create with your appreciation one element

of the great Art structure of the world. If only each of you will strive to bring that element out of yourselves, you who at least understand the need of Art in the growth of the person, then the time will not be so far away when all your fellow men can be induced to love Art, when the whole world will have a newer understanding of the greatness of life. We all have to live; but why need we live like men when we can live like angels? It is for Art to show us that there is a way to live, not in time, but in eternity, not dogged by mortality but with deathlessness as our crown. And that crown is for all of us here and now, if only we will seek it; and the way of the seeking is through Art. For Art is one way of giving, and to give is to live. ✧

O lead my spirit,
O raise it from these heavy depths,
transported by Thy Art
that fearlessly and joyfully it soar up to Thee.
For Thou, Thou knowest all things,
Thou alone canst inspire.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Studies in *The Voice of the Silence*, 17

JOHN ALGEO

HAVING passed the midpoint, the fourth Portal of Virāga or dispassion, the third Fragment on ‘The Seven Portals’ continues to the final three Portals, which deal with the inner or higher self. Verses 258 to 271 describe the approach to the fifth gate, which represents the mind.

VERSES [258–271]:

[258] Thou hast removed pollution from thy heart and bled it from impure desire. But, O thou glorious combatant, thy task is not yet done. Build high, *lanoo*, the wall that shall hedge in the Holy Isle,* the dam that will protect thy mind from pride and satisfaction at thoughts of the great feat achieved.

[259] A sense of pride would mar the work. Aye, build it strong, lest the fierce rush of battling waves, that mount and beat its shore from out the great world Māyā’s ocean, swallow up the pilgrim and the isle — yea, even when the victory is achieved.

[260] Thine Isle is the deer, thy thoughts the hounds that weary and pursue his progress to the stream of Life. Woe to the deer that is o’ertaken by the barking

fiends before he reach the Vale of Refuge — Jñāna-Mārga, ‘path of pure knowledge’ named.

[261] Ere thou canst settle in Jñāna-Mārga,¹⁸ and call it thine, thy Soul has to become as the ripe mango fruit; as soft and sweet as its bright golden pulp for others’ woes, as hard as that fruit’s stone for thine own throes and sorrows, O conqueror of weal and woe.

[262] Make hard thy Soul against the snares of self; deserve for it the name of ‘Diamond-Soul’.¹⁹

[263] For, as the diamond buried deep within the throbbing heart of earth can never mirror back the earthly lights, so are thy mind and Soul; plunged in Jñāna-Mārga, these must mirror nought of Māyā’s realm illusive.

[264] When thou hast reached that state, the Portals that thou hast to conquer on the Path fling open wide their gates to let thee pass, and Nature’s strongest might possess no power to stay thy course. Thou wilt be master of the sevenfold Path; but not till then, O candidate for trials passing speech.

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[265] Till then, a task far harder still awaits thee: thou hast to feel thyself ALL-THOUGHT, and yet exile all thoughts from out thy Soul.

[266] Thou hast to reach that fixity of mind in which no breeze, however strong, can waft an earthly thought within. Thus purified, the shrine must of all action, sound, or earthly light be void; e'en as the butterfly, o'ertaken by the frost, falls lifeless at the threshold — so must all earthly thoughts fall dead before the fane.

Behold it written:

[267] 'Ere the gold flame can burn with steady light, the lamp must stand well guarded in a spot free from all wind.* Exposed to shifting breeze, the jet will flicker and the quivering flame cast shades deceptive, dark and ever-changing, on the Soul's white shrine.

[268] And then, O thou pursuer of the truth, thy mind-soul will become as a mad elephant that rages in the jungle. Mistaking forest trees for living foes, he perishes in his attempts to kill the ever-shifting shadows dancing on the wall of sunlit rocks.

[269] Beware, lest in the care of Self thy Soul should lose her foothold on the soil of Deva-knowledge.

[270] Beware, lest in forgetting Self, thy Soul lose o'er its trembling mind control, and forfeit thus the due fruition of its conquests.

[271] Beware of change! For change is

thy great foe. This change will fight thee off, and throw thee back, out of the Path thou treadest, deep into viscous swamps of doubt.

COMMENT. Having passed the fourth gate, that of desire — whose key is *virāga*, desirelessness or seeing the world as it is, uncoloured by emotional states — the pilgrim has cleansed the heart, traditionally a symbol of feelings or emotions, of 'impure desires'. But the journey is not over. Next to be passed is the fifth gate, that of the mind.

Verses 258–9 change the metaphor from gates to an island in the middle of the stream or ocean of life. The mind is such a 'Holy Isle'*:

HPB note: *The Higher Ego, or Thinking Self.

