

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.



On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

The Future of the Theosophical Society

You probably know the statement in the Bible 'He sendeth his rain and maketh the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust.' These are the things that make not much difference between one kind of people and another. But he does not cast wealth and virtue upon people equally, for these are things which we create for ourselves, but attribute to something else when it is convenient to do so. Take a person like Kabir in India who is held even today to be exceptional. He was not honoured as a great man in his time, he continued to be a simple cobbler, but for centuries he has become known for what he understood and wrote. And princes and rulers who enjoyed so-called honour at the time remembered him.

Our ideas may be similarly based on some kind of spiritual inability to see what is and what is not related to truth. The power 'which moves to good' has a vast vision for the universe, according to what is necessary for all people and other forms of life to make progress in the real sense and reach greater heights spiritually. We cannot understand fully the progress which is evolution; we only understand a very small part because it is a vast scheme

going beyond the many lives of each person involved.

Conran Smith whose work is known to some Theosophists has written that evolution on this earth is taking everything to a higher level, and has reached the stage of man. But we like to think that this is the ultimate stage, and there is nothing else beyond. Every person who is capable of thinking can think such thoughts, and they would have no meaning at all from the real point of view. The elephant, if he could think, might as well believe that the elephant stage is the highest, and there is nothing beyond it. Of course human beings can kill elephants; but they are not more intelligent; therefore the elephant is superior. It can think like that, but it does not.

Everything on this line of evolution, that is improvement inwardly and otherwise, is moving towards spiritual perfection. But we human beings can only think of human perfection, in terms of things about which our minds are capable of thinking. But slowly, in an orderly scheme, a movement towards perfection, which is not arbitrary or understandable, goes on. Evolution is breaking up forms and renewing them. Each time an individual dies, he does not really die; he contributes a little bit — maybe a tiny bit

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— to a higher order, a new way of functioning which is quite extraordinary. Out of the multiple alternatives and choices, evolution pushes towards goals that bring about the perfection which is taking place unseen by us.

Some scientists do know that this process is going on through the centuries, but they do not know why, and we cannot know either. If we look at evolution, it does not seem random; it seems to be something planned according to time, or timelessness. If we think of it in terms of our time, it has nothing to do with the real. But perhaps evolution takes place outside of time as we know it, and things are not predetermined in the way that we imagine.

There seems to be a supreme memory at work, but we are not able to understand it. The rationality of the universe may be based on various kinds of fields and planes, and we do not intuit them yet. Divine consciousness of which we have some inkling, allows our intuition to work, but imperfectly. Divine consciousness is not perishable, and that is what scientists propose in regard to energy which is said to be undiminishing. It is universal and nobody can destroy it, and perhaps that is the idea that Hindus had of Śiva, Purusha, etc. They had an inkling of this; the original source is the supreme being, and all models or forms are temporary and localized. So the below is determinable, perishable; it can degenerate, but the original is unlike that.

Whitehead made a statement (and it sounds true) about the perishability of thought. He said when the idea is new, its

custodians live for it, and if need be, die for it. Their inheritors receive the idea, and perhaps their faith is strong and their intention is good. Without inheriting the fervour, the idea settles down to a comfortable middle age and turns senile. The institutions organized around it do not die, but by sheer force of momentum, or like a dead knight borne on the horse, they go on. It is a useful statement, of what we can actually experience. Ideas go on surviving for a long time before they die. Lofty ideas become superstitions and lead to exploitation. The idea behind science is less corruptible than many other things, but enquiry becomes something quite different in the course of time from what it was meant to be.

Science is going through a period leading to a new way of bringing about destruction, of treating the environment, a new way of commercialism, and of personal vanity. Religions begin with very profound ideas of universal love, compassion, tenderness etc., and as they develop they become loaded with bigotry, with fanaticism, and ultimately they kill. They believe in killing in order to bring about right ideas. There are noble ideas about human dignity behind some revolutionary movements, which seem changed by self-interested people, and therefore have lost all value.

Ideal Forms

Ideas can mirror model forms or become petty and small. Great movements are founded on values and ideas we have at the lofty level. Freedom, brotherhood

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and love, are ideas which never die, therefore we call them principles. When ideas decay and die they can be resuscitated by new light, which is important to realize. We must look at them with fresh minds so that we see what is intrinsic to them, what is really of value. Then those thoughts become endowed with a power which old ideas do not have, because they have become encrusted manifestations. All the religions speak of some truth; the truth of unity, for example, behind all religions; but these ideas can change and become different, and weak. So what is needed for human progress is not new ideas, but new light, a mind which sees the beauty of right ideas, which can intuit a great deal.

Brotherhood is the concept of wholeness. Unfortunately in English there is no common word for brother and sister. We say 'brotherhood', and it includes both brother and sister; we mean complete wholeness, a feeling of kindness, of compassion, of oneness, with every living thing. It cannot be known by self-enclosure. The word 'brotherhood' can become a cliché, just as the word *karma* has become a cliché to Hindus. Karma is actually part of the universal system, and has a profound meaning. It is a teacher and refers to that state which acts with goodness and is revealed even when it is not apparent.

Theosophy should be a word which denotes that wholeness, and being alive to the import and the nature of things. It should mean the light behind the wisdom. If we think of this, the Theosophical

Society should be a vital, dynamic, ever-new body, and not a body which is gradually sinking into routine. I do not want to make remarks that seem derogatory about anybody, but a few Sections want to renew or revitalize Theosophy by making it acceptable to the world. What can we do to keep the Society alive, without changing basic ideas, not the idea that everyone has of the Society. What can make it a force?

I think the important thing is that we should be clearly based on certain unchanging principles. Ideas have changed because of new discoveries in the field of material things, but the quality of human actions has not changed; they have become aggravated. We are told that when Muslims first came to India, soldiers of the invading Muslim armies and local soldiers used to fight in one field, and in the next field farmers went on ploughing the land and planting their crops! It did not always affect the entire country. But now everything tends to have an impact all over the world, and people think in terms of worldly success, not of local success. The problem has become more serious.

The problem of injury to the environment, for example, is widespread. It was the view until recently that in the north and south poles little or nothing could be done. Now they want to dig the earth there and extract minerals, as this will be profitable. So money rules the conduct of nations. Behind the action is the feeling of selfishness, of grabbing things. In India today they think that the standard of life has gone up; in some ways

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it has, and many more people are becoming very rich. But poverty which we do not see in the cities, desperate poverty drives people to suicide, etc. elsewhere. It is because we have the idea of personal importance, ideas which are selfish, and so on.

What does evolution mean? Does it mean merely making more money, exploiting more of the earth, or does it mean something else? We do not care about people being equal in the real sense. We are going ahead with utter purposelessness. So the question is — of what use are the general principles which must guide us in life? The more people think of what humanity has to reach, what it has

to achieve, what it has to work for, the better it would be.

The Theosophical Society is a small society. But small though we are, we can help the world to recover; we must bring to the attention of people, again and again if necessary, that there must be a revolutionary process to develop virtues, to become more intelligent and less selfish. If we have this thought in our minds, and we think about it together and also individually, we can bring new life to the Theosophical Society. Instead of repeating old ideas let us think about everlasting principles, and the way we should present them to people in the present day. ✧

Its future [The Theosophical Society's] will depend almost entirely upon the degree of selflessness, earnestness, devotion, and last, but not least, on the amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by those members, on whom it will fall to carry on the work, and to direct the Society after the death of the founders. . .

I do not refer to technical knowledge of the esoteric doctrine, though that is most important; I spoke rather of the great need which our successors in the guidance of the Society will have of unbiased and clear judgement. Every such attempt as the Theosophical Society has hitherto ended in failure, because, sooner or later, it has degenerated into a sect, set up hard-and-fast dogmas of its own, and so lost by imperceptible degrees that vitality which living truth alone can impart. You must remember that all our members have been bred and born in some creed or religion, that all are more or less of their generation both physically and mentally, and consequently that their judgement is but too likely to be warped and unconsciously biased by some or all of these influences. If, then, they cannot be freed from such inherent bias, or at least taught to recognize it instantly and so avoid being led away by it, the result can only be that the Society will drift onto some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die.

H. P. Blavatsky
The Key to Theosophy

Action without Attachment

DUSAN ZAGAR

IN *At the Feet of the Master* we read: 'Whatsoever you do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord, and not unto men.'

And: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'

Annie Besant in her book of *Meditations* wrote:

Fix your mind rigidly on the work before you for the time being, and when you have done with it, drop it.

These words give us one and the same advice, which is to do our work with full attention. This also means that there would be no attachment. When we work without attachment then what matters is the work itself and not the results. Today, when a painter paints a picture he puts his name on it so that everybody can see who the artist is. In ancient times painters did not do that. It was only the painting itself that was important. That means that what is important is the work itself and not the author.

The Master says: '*Whatsoever* you do, do it heartily. . . *whatsoever* you do!' Here we have essential advice, which we should not pass by hastily.

Every work we do, we should do heartily, which means with love. Love is always in the present moment and at that moment the 'head' is silent. What is happening in the present should be observed deeply. Here the Master tells us that what matters is our attitude, *how* the work should be done. He does not speak about how to attain results.

If we would practise this advice every day, persistently, then one day we would recognize that the being who is doing the work is our innermost Self.

Thich Nhat Hanh writes in his book *Cultivating the Mind of Love*:

When you volunteer to clean the kitchen or scrub the pots, if you practise as a bodhisattva, you will have great joy and happiness while doing so. But if you have the feeling, 'I am doing a lot, and others are not contributing their fair share', you will suffer, because your practice is based on form . . .

Great Ones have told us that when we are attached to something there is always anger, greed, delusion, fear, competition, envy, jealousy, likes and dislikes, sorrow,

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etc. These are all attributes of selfishness which is the main cause of suffering. Such is the picture of the world today.

The Mahachohan in his letter to A. P. Sinnett gave the advice: *‘Teach the people to see that life on this earth, even the happiest, is but a burden and an illusion. . .’* This teaching gives us a message of complete unattachment.

To be able *to teach the people* what is said above is not an easy thing to do. If we take these words seriously then it is obvious that before we can teach others this truth it should first be grasped by ourselves. We should realize that we are guests on this beautiful planet. We come, and after a while, we go away. But in between we live our lives as if we shall be here forever. We become very attached to the earthly things and our great master is desire, craving. We become prisoners of our desires and are really not aware of this fact. Every desire for the fruit of action is like a new jailer, a new jewel of Māra (as the Buddhists would say) with its false blended light. Each desire brings a new attachment and a new kind of fear and disappointment.

There is a little story of two gardeners. They both had some apple trees. The first wanted the trees to bear many apples. So he watered them very often and gave them much fertilizer. But the trees did not become stronger; they became even feebler. He did not notice that. In his greed for many apples he gave them too much water and too much fertilizer.

When the time came the trees bore some apples but not as many as he had expected

— only ten baskets. He began thinking, ‘There are not so many apples but I will sell them at a higher price.’ So he went to the market place. There he met the other gardener who was a very humble and peaceful man, who brought fifty baskets full of very healthy and beautiful apples. He was very surprised and envious.