The new metaphor is appropriate because the emotions are often symbolized as a body of water that threatens to flow over and submerge the conscious mind. The pilgrim must therefore build a wall, a dam, to protect the island of the mind from being engulfed by the oceanic stream of life, and especially by the emotions of pride and self-satisfaction, to which the mind is especially prone.

With verse 260, the metaphor changes again. The mind has become, not an island threatened by flood, but a deer pursued by the hounds of thought. This metaphor highlights a concept that is foreign to the way we usually talk about our mind and thoughts and gives us the

possibility of a different view. We usually imagine the mind to be a sort of machine that produces thoughts — so that thoughts are the product of the mind. This metaphor views thoughts as things that come from outside of the mind and attack it, as vicious hounds attack a gentle deer.

The metaphor of the mind as a deer and thoughts as pursuing hounds may seem bizarre to us at first. We assume that all the thoughts we ‘have’ are ‘our’ thoughts — that they have been created by us. But an old Theosophical tradition holds that thoughts are things, quite literally. They are realities independent of us. The mental atmosphere is full of thoughts, and if our minds are in tune with thoughts of a certain kind, if they are on the same wavelength, those thoughts will be attracted to our minds as hounds are attracted to a deer. We must therefore guard against attacks by such thoughts, just as we guard the island of the mind from inundation by the emotions.

To be safe from being overtaken by the hound-like thoughts, the deer of the mind must reach a place of refuge — the Jñāna-Mārga. HPB comments upon it in a gloss:

Gloss 18. *Jñāna-mārga* is the ‘Path of Jñāna’, literally; or the *Path of pure knowledge*, of *paramārtha* or (Sanskrit) *svasamvedanā*, ‘the self-evident or self-analysing reflection’.

Mārga is a ‘path’ and so, metaphorically, a way of living or of reaching one’s goal. *Jñāna* means direct insight or ‘pure knowledge’ and is cognate with the Greek

gnosis. But what is *jñāna* or gnosis knowledge of? It is knowledge of *paramārtha*, which means ‘the highest truth or most valuable thing in the world’. And what is that? It is *svasamvedanā*, which means ‘self-knowledge, knowing who or what we are’. So to protect itself from the hounds of thought, the mind must reach knowledge of who we really are.

To reach self-knowledge, however, requires a certain toughness about ourselves combined with a softness or sympathy for others. And so the metaphor changes yet again in verse 261, where the soul becomes a mango fruit, soft and sweet in its outer pulp, but hard as a stone in its inner core. We must be the diamond soul, concerning which, a gloss reads:

Gloss 19. ‘Diamond-Soul’ or Vajradhara presides over the Dhyāni-Buddhas.

In an earlier gloss (number 4 in the second fragment, to verse 114), ‘Diamond Soul’ is said to be ‘a title of the supreme Buddha’ or Ādi-Buddha (*ādi* meaning ‘first, original’). The expression also echoes the Tibetan mantra *Om mani padme hum*, which might be translated as ‘Oh, the jewel in the lotus, ah!’ The combination of a jewel, specifically a diamond, inside a lotus is a striking image. The diamond is one of the hardest of all substances, and the lotus is a fragile blossom. Yet the adamant jewel is found in the heart of the delicate flower. That image thus echoes the message of the mango fruit. We must be tough inside, that is, with respect to ourselves, but gentle outside, with respect to others.

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Verses 265–70 return to the distinction between the mind and the thoughts associated with it. A distinction is made between ALL-THOUGHT, that is, Consciousness itself, and particular thoughts. We are the former, not the latter. In a footnote HPB identifies the image of the ‘lamp . . . in a spot free from all wind’ as from the *Bhagavadgītā* (VI.19: ‘As a lamp in a windless place flickereth not, to such is likened the Yogi of subdued thought, absorbed in the yoga of the SELF’). But that image may also suggest the Western legend of Christian Rosenkreutz, the eponymous founder of the Rosicrucian tradition, who was said to be buried in a sealed tomb in which a lamp burned continuously in an airless vacuum without exhausting its fuel.

When the inconstant and fickle breezes disturb that flame, it flickers, casting fantastic shadows on the walls, which are mistaken by the observer for dangers and threats. They are, of course, illusions. An illusion is not a delusion of something that does not exist. Rather it is a misperception of something that is real, but is not what the observer perceives it to be. The shadows represent realities, but because the flame is flickering, they are distorted and so misinterpreted by the observer. In a similar way, when the still light of consciousness is disturbed by wandering thoughts, which come to us from outside our own minds, they distort what we see around us and lead us to respond like ‘a mad elephant’, charging this way and that against the flickering shadows.