He asked him: ‘Are these apples all from your garden?’

‘Yes, they are’, replied the other gardener with his meek and gentle voice.

‘But how come you have so many? What have you done? Did you use some special method?’

‘No special method, I only cared for the trees for the sake of the trees themselves and not because of the apples’, replied the other gardener.

The wisdom of this story teaches us that if we do our work with love, the fruits will come naturally. There is a divine Law operating behind all our actions and the real practitioner of the Heart Doctrine, which is true Theosophy, does not care for results. If we unselfishly work for others, which is for minerals, plants, animals and human beings, we become a benevolent force in Nature.

In HPB’s *Practical Occultism* we read:

Feel that you have nothing to do for yourself, that certain charges are laid upon you by the Deity, which you must fulfil. Desire God *and not anything that he can give*. Whatever there is to do, *has* to be done, but not for the sake of enjoying the fruit of action. If all one’s acts are performed with the full conviction that

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they are of no value to the actor, but are to be done simply because they *have* to be done — in other words, because it is in our nature to act — then the personality of egotism in us will grow weaker and weaker until it comes to rest, permitting

the knowledge revealing the True Self to shine out in all its splendour.

As the Master said to the young Krishnamurti: ‘He who acts without attachment entirely forgets himself and becomes as a pen in the hand of God.’ ✧

Asceticism is for the common run of people, since it consists in making the concupiscent appetite abstain from pleasures, in renouncing the temptation to return again to that from which one is separated, in dropping the search for what one has lost, in depriving oneself of superfluous desires, in thwarting the goad of the passions, in neglecting all which does not concern the soul. But this is an imperfection as regards the path of the elect, for it presupposes an importance attached to the things of this world, an abstention from their use, an outward mortification in depriving oneself of things here, while inwardly an attachment is felt for them.

To make an issue of the world amounts to turning thyself toward thyself: it is to pass thy time struggling with thyself; it is to take account of thy feelings and to remain with thyself against thy concupiscence.

In all truth, asceticism is the ardent aspiration of the heart towards Him alone; it is to place in Him the aspirations and desires of the soul; to be preoccupied uniquely with Him, without any other preoccupation, in order that He (to whom be praise!) may remove from thee the mass of these causes.

Ibn al-ʿArif

The Philosophy of Buddhism

BHUPENDRA R. VORA

BUDDHISM is essentially a way of life based on the teachings of its founder and demonstrated in his exemplary life. Beautiful legends have gathered around the birth, boyhood and young manhood of Siddhartha Gautama, telling how, despite his happy, protected life within the palace, he discovered that sorrow, disease and death are universal; how at the age of twenty-nine years he left his home, his wife and newborn son, and went away alone into the forest to find the way to end man's suffering. During the six years that followed when he was a hermit, he experimented with the path of extreme penance — tortures and starvation which were self-inflicted — but finding no answer to his quest gave up that path, and sitting in meditation on what is believed to be the full moon day of May (Wesak or Vaisakh), he found the answer and became a *Sammāsambuddha*, the All Knowing or the Awakened or Enlightened One. There followed forty-five years of active preaching life when he went about the country showing men and women how they might find the ending of ill, discord and suffering, and the same imperturbable joy that he himself had found.

There are many stories in the *Jātaka*

tales of the Buddha's previous lives in which he tried life after life to develop virtues and gradually perfect himself to a noble life. Each of these stories has a moral and is instructive of the path of *Bodhisattva*-s.

When the Buddha took the last of his many births, when he came as Lord Gautama, it does not appear that he had originally planned to found a new religion. He belonged simply to a faith which was already of considerable antiquity, and had therefore departed much from its original form, as all religions tend to do after a time. There was considerable rigidity as to forms and ceremonies. There were also animal sacrifices at rituals. Then came Lord Buddha, and by his teachings flung open wide the gates of the sweet law of justice, for he taught that man had departed entirely from the real form of religion. The Buddha taught them what he called the Middle Way, which gave hope to the masses that a higher life is possible for the man still in the world; though he might not be able to devote himself to metaphysics and to hair-splitting arguments, he could still obtain sufficient grasp of the great facts of evolution to form a satisfactory guide to

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him. He declared that extremes in either direction are equally irrational, either a life of pleasure and comfort on the one hand, or extreme asceticism on the other hand.

One of the finest books on the life of Lord Buddha is *The Light of Asia* which brings out the spirit of the time and life of the Buddha. The Buddha's triumphant words on attaining enlightenment were:

MANY A HOUSE OF LIFE
HATH HELD ME — SEEKING EVER HIM
WHO WROUGHT
THESE PRISONS OF THE SENSES,
SORROW-FRAUGHT;
SORE WAS MY CEASELESS STRIFE!

BUT NOW,
THOU BUILDER OF THIS TABERNACLE
— THOU!
I KNOW THEE! NEVER SHALT THOU
BUILD AGAIN
THESE WALLS OF PAIN,
NOR RAISE THE ROOF-TREE OF DECEITS,
NOR LAY
FRESH RAFTERS ON THE CLAY;
BROKEN THY HOUSE IS, AND THE RIDGE-
POLE SPLIT!
DELUSION FASHIONED IT!
SAFE PASS I THENCE — DELIVERANCE
TO OBTAIN.

Buddhism, more than any religion shows the futility of earthly life and this feeling is conveyed in this statement from the *Dhammapada* which has been so aptly presented by Sir Edwin Arnold.

On attaining Buddhahood, the Lord went to Sarnath and gave his first discourse to his first five disciples — the Dhammachakka Pavathana Sutta or

Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness. He gave the four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path:

The First Truth is of *Sorrow*. Be not mocked!