In our concern to defend ourselves

against the illusory threat of the shadows, we may forget the great Self, which is the very light, and thus lose what we have so far gained. The ‘change’ we are warned against in verse 271 is the flickering changes of the shadows, when we mistake them for permanent realities.

MEDITATION. Consider the relationship between mind and thoughts by thinking about some of the metaphors used in these verses to illustrate that relationship: an island protected from flooding waters by a dam, a deer pursued by hounds, a diamond deep within the earth where none of the surface lights can reach it, and a lamp in a place where no breeze can disturb it.

Hold any one of these images steady in your mind and let it speak to you.

Verses 272 through 280 describe the final approach to and passage through the fifth and sixth gates. These are an interesting pair of gates — in some ways apparently contradictory, but actually they complement and supplement each other. The fifth gate is that of *virya*, meaning ‘strength, zeal, heroism’, an active and vigorous concept. The fifth gate corresponds with the principle of *manas*, the mind. The sixth gate is that of *dhyāna*, meaning ‘meditation’, a quiet and self-reflective process. The sixth gate corresponds with the principle of *buddhi*, the intellect or faculty that discriminates. They are respectively outgoing and inward looking: the warrior and the contemplative — one who spends life in fighting and one who spends it in prayer

or meditation. Together they represent a balance, of precisely the kind one must have to pass through these two gates.

VERSES [272–280]:

[272] Prepare, and be forewarned in time. If thou hast tried and failed, O dauntless fighter, yet lose not courage: fight on and to the charge return again, and yet again.

[273] The fearless warrior, his precious life-blood oozing from his wide and gaping wounds, will still attack the foe, drive him from out his stronghold, vanquish him, ere he himself expires. Act then, all ye who fail and suffer, act like him; and from the stronghold of your Soul, chase all your foes away — ambition, anger, hatred, e'en to the shadow of desire — when even you failed. . . .

[274] Remember, thou that fightest for man's liberation,²⁰ each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time. The holy germs that sprout and grow unseen in the disciple's soul, their stalks wax strong at each new trial, they bend like reeds but never break, nor can they e're be lost. But when the hour has struck they blossom forth.²¹

.....

[275] But if thou camest prepared, then have no fear.

.....

[276] Henceforth thy way is clear right through the Virya gate, the fifth one of the Seven Portals. Thou art now on the

way that leadeth to the Dhyāna haven, the sixth, the Bodhi Portal.

[277] The Dhyāna gate is like an alabaster vase, white and transparent; within there burns a steady golden fire, the flame of Prajñā that radiates from Ātman.

[278] Thou art that vase.

[279] Thou has estranged thyself from objects of the senses, travelled on the 'Path of seeing', on the 'Path of hearing', and standest in the light of Knowledge. Thou hast now reached Titikshā state.²²

[280] O Naljor, thou art safe.

.....

COMMENT. As the pilgrim approaches the fifth gate, that of the mind, the metaphor in verses 272–5 changes to that of a warrior. This new metaphor is appropriate, for the key to the fifth portal is *virya*. *Virya* is a Sanskrit word that comes from a root *vir* 'to be powerful', which English has also (from Latin) in *virile* and *virtue*. *Virtue* originally meant, not a passive goodness, but an active and virile power for good. So also, the Sanskrit word *vira* means a 'heroic warrior', as in the name of the founder of Jainism, Mahāvira, which means 'great hero'. Similarly, the Latin word *vir*, from which *virile* and *virtue* are derived, means a 'manly man'.

The warrior metaphor is ancient and universal. St Paul speaks of leading a life of holiness as fighting the good fight. And a sword is a traditional symbol of the mind. In her diagram on meditation, HPB speaks of 'courage' as what we gain from

contemplating the unity of all life. HPB explains the expression ‘thou that fightest for man’s liberation’ in a gloss:

Gloss 20. This is an allusion to a well-known belief in the East (as in the West, too, for the matter of that) that every additional Buddha or Saint is a new soldier in the army of those who work for the liberation or salvation of mankind. In Northern Buddhist countries, where the doctrine of *Nirmānakāya*-s — those Bodhisattvas who renounce well-earned *Nirvāna* or the *Dharmakāya* vesture (both of which shut them out for ever from the world of men) in order to invisibly assist mankind and lead it finally to *Paranirvāna* — is taught, every new Bodhisattva or initiated great Adept is called the ‘liberator of mankind’. The statement made by Schlagintweit in his *Buddhism in Tibet* to the effect that *Prulpai Ku* or *Nirmānakāya* is ‘the body in which the Buddhas or Bodhisattvas appear upon earth to teach men’ — is absurdly inaccurate and explains nothing.