Life which ye prize is long-drawn agony:

Only its pains abide; its pleasures are
As birds which light and fly.

The Second Truth is *Sorrow's Cause*.

What grief
Springs of itself and springs not of
Desire? . . .
So flameth *Trshnā*, lust and thirst of things.

The Third is *Sorrow's Ceasing*. This is peace—

To conquer love of self and lust of
life,
To tear deep-rooted passion from the
breast,
To still the inward strife . . .

The Fourth Truth is *The Way*. It
openeth wide,

Plain for all feet to tread, easy and near,
The *Noble Eightfold Path*; it goeth straight
To peace and refuge. Hear!

The Noble Eightfold Path

The teachings of the Blessed One are characterized by their simplicity, so that the ordinary human being could understand them. Even the language he used at that time was Prakrit, the language of the people — not Sanskrit.

The teachings, although brief, are instilled with wisdom and just as volumes could be written on the four Noble Truths,

so also could they be written on the Noble Eightfold Path. Each person gets from them a meaning according to his development and level of understanding. Moreover, the teachings are so logically arranged that one follows the other and are easy to remember by the average man. If an aspirant following this path carries out the eight directions, he would bridge the threshold of Arhatship and prepare himself for liberation.

- The first of these great truths is Right Knowledge.
- The second Right Thought or Purpose
- The third Right Speech
- The fourth Right Activity
- The fifth Right Means of Livelihood
- The sixth Right Exertion
- The seventh Right Memory
- The eighth Right Concentration

Sometimes, the first five steps are considered appropriate for the average man and the last three for the more serious aspirant who wishes to hasten his evolution. We shall consider each step briefly although far deeper meanings are attributed to them.

Right Knowledge or Right Doctrine

One can sum up in brief that right knowledge is based on and is in accordance with the facts of life, the facts of the Universe, and the Law of Cause and Effect. If one were in a state of *avidyā* (lack of knowledge) and acted, effect would still follow cause, but one would have no way of guiding one's life. The

Buddha gave simple examples in his teaching so that even a peasant could understand him. He explained the law of Karma thus: If a man acts from an evil thought, pain follows that action just as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the cart. Again, if a man acts from a pure thought, happiness attends him as inseparably as his shadow.

The Buddha also taught that 'hatred ceaseth not by hatred but by love' — the Law of Opposites. Vibrations of one type grow by vibrations of the same type and are neutralized by those of the opposite type, love by hate and vice versa, and are strengthened by those of the same type, love by love, hate by hate.

It is with Right Knowledge that the next step is considered.

Right Thought

Having the right beliefs one comes to right thought or purpose.

A man who thinks wrongly, acts wrongly. A man who thinks rightly, acts rightly. Therefore, thought or purpose, which is often disregarded, is far more important than either speech or action. Carelessness in thought results in evil ways. Therefore, on the foundation of Right Knowledge, Right Thinking or Right Purpose is to be built. Earnestness, said the Buddha, 'is life; thoughtlessness is death'. Thoughts build the future — thoughts make the character. As one thinks today so he inevitably acts the following day. Thoughts create tendencies which are re-embodied in the next incarnation.

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Right Speech

Right speech is speech which is true, kind and courteous. All the empty falsehoods which people so lightly utter — these are all condemned and shut out from Right Speech. Right speech is true to the utmost and it is also kind and courteous. Harsh language, cruel words, bitter attacks — none of these is possible to a Buddhist who is trying to walk upon the Noble Eightfold Path.

A good example from the life of the Buddha: A certain man was using the wrong type of speech, throwing abuses at the Blessed One, who listened patiently until he had finished and answered gently: ‘Son! When a man gives a present without regard to the rules of politeness, the fashion is to say “keep your present”, Son! I cannot take your railing. Keep it and take it back to yourself.’

The wicked man who attacks a virtuous one, is like a man who looks up to high heaven and spits at it. Heaven is not soiled thereby, for the spittle falls upon his own person. The moral here is that any evil words spoken to you do you no harm, unless you answer them with evil speech. By giving love when evil words are spoken, the evil is returned and one remains uninjured.

Right Action

Once control over the mind and tongue are established, right action is sure to follow. In the five precepts of the Buddha are Right Action, i.e., not to kill, not to lust, not to drink alcoholic drinks, etc. Right action is therefore the fourth of the steps on the path.

Right Means of Livelihood

What are the Right Means of Livelihood? They are the gaining of a living by means that do not hurt our fellow-men. In earning one’s livelihood, a person should neither injure nor wrong those amongst whom he lives. A man earns his livelihood but rarely ponders, ‘Do I earn it in the right way?’ Behind the great success stories of fortunes made, one sees ruined homes, desperate men, the miseries of many. This teaching exhorts men to be careful and vigilant about how they earn their living.

Right Exertion

Right exertion cannot take place unless Right Knowledge and Right Thought exist. The man who deliberately does right using right knowledge and guiding his exertion by right thought does twice as well as the headlong man who desires to do right but does not think rightly. One must be wise as well as good and prudent, for much of the harm and misery in the world grows out of ignorant good intentions.

Right Memory

Right memory from the worldly point of view means that a kindness that is done to one is treasured and remembered for the rest of one’s life in gratitude; it also means that a wrong done is forgotten as soon as it is committed. This is the Right Memory one has to develop. By remembering all the good one has received and forgetting all the wrong done, peace and joy are assured and

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memory loses the power to be tormented for injustices.

From an esoteric point of view, right memory means memory of all past births and its experiences — understanding the workings of the laws of Reincarnation and Karma.