Verse 274 gives an assurance that, in fighting this battle or walking the Path, there are no failures. Every effort is assured sooner or later of producing an effect. When we make an effort, we lay the groundwork for future success. That success may come later in this life or in a future one, but no effort is ever wasted. All bear fruit, as HPB says:

Gloss 21. A reference to human passions and sins which are slaughtered during the trials of the novitiate, and serve as well-fertilized soil in which holy germs or seeds

of transcendental virtues may germinate. Pre-existing or *innate* virtues, talents or gifts are regarded as having been acquired in a previous birth. Genius is without exception a talent or aptitude brought from another birth.

The Masters echo this same idea. One of them wrote, ‘We have one word for all aspirants: TRY’ (*Mahatma Letters*, chronological ed. 54, 3rd ed. 35). The only failure is not to try. If we are prepared, by trying, verse 275 tells us that we have nothing to fear.

In verse 276 we learn that, having fought the good fight, we have passed through the fifth gate of *virya* and are on our way to the sixth. The sixth gate is said to be the Bodhi (or Wisdom) Portal. It corresponds to the principle of *buddhi* (intuitive intelligence), and the key that unlocks it is *dhyāna* or meditation.

Echoing the image of the mind as a lamp in a windless place (verse 267), the *buddhi* is said (verse 277) to be a transparent white vase of alabaster in which burns the golden flame of *prajñā* or ‘intuitive wisdom’ radiating from the One Self (*Ātman*). The similarity of the images is significant, for when the mind is energized by *buddhi*, the two principles form a unit, and then the lamp of the mind is not disturbed by the wandering breezes and its light is steady. We ourselves are then that vase (verse 278) and stand in the light of calm indifference to the vagaries and illusory changes of the shadow world. We are then in the state called *titikshā*:

Gloss 22. *Titikshā* is the fifth state of Rāja Yoga — one of supreme indifference, submission, if necessary, to what is called ‘pleasures and pains for all’, but deriving neither pleasure nor pain from such submission — in short, the becoming physically, mentally, and morally indifferent and insensible to either pleasure or pain.

Titikshā is the condition of being indifferent to the fluctuations of the opposites. Life consists of an unending succession of changes: yin and yang each continually turn into the other. Pain and pleasure succeed each other, hunger and satiety, night and day, life and death. If we want the changes to stop, if we want to hang on to some transitory state, we will be continually frustrated. But accepting the fluctuations of the world and rising above them is the condition of *titikshā*. It is seeing the fluctuations for

what they are, and not being disturbed by them. In this state, we are safe (verse 280).

Naljor (as the aspirant is addressed in verse 280) is a Tibetan word for a saintly person. It is used especially of those who have reached the sixth gate, that is, who have achieved intuitive insight into the nature of things and into themselves.

MEDITATION. Think about the images of the warrior and the contemplative. Whereas a number of different metaphors were used to talk about the discursive mind (the island, the deer, the diamond, the lamp), only one is used for the intuitive intelligence or *buddhi* (the alabaster vase with a golden light). How does that difference correlate with the images of warrior and contemplative? In what ways is the mind like a warrior, and the intuitive intelligence like a contemplative? Think on these things. ✧

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all
Where truth abides in fullness . . . and to KNOW
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.

Robert Browning
Paracelsus

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

In the ancient days, when the first quiver of speech came to my lips, I ascended the holy mountain and spoke unto God, saying, 'Master, I am thy slave. Thy hidden will is my law and I shall obey thee for ever more.'

But God made no answer, and like a mighty tempest passed away.

And after a thousand years I ascended the holy mountain and again spoke to God, saying, 'Creator, I am thy creation. Out of clay hast thou fashioned me and to thee I owe mine all.'

And God made no answer, but like a thousand swift wings passed away.

And after a thousand years I climbed the holy mountain and spoke unto God again, saying, 'Father, I am thy son. In pity and love thou hast given me birth, and through love and worship I shall inherit thy kingdom.'

And God made no answer, and like the mist that veils the distant hills he passed away.

And after a thousand years I climbed the sacred mountain and again spoke unto God, saying, 'My God, my aim and my fulfilment; I am thy yesterday and thou art my tomorrow. I am thy root in the earth and thou art my flower in the sky, and together we grow before the face of the sun.'

Then God leaned over me, and in my ears whispered words of sweetness, and even as the sea that enfoldeth a brook that runneth down to her, he enfolded me. And when I descended to the valleys and the plains God was there also.

Kahlil Gibran

Comments on *Viveka-chudāmani*

SUNDARI SIDDHARTHA

ŚANKARĀCHĀRYA, the apostle of Advaita Vedānta, wrote scholastic and technically complex commentaries on the *Brahma Sutra*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Upanishad-s. For those with a lesser technical grasp, he wrote other treatises, presenting the Truth in a simpler form. In this genre, the pride of place goes to *Viveka-chudāmani*. In 580 mellifluous verses, Śankarāchārya narrates a sustained dialogue between a master and his disciple on the human predicament, the nature of the Ultimate Reality, and the means of attaining freedom from the trammels of *samsāra*. The pupil humbly approaches the guru and submits seven questions (Verse 51).

1. What is bondage?
2. How does it arise?
3. How does it continue to exist?
4. How is one released from it?
5. What is that which is not the true self?
6. Who is the True self?
7. How is one to distinguish between the two — the true and the untrue self?

The Master takes up the fourth question first, namely — ‘How is one released from

bondage?’ A very interesting reason is given by the commentator for taking up the fourth question first. He says: ‘When a man is caught in a house on fire, his first impulse will be to douse the flames and escape death. He will not be interested in knowing how the fire was caused, what its extent is, etc.’

The Master makes another significant point. There are many things others can do for you, but the effort for liberation must come from yourself. Others may take the burden from your head and remove your suffering, but the suffering that results from hunger, etc. cannot be appeased by anyone but yourself alone.

Verses 18 to 27 are also very appealing and popular. They enumerate and define the four qualifications which Śankarāchārya considers essential for a person aspiring for liberation. These occur in most of his shorter treatises. So they are considered an essential part of the method of that great Master Śankara. We may think of them as Śankara’s Rules. Charles Johnston added an appendix to his translation of the *Viveka-chudāmani*, in which he compares these four

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prerequisites for Moksha, with parallel passages from Western mystics, including *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, *The Spiritual Guide* by Miguel de Molinos, *A Short Rule* by the Abbot Ludovicus Blosius of the Order of Saint Benedict and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* by William Law, the Anglican mystic. We shall thus have a sufficiently representative view of the Western teachings which cover the same ground as Śankara's Rules.

The four qualifications are:

1. Discernment between the Eternal and the non-eternal.
2. Freedom from self-indulgence in the fruits of works here and above.
3. A group of six virtues — Quietude, Control, Cessation, Endurance, Faith, Concentration.
4. Desire for Liberation.

The book *A Short Rule* says: 'When shall I die to myself and to all created things? When shall nothing live within me but only thou?'

The Imitation of Christ says: 'It is no hard matter to despise human comfort, when we have *that* which is divine.'

Light on the Path says: 'Learn now that there is no cure for desire, no cure for the love of reward, no cure for the misery of longing, save in the fixing of the sight and hearing upon *that* which is invisible and soundless. Begin even now to practise it, and so a thousand serpents will be kept from your path. Live in the eternal.'

Regarding control — 'Great watchfulness and caution are needful in speaking, that too many words may be avoided and

no unfitting ones used. Let thy speech be short, simple and calm' (*A Short Rule*, p.58).

These four qualifications, too, must be acquired by the disciple by his own efforts. Though from the beginning the footsteps of the aspirant have been guided by the Master, yet the conviction of the supreme reality and worth of the spiritual life must be his own conviction.

One's own effort is followed by identification with the Master in heart and thought and will. This concept of the Master or the *guru* exists in Theosophy too. But the Masters are there only till you are well entrenched on the Path. Beyond that point, you are on your own, of course well-equipped with the qualities that have been cultivated and the guidance that has been given by the Master. The foreword to *At the Feet of the Master* demarcates the steps of the aspirant, very much like *Viveka-chudāmani*. The very first words are from the Bible: 'To those who Knock.' Then it says, 'To look at food and say that it is good will not satisfy a starving man; he must put forth his hand and eat.' And for that he must know that this is the *food* which will appease his hunger. So to hear the Master's words is not enough; we must do what He says. *At the Feet of the Master* also gives four qualifications, like *Viveka-chudāmani*. And the very first one is *viveka*. Alcyone uses the word Discrimination. The numbers and types of *viveka* elucidated there, make it seem as if he is talking to you personally about your shortcomings and problems. *At the Feet of the Master*, to put it in a nutshell,

gives the gist of many of the books of Eastern Wisdom in simple English.

Why the Quest?

In the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Publication of *Viveka-chudāmani*, the translator P. Sankaranarayanan has presented in his introduction two questions which can be raised in all sincerity by modern seekers. They may genuinely question the purpose and value of such a metaphysical quest in this technological age, when man sets himself no limit to the conquest of Nature. The translator is himself deep into the quest for spirituality. So he has an answer ready. 'The metaphysical quest in the privacy of one's being is no less arduous in its preparation and execution and no less exhilarating and fruitful in its result than the adventures of modern man to set foot on the Moon, and now on Mars. Both are adventures of the Spirit to explore the infinite, the one of 'The Spirit of Man', the other of 'The Spirit that is Man'.