Right Concentration

Finally, the last step of the Noble Eightfold Path. For the man of the world this means the training of the mind in the duties of everyday life — fixing one's attention to the things one is doing so that they are done as perfectly as possible, not letting the mind wander or drift, not to be distracted by extraneous things. This is the first step towards the higher aims of true concentration and meditation.

From an esoteric point of view, it means training the mind in the highest forms of concentration and meditation to enable one to know anything one wills, i.e., to know the realities of the higher life.

This is the teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path, given out by the Lord Buddha,

so logically organized that it is easy to remember and easy to understand.

The Buddha avoided all unnecessary speculation on the source or ultimate nature of man, God or the Universe, for he felt that what was of importance to man were his problems of everyday life.

. . . measure not with words
Th' Immeasurable; nor sink the string of
thought
Into the fathomless. Who asks doth err,
Who answers, errs. Say nought!

The teachings of the Buddha spread far and wide but his whole doctrine may be summed up in one Gāthā:

*Sabba pāpassa akaranam
Kusalassa upasampadā;
Sa-chitta-pariyodapanam
Etam Buddhānusāsanam*

To cease from all evil actions,
To generate all that is good,
To cleanse one's mind.

This is the constant advice of the Buddha-s. ✧

Daibai asked Baso, 'What is the Buddha?' Baso answered,
'This very mind is the Buddha.'

Mumonkan (Gateless Gate), 30

Studies in *The Voice of the Silence*, 16

JOHN ALGEO

AFTER the preceding introductory verses, the text returns to the list of the seven Portals (verses 207–13) and describes each in greater detail. The first three Portals and keys, treated in verses 230–40, concern particularly the body or outer person.

VERSES [230–40]:

[230] Armed with the key of charity, of love and tender mercy, thou art secure before the gate of Dāna, the gate that standeth at the entrance of the Path.

[231] Behold, O happy pilgrim! The Portal that faceth thee is high and wide, seems easy of access. The road that leads there-through is straight and smooth and green. 'Tis like a sunny glade in the dark forest depths, a spot on earth mirrored from Amitābha's paradise. There, nightingales of hope and birds of radiant plumage sing perched in green bowers, chanting success to fearless pilgrims. They sing of Bodhisattvas' virtues five, the fivefold source of Bodhi power, and of the seven steps in Knowledge.

[232] Pass on! For thou has brought the key; thou art secure.

[233] And to the second gate the way is verdant too. But it is steep and winds uphill; yea, to its rocky top. Grey mists will overhang its rough and stony height, and all [will] be dark beyond. As on he goes, the song of hope soundeth more feeble in the pilgrim's heart. The thrill of doubt is now upon him; his step less steady grows.

[234] Beware of this, O candidate! Beware of fear that spreadeth, like the black and soundless wings of midnight bat, between the moonlight of thy soul and thy great goal that loometh in the distance far away.

[235] Fear, O disciple, kills the will and stays all action. If lacking in the Śīla virtue — the pilgrim trips, the karmic pebbles bruise his feet along the rocky path.

[236] Be of sure foot, O candidate. In Kshānti's essence bathe thy soul; for now thou dost approach the portal of that name, the gate of fortitude and patience.

[237] Close not thine eyes, nor lose thy sight of *dorje*;¹² Māra's arrows ever smite the man who has not reached Virāga.¹³

[238] Beware of trembling. 'Neath the breath of fear the key of Kshānti rusty

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grows: the rusty key refuseth to unlock.

[239] The more thou dost advance, the more thy feet pitfalls will meet. The path that leadeth on is lighted by one fire — the light of daring, burning in the heart. The more one dares, the more he shall obtain. The more he fears, the more that light shall pale — and that alone can guide. For as the lingering sunbeam, that on the top of some tall mountain shines, is followed by black night when out it fades, so is heart-light. When out it goes, a dark and threatening shade will fall from thine own heart upon the path, and root thy feet in terror to the spot.

[240] Beware, disciple, of that lethal shade. No light that shines from Spirit can dispel the darkness of the nether Soul, unless all selfish thought has fled therefrom, and that the pilgrim saith: 'I have renounced this passing frame; I have destroyed the cause: the shadows cast can, as effects, no longer be.' For now the last great fight, the final war between the Higher and the lower self, hath taken place. Behold, the very battlefield is now engulfed in the great war, and is no more.

Verses 230–32 describe the first Portal and its key. That Portal or gate is called *Dāna*, the basic meaning of which is 'the act of giving'. The Sanskrit word is related to the English word *donate*. The key to that gate is charity, not just charity in the sense of donations to a good cause or to help the needy (though that is involved), but charity in its etymological and theological sense of 'the love of humanity',

the will to help all beings reach their ultimate good. At this gate, one gives oneself. It is the gate of the dedication of one's talents, efforts, and whole life in service to the world. That is why it is the first Portal on this Path of service. It is the Portal of the Bodhisattva-s (those who have dedicated themselves to this Path), of contact with Wisdom or 'Bodhi', and of the Knowledge (or gnosis) that eliminates the ignorance producing frustration or *duhkha*. It is a joyful Portal, for the decision to enter on the Path is one of joy.

The Path becomes, however, less smooth and easy as one progresses. So verses 233–35 describe the way to the second Portal as still green, but steep and as leading to a rocky summit clouded in mists. The approach to the second Portal calls forth doubt and fear. This observation is psychologically accurate. When we start on any new venture, the excitement and expectation carry us forward with optimism and pleasure. But as we continue, the inevitable difficulties evoke the opposite emotions. This is a time to remember that our emotional response is always conditioned. We know it will change according to a pattern, so we forge ahead, regardless of the conditioned responses we experience, knowing that they will all change and that the worth of the journey is not affected by them. The second Portal is *Śīla*, 'harmony' or 'good conduct', harmony being the basis of all good conduct. Harmonious right action is what we need to get over the rocky stretches of life.