One really wonders: Who is greater? The Creator who created this world and Man in it? OR the Creator's creation — Man, who is so intent on unravelling the mystery and intricacies of that creation?

The other day my physiotherapist mentioned that after twenty years' research, two scientists have recorded that 'of the twelve pairs of cranial nerves, the first — the olfactory nerve, is capable of experiencing ten thousand types of smells'. I am a student of the Humanities. So I was quite thunderstruck. And those scientists in turn are thunderstruck when

we recite the *Gītā* — Arjuna saying 'O, Lord! I perceive everything in you' (*The Viśvarupa* in ch.XI).

So what is common to both is 'the feeling of wonder'. In the book *Sophie's World*, the philosopher is defined thus: 'the only thing we require to be good philosophers, is the faculty of wonder'.

If you fail to wonder or do not have the scientist's curiosity to know, you are but a vegetable. And Alberto describes these sedate, run-of-the mill people to Sophie in a delightful way. He says:

The whole universe is a source of wonder. It is, in a way, the white rabbit that the magician pulls out of his empty hat. And we who live here in the world are microscopic insects existing deep down in the rabbit's fur. But philosophers are always trying to climb up the fine hairs of the fur, in order to stare right into the magician's eyes. The vegetables are content in remaining deep down in the rabbit's fur.

Jivanmukta

In the last part of *Viveka-chudāmani* — around Verse 430 — we have a detailed expostulation of the man who is free even in life. He is called *Jivanmukta*. The refrain goes on from verse 428 to 441. 'He whose wisdom thus stands firm, whose bliss is unbroken, by whom this world is well-nigh forgotten, he is said to be free even in life.'

The translator raises a question about these *Jivanmukta-s* and provides an answer. The question is: 'Of what use to the world are these *Jivanmukta-s*? They

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might have secured their own *moksha*, but what good do they do to the world? Even a philanthropist or a social worker is better than them.'

He himself answers, giving the example of Bhagavan Ramana of Tiruvannamalai and says: 'Have we not seen him effecting, by his very presence, a Copernican revolution withdrawing men's minds from things material and centring them in the ātman?' I am tempted to quote once again from *At the Feet of the Master*. In the chapter on Discrimination, it is said: 'You must distinguish not only the useful from the useless, but the more useful from the less useful. To feed the poor is a good and noble and useful work; yet to feed their souls is nobler and more useful than to feed their bodies. Any rich man can feed the body, but only those who know can feed the soul. If you know, it is your duty to help others to know.'

Just like the Masters of Theosophy, the Master of *Viveka-chudāmani* reveals to the disciple all the secrets of the complex, separated self, in wise and eloquent words, with practical illustrations drawn from our common experience; and further he

reveals to him the steps by which he may rise to the self which is without separateness.

The Master, in fact, leads the disciple up to and through the first initiation which opens the arduous road to adeptship. Thereafter the disciple sees and must faithfully follow the ancient, narrow path stretching away, the path the seers tread towards the goal of divinity.

In the Sanskrit language there is a famous drama, *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*, written by the great poet Kālidāsa. It is generally believed that Goethe, the great dramatist and poet of Germany, was impressed by Kālidāsa's *Śākuntalam*. Goethe's work *Faust* bears the impression of it. I want to conclude with a quotation from that *Faust*:

Besinne dich doch!
Nur einen Schritt,
So bist du frei.

In English,

Reflect, consider, remember,
(Resort to introversion),
Then one step more.
And thou art free!

**The tree which needs two arms to span its girth sprang from the tiniest shoot.
Yon tower, nine storeys high, rose from a little mound of earth. A journey of a
thousand miles began with a single step.**

Tao Te King

Brother Rājā — Our Fourth President

A TS MEMBER

CURUPPUMULLAGE JINARĀJADĀSA (CJ) was born in 1875 in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. At the age of thirteen, he met C. W. Leadbeater. Leadbeater had organized in 1886 an English School for boys in Ceylon, which CJ joined that same year. This School grew to become the important Ananda College with over a thousand boys.

In 1889, CJ went to England with CWL, who assumed responsibility for the boy's education up to the time he entered St John's College, Cambridge. CWL recalls their arrival in London:

We reached London the day after Christmas — a glorious season of happiness and goodwill, no doubt, but hardly the best time of the year to transfer a boy from the splendid sunshine of Ceylon to the chilly fogs of London.