With verse 236, we begin the approach

to the third Portal, that of *Kshānti*, ‘patience’. The *dorje* of verse 237, which the disciple is to keep in view, is a thunderbolt or a diamond. Its conventional representation looks something like a dumb-bell. It is a weapon of the gods and so is a symbol of the power of wisdom. HPB glosses the term:

Gloss 12. *Dorje* is the Sanskrit *Vajra*, a weapon or instrument in the hands of some gods (the Tibetan *Dragshed*, the *Deva-s* who protect men), and is regarded as having the same occult power of repelling evil influences by purifying the air as ozone in chemistry. It is also a *mudrā*, a gesture and posture used in sitting for meditation. It is, in short, a symbol of power over invisible evil influences, whether as a posture or a talisman. The Bhöns or Dugpas, however, having appropriated the symbol, misuse it for purposes of black magic. With the ‘Yellow Caps’, or Gelugpas, it is a symbol of power, as the Cross is with the Christians, while it is in no way more superstitious. With the Dugpas, it is like the *double triangle reversed*, the sign of sorcery.

Māra is the personification of temptation, a demon figure who tried, for example, to prevent the Buddha from attaining enlightenment. Patience and fortitude are needed to resist his onslaughts until the quality of desirelessness (*virāga*) has been attained. That quality, which is the fourth Portal, is spoken of in anticipation. HPB has a gloss for the term:

Gloss 13. *Virāga* is that feeling of absolute indifference to the objective universe, to

pleasure and to pain. ‘Disgust’ does not express its meaning, yet it is akin to it.

Dispersion is, perhaps, the nearest equivalent and is the term used in *At the Feet of the Master*.

MEDITATION:

The first three Portal keys are charity (acting for the welfare of all living beings), harmonious right action, and calm patience. In a sense, these three are aspects of the same basic quality, which is discriminative action or *viveka*. Think about how concern for others, harmony in action, and patience are related qualities and all require us to distinguish between what is important in life and what is not. Think of them as a triangle of behaviour.

With verse 241 we begin a long discussion on the fourth Portal, *Virāga*. This is not one of the traditional *pāramitā-s*, but is added in the *Voice*, bringing the traditional list of six up to seven. Its position, half way through the catalogue of transcendental virtues, indicates its importance. It is viewed as a central qualification, marking the boundary between the first three, outward-looking virtues and the last three, inward-looking ones. Having passed *Kshānti*’s ‘patience’, or we might gloss it as ‘persistent application’, we face the need to be free from the bonds of desire, which tie us to the external world, before we can achieve the liberation represented by passing the last three Portals.

VERSES [241–57]:

[241] But once that thou hast passed the gate of *Kshānti*, step the third is taken.

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Thy body is thy slave. Now, for the fourth prepare, the portal of temptations which do ensnare the *inner* man.

[242] Ere thou canst near that goal, before thine hand is lifted to upraise the fourth gate's latch, thou must have mustered all the mental changes in thy self and slain the army of the thought sensations that, subtle and insidious, creep unasked within the soul's bright shrine.

[243] If thou wouldst not be slain by them, then must thou harmless make thine own creations, the children of thy thoughts, unseen, impalpable, that swarm round humankind, the progeny and heirs to man and his terrestrial spoils. O fearless aspirant, look deep within the well of thine own heart, and answer. Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows?

[244] If thou dost not — then art thou lost.

[245] For, on path fourth, the lightest breeze of passion or desire will stir the steady light upon the pure white walls of soul. The smallest wave of longing or regret for Māyā's gifts illusive, along *antahkarana* — the path that lies between thy Spirit and thy self, the highway of sensations, the rude arousers of *ahamkāra*¹⁴ — a thought as fleeting as the lightning flash will make thee thy three prizes forfeit — the prizes thou has won.

[246] For know, that the Eternal knows no change.

[247] 'The eight dire miseries forsake for evermore. If not, to wisdom, sure, thou

canst not come, nor yet to liberation', saith the great Lord, the Tathāgata of perfection, 'he who has followed in the footsteps of his predecessors'.¹⁵

[248] Stern and exacting is the virtue of Virāga. If thou its Path wouldst master, thou must keep thy mind and thy perceptions far freer than before from killing action.

[249] Thou hast to saturate thyself with pure Ālaya, become as one with Nature's Soul-Thought. At one with it thou art invincible: in separation, thou becomest the playground of Samvṛti,¹⁶ origin of all the world's delusions.

[250] All is impermanent in man except the pure bright essence of Ālaya. Man is its crystal ray; a beam of light immaculate within, a form of clay material upon the lower surface. That beam is thy life-guide and thy true Self, the Watcher and silent Thinker, the victim of thy lower self. Thy Soul cannot be hurt but through thine erring body; control and master both, and thou art safe when crossing to the nearing 'Gate of Balance'.

[251] Be of good cheer, O daring pilgrim 'to the other shore'. Heed not the whisperings of Māra's hosts; wave off the tempters, those ill-natured sprites, the jealous *lhamayin*¹⁷ in endless space.

[252] Hold firm! Thou nearest now the middle portal, the gate of woe, with its ten thousand snares.

[253] Have mastery o'er thy thoughts, O striver for perfection, if thou wouldst cross its threshold.

[254] Have mastery o'er thy soul, O seeker
after truths undying, if thou wouldst reach
the goal.

[255] Thy soul-gaze centre on the One
Pure Light, the Light that is free from
affection, and use thy golden Key.

.....

[256] The dreary task is done, thy labour
well-nigh o'er. The wide abyss that gaped
to swallow thee is almost spanned.

.....

[257] Thou hast now crossed the moat that
circles round the gate of human passions.
Thou hast now conquered Māra and his
furious host.

COMMENT. With verse 241, we come to the middle Portal of the seven, the gate of *virāga* or *vairāgya*, the perception of reality uncoloured by emotions, free from personal, limiting desires. Desire itself is an essential element in all life, neither bad nor good, but simply a fact of existence. It becomes bad or good according to its object and the way we respond to it. The fourth Portal is that of temptations, hence of Māra, the archetypal Tempter. With it, we leave the outer world of the body and enter the inner world of the psyche and the mind.

The great problem with desires is not our having them, but their having us — that is, our desires becoming our masters. Our passionate thoughts are constantly creating emotional entities, which are all around us, the children of those thoughts

(verse 243). To make our thought-children harmless, we have to place them in perspective, to see them as they really are. To that end we are counselled 'to study the voidness of the seeming full, the fullness of the seeming void'. That counsel is directly in line with the Northern Buddhist mystical tradition of *śūnyatā* or 'voidness'.

The phenomenal world around us seems to be various and crowded with things (in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The world is so full of a number of things . . .'). In fact it is empty of reality, void of real substance, for everything in it is relative and nothing has an independent and permanently enduring nature. On the other hand, the Reality that transcends this world seems to us to be nothing, being void of all the properties by which we know things (which are in fact limitations of various kinds). Yet that void-seeming Reality is the unfailing source of everything that is, has been, will be, or might be. It is the true cornucopia, the real fullness.

By realizing that both our desires and the things that are the objects of those desires are all empty, that is, are part of the relative and impermanent world, without inherent reality, we can regard those desires from a proper perspective and free ourselves from being mastered by them. If we do not achieve that realization, our desires will dominate us and pull us back, making us forfeit the three prizes we have won, that is, the three Portals we have passed through. The lack of such realization will strengthen the

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sense of egoity in us — the illusion that we are separate selves disconnected from the rest of reality, the ‘I’-making faculty or *ahamkāra*:

Gloss 14. *Ahamkāra* — the ‘I’ or feeling of one’s personality, the ‘I-am-ness’.

The great example of one who has passed, not only the middle Portal (during his tempting by Māra under the Bo tree), but all seven Portals is the Buddha, to whom is given the title of *Tathāgata*. The meaning of that title is in fact uncertain, with several interpretations having been advanced for it. HPB’s interpretation is one of the traditional ones:

Gloss 15. ‘One who walks in the steps of his predecessors’ or ‘those who came before him’, is the true meaning of the name *Tathāgata*.

As explained in verse 221, *Ālaya* is the ultimate reality, the Real Self of all things. By centring ourselves in it, we are protected from both the assaults of desire and the illusions of the relative truth of this *māyāvic* world, which is *samvṛti* truth:

Gloss 16. *Samvṛti* is that one of the two truths which demonstrates the illusive character or emptiness of all things. It is relative truth in this case. The Mahāyāna school teaches the difference between these two truths — *Paramārthasatya* and *Samvṛtisatya* (*satya* ‘truth’). This is the bone of contention between the Mādhyamika-s and the Yogāchārya-s, the former denying and the latter affirming that every object exists owing to a previous cause or by a

concatenation. The Mādhyamika-s are the great Nihilists and Deniers, for whom everything is *parikalpita*, an illusion and an error in the world of thought and the subjective, as much as in the objective universe. The Yogāchārya-s are the great spiritualists. *Samvṛti*, therefore, as only relative truth, is the origin of all illusion.

In contrast with the secure truth of *Ālaya*, the relative truths of this world are like demon tempters. That is, we constantly personify them, just as Saint Anthony did when he saw his temptations as demons. The justification for that personification is that everything has life in it; so, in a sense, the thought forms of desire that we have created are living things. In the Tibetan tradition they are called *lhamayin*:

Gloss 17. *Lhamayin* are elementals and evil spirits adverse to men and [thus] their enemies.

Verse 252–57 record the attainment and passage of the fourth Portal. They begin with an injunction to ‘Hold firm!’ That is the virtue of *kshānti*, patience or persistent application. The middle portal is that which divides the lower or material self from the higher or spiritual one. It is consequently pivotal. After the ellipsis following verse 255, the disciple appears to be in mid-passage through this portal. And after the next ellipsis following verse 256, the disciple has crossed the moat around the passions and conquered Māra, the personification of death, whose name is derived from the root *mṛ* ‘to die’,

whence also *amṛta*, the elixir of immortality.

MEDITATION:

Give some discursive thought to the nature of desire and to what is meant by desirelessness. Under what circumstances is desire beneficial? The fourth of the

preliminary qualifications for entering the Path in the Vedāntic tradition is called 'intense desire for liberation' in the *Vivekachudāmani*, but 'love' in *At the Feet of the Master*. How does looking at the world without emotional colouration relate to both love and an intense desire for liberation? ✧

Those who set out to work in the spirit thinking that they should see, hear, taste, smell, and feel the spiritual, either interiorly or exteriorly, are greatly deceived and violate the natural order of things. Nature designed the senses to acquire knowledge of the material world, not to understand the inner realities of the spirit . . .