At the first opportunity I presented Rājā to Madame Blavatsky, who was then staying at 17 Lansdowne Road, and she received her future Vice-President very graciously. . . . In 1895 Mrs Besant most kindly invited us to join the Headquarters Staff, which was then established in her house at 19 Avenue Road, St John's Wood, and we resided there until she sold the lease

at the end of the century. It was during this period that Mr Jinarājadāsa went up to Cambridge. He took up the study of Sanskrit and Philology. It was his intention to qualify in Law as well, but unfortunately his health failed, and he was unable to appear for the Law Tripos examination, though he had done the requisite study and had gained a high place in the 'Mays', the trial examination conducted by the College. He also bore a prominent part in another side of the University life, for he joined the Lady Margaret Rowing Club, and steered his College boat one year in the Lent races to a fourfold victory, thereby winning for it the headship of the River. He took a very good degree in 1900, and almost immediately afterwards returned to Ceylon, as we had the idea that his lifework might lie among his own countrymen. He seems to have been well received, for he was shortly made Vice-Principal of the Ananda College, but I fancy he soon found that there was but very limited scope there for his talent, and felt that he could do more effective work in Western countries. (*The Theosophist*, November 1993)

Brother Rājā, as he was affectionately known, began his career as an

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international lecturer for the TS in 1904. He occupied various positions in the Society, including that of international Vice-President between 1921 and 1928. He was Director of the Adyar Library (1930–32) and was awarded the T. Subba Row Medal in 1913 for his contribution to Theosophical literature. He addressed audiences in many countries of the world in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. He is the author of many books, including *First Principles of Theosophy*, *Practical Theosophy*, *The New Humanity of Intuition*, *What Shall We Teach* and *Art as Will and Idea*.

In his inaugural address as the fourth President of the Theosophical Society, Brother Rājā said on 17 February 1946 at Adyar:

We know that divine Truth well here in India in the proclamation of the sages that God and man are one, not two. *Tat tvam asi*, 'THAT art thou', is still found written in the scriptures.

This same truth that God and man are one exists in some other religions also, but mostly as an esoteric doctrine. Said Jesus Christ, 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches,' 'At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye, in Me, and I in you.' Said His greatest disciple, St Paul, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' Traditions of this wonderful revelation, that there is no eternal chasm between the nature of God and the nature of man, are found everywhere.

Thus, in Buddhism also, as it is understood

in Tibet, China and Japan, the same mystic truth is proclaimed. The teaching is given to all, that in each human being exists a Bodhisattva Principle, so that each who desires to tread the Way of the Buddhas, necessitating heroic efforts life after life for hundreds of lives, in order to teach mankind the Great Law, can achieve the stupendous height of being a Tathāgata, a Saviour of mankind, for Bodhi, Supreme Wisdom and Compassion, is at the root of his being.

It is by basing our work on this truth, the eternal Rock of Ages, that we Theosophists can help mankind. If I have the nature of God within me, if somewhere in the recesses of my heart and mind, I can see a Divine Light shining within me . . . it follows that Divine *Happiness* also resides within me, I am then not only 'the Way, the Truth and the Life', I am also the fount of Happiness. Convince men that the fount of Happiness is within themselves, then little by little the struggle for life diminishes . . .

Suppose in addition, every Theosophist in every Theosophical Lodge were to say softly to himself as he meets friend or stranger, 'THAT art thou, the Vision of God that I seek, the goal of Mukti which I long for, art *thou*.' All our Theosophical studies then are a mere accompaniment, an elaboration in harmonies, of the glorious chant of Unity which rings throughout the universe, linking angel and man, beast and plant, in one joyous embrace.

My Brothers, we shall succeed in our

Brother Rājā — Our Fourth President

stupendous task. We shall achieve our dream. For we work, but *not alone*. With us stand the Great Saviours of the World who have gone before us. Their Blessing is with us. Their Strength will uphold us, as, in Their name and for the love of mankind, we go forth into the world to lessen the load of human misery.

It was during Brother Rājā's presidency that the School of the Wisdom was started at Adyar. At its inaugural session, on 17 November 1949, he said:

There is an important distinction between Wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom will embrace within her field of operations every form of knowledge; but all knowledge in its entirety does not constitute Wisdom.

It is the purpose of a School of the Wisdom to bring each student to survey things 'from the centre'.

The aim of a true School of the Wisdom is to enable the individual to cease from being one who gives his intellectual adherence to a particular school of philosophy, and become by himself one who little by little surveys the problem of life directly from his own standpoint. It is the School's purpose to equip its students to become, each according to his own temperament and aptitude, philosophers, scientists, ethical teachers, artists, givers of economic law, statesmen, educators, town planners and every other possible type of server of humanity. . . .

This intense sense of Life must always

accompany the true student. There can be no Wisdom which is unaccompanied by an ever-increasing sense of Wonder.

His view of Theosophy was dynamic, non-dogmatic, passionate and full of hope for the future of humanity. In *The Theosophist*, 'Ever New Theosophy', March, 1941, we read:

. . . Theosophy is not a system of thought that is *concluded*. There is no textbook of Theosophy which can say: 'All Theosophy is here.'

We, who are old students, must not imagine, because we have read many books, attended many study classes, or even are Theosophical lecturers and authors, that we know everything about Theosophy. If we have studied well, we realize that there are innumerable new aspects of Theosophy awaiting discovery by us. It is just that fact of new discoveries in Theosophy which makes Theosophy so intensely fascinating. . . .

In addition to all these aspects of Theosophy, we have during the last few years discovered a new field for Theosophical research. It is the domain of Art. We are beginning to realize that, without an understanding of the inner meaning which underlies the creations of art, it is not possible for a student of Theosophy to survey accurately all the creations of the Divine Mind.

How many new and inspiring aspects of Theosophy, which succeeding generations of Theosophists will discover, who shall

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say? We are only at the beginning of the discovery of Theosophy.

In all these remarks of mine, I want to make clear my thought that Theosophy is not a philosophy which is *static* or *fixed*, but one that *grows*. And therefore we who are old Theosophists must recollect that Theosophy is for us ever new. Though we have read Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* a dozen times, we are only at the beginning of our Theosophical discoveries. For, there is another *Secret Doctrine* which many of us Theosophists have not so far learned or read. It is the book of Nature. The sea, the hill, the great mountain range, the cloud, the lake, the tree, the flower, the pebble, each one of these is one page of a new *Secret Doctrine*; we must learn to read those pages also one by one, by

identifying ourselves with them by our imagination and sympathy.

Brother Rājā passed away on 18 June 1953, at 'Olcott', the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in America. Mr N. Sri Ram, who had succeeded him as President of the TS, in his speech at the memorial meeting held in the Headquarters Hall at Adyar on the following day, said of Brother Rājā:

There is no aspect of the Theosophical work with which he has not been intimately associated during the long period of his labours for the Society. . . .

He had his own vision of Truth in his presentation of Theosophy, which had the characteristics both of a mystic and an occultist. He was both practical and idealistic. ✧

OFFICIAL NOTICE

CONVENTION 2009

In accordance with Rule 46 of the Rules and Regulations of the Theosophical Society, the Executive Committee has determined that the 133rd international Convention of the Theosophical Society will be held at the international Headquarters, Adyar, Chennai, India, from 26 to 31 December 2009.

Dr C. V. Agarwal
International Secretary

Theosophical Work around the World

East and Central Africa

The 44th Convention of the East and Central African Section was hosted by the Nile Lodge, Kampala, Uganda, 10–12 April 2009. The theme was ‘Unity in a Changing World’. The guest speaker was Mr C. V. K. Maithreya from Chennai, India. He also toured Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia. The programme included talks, etc., a question and answer session and a symposium on the subject ‘Unity — A Necessity in the Changing World’. Members in Kampala are confident of reviving Lodges closed down in 1972 due to the problems prevailing in Uganda at that time.

Mr Kiran H. Shah, a past General Secretary of the Section, was elected as Chairman of the Pan-African Theosophical Federation at the Federation meeting held in Kampala during the Convention. He succeeds Mr Tom Davis in that position. Mr Navin B. Shah was re-elected as General Secretary.

England

The Southern Federation Spring Conference, which is organized by the Foundation of Theosophical Studies in conjunction with the Southern Federation of the TS in England, was held on 1–3 May 2009 at Tekels Park, Camberley,

Surrey. The theme was ‘Reincarnation, Karma and the Spiritual Path’. The talks presented included ‘Reincarnation: the Evidence and the Implications’ by Mr Peter Barton, ‘Reincarnation: A Personal Odyssey’ by Mr John Holden, and ‘Alchemical Wedding of Soul and Spirit’ by Mr George Wood.

India

The 80th Annual Conference of the Kerala Theosophical Federation was held in Calicut, 2–3 May 2009. The Conference theme was ‘A Life of Action, Not of Reaction’. The international Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, was the chief guest and delivered a talk on ‘Karma and Dharma’. Dr P. Sivadasan, a historian of the Calicut University, delivered a public lecture on ‘The Theosophical Society and the Social Renaissance in Kerala’, which was much appreciated.

The 89th anniversary of the Bengal Theosophical Federation took place on 4–5 April 2009, followed by a TOS Conference. The international President, Mrs Radha Burnier, presided over both functions. The guest speakers included Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary of the Indian Section, Mr H. K. Sharan, National Lecturer, Indian Section, and Mrs Manju Sundaram. ✧

The Divine Wisdom in knowing itself will know all things.

Dionysius the Areopagite

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