Our spiritual faculties, on the other hand, are equally limited in relation to the knowledge of God as he is in himself. For however much a man may know about every created spiritual thing, his intellect will never be able to comprehend the uncreated spiritual truth which is God. But there is a negative knowledge which does understand God. It proceeds by asserting everything it knows: this is not God, until finally he comes to a point where knowledge is exhausted. This is the approach of St Denis, who said, 'The most divine knowledge of God is that which is known by not-knowing.'

The Cloud of Unknowing

Theosophists and Krishnamurti

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

A FEW days ago, in Santo Domingo, I suffered a deep stab of pain. Seated at table was a gentleman, and he remarked: 'So, it seems that the Theosophists are rejecting Krishnamurti!'

If that impression in the public mind is true, then some of us who have worked for the last nineteen years among Theosophists have failed in our endeavours. But have we failed?

For, what does Krishnamurti want us to do? To cease to be Theosophists? No, but to be 'one with Life', to see the 'Goal' clearly, and go straight towards it, as the arrow flies to its mark. But is that message of his different from what Theosophy has given? What else has Theosophy proclaimed but that there is a 'Goal' for each, a 'Life' to become one with? If the message of Krishnamurti appears to do violence to the ideal proclaimed by Theosophy, it is because that ideal was never really understood.

Krishnamurti proclaims that there is a Goal, which is to be one with Life. He asserts that he is liberated, and so one with Life, and he urges each one of us also to be liberated and to be one with Life. But how? Certainly *not* by following

Krishnamurti, and *not* by going to *his* Goal. On this he is emphatic. For him, becoming one with Life means to go from land to land proclaiming the message of freedom. But does he ask every one of the millions in the world to travel from land to land, imitating him? Emphatically no!

Krishnamurti wants each to go swiftly to his Goal, *each to his own*. To all, there is a Liberation, becoming one with Life. But Krishnamurti does not give orders, indicating to each where lies his Goal. That is for the individual to find out.

It is here that many Theosophists are failing today, just because in the past they have understood Theosophy only partly. Many have taken as their Goal only to be Dr Besant's 'disciples'. Why, some even write to me, begging to be my disciples. Is *that* what Theosophy has taught?

As a boy of eleven, before I had any idea of what Theosophy is, I had a dim vision of my Goal. (It does not matter to another what that is.) Before I was fourteen, the vision was clear and precise. And since then, I am going to my Goal, striving, toiling, suffering, in order to be 'one with Life'.

True, I am a disciple of a Master whom

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I love dearly. But is He my Goal? No. He is a wonderful signpost pointing to my Goal, an unerring compass with which to guide myself to my Goal. But He is not my Goal; He is not my 'crutch', and has not prevented me from making my mistakes, nor from hurting myself. That Goal is clear; and because I see it night and day, something of its glory and beauty and strength, and the pain of its distance yet from me, are ever with me.

Let each Theosophist ask of himself: 'What after all is my Goal?' and then go towards it, whether from within the Theosophical Society or from without it. The place does not matter, for there is but one Life — 'One without a second'. But each must see his own Goal, not Krishnamurti's Goal, not Dr Besant's Goal, clearly, directly, for and by himself.

Krishnamurti does not desire disciples;

but let us imitate him in this — to become one with *our* Goal, one with Life, *in our own way*. Then we shall see that there is no contradiction between the Divine Wisdom which comes to us through the tradition of Theosophy, and the Divine Wisdom which Krishnamurti brings.

It is only those who have not yet seen their Goal who discuss and argue; it is only those who undertook activities, not because they saw the Goal through them, but only because they believed that such activities were asked for by the Masters, who are now shaken, as a reed by the wind. Those who have seen the Goal have ever but one thought, one emotion, one action — how to become one with Life, till there is naught but One Life, 'One without a second'. To those who through any line of Service have already seen their Goal, Krishnamurti is indeed the bringer of 'good tidings of great joy'. ✧

Truth is neither evil nor good,
Truth is neither love nor hate,
Truth is neither the pure nor the impure,
Truth is neither holy nor unholy,
Truth is neither simple nor complex,
Truth is neither of heaven nor hell,
Truth is neither moral and immoral,
Truth is neither of the God nor of the devil,
Truth is neither virtue nor vice,
Truth is neither birth nor death,
Truth is neither in religion nor without religion.
Truth is as the waters — it wanders,
It has no resting place.
For Truth is Life.

I saw the mountain come down to the valley.

J. Krishnamurti
Poems and Parables

A Talk by Krishnaji to Members

I WOULD like to talk about our belief and how to avoid the complications that arise from beliefs. As years pass by, the event for which each one of us is looking is getting nearer, and there is a distinct transformation in those who have recognized, and in those who have heard the distant murmurings of the storm. It is as if this storm were gathering on the mountain tops, and that those who live on the plains can hear the distant murmur. The mountaineers and those who dwell among the high altitudes know well how to protect themselves against sudden storms, against sudden gusts and hurricanes. They know their strength, they are prepared, and they are well established in those heights. But the people of the valleys and plains, who have not yet tested either their own strength nor the strength of the storm, do not know how to protect themselves as yet. They know that when the rain comes they must look to the roof, and when the hurricane comes they must look to their foundations.

Those who have heard the distant murmurings must look to their own hearthstones, to their own strength, their own affections, their own friendships, and strengthen those things that are lasting, and destroy those things that are transient. Belief in this truth is as real and as forcible

as seeing a sunset, as seeing the rose-coloured mountains in the distance. No one needs to be convinced of their beauty and glory. Likewise the truth cannot be destroyed, because it stands in its own perfection and simplicity. When once you have found the truth, no other truth exists for you. It is the truth which you have gained for yourselves, and therein lies its beauty. It is the truth which each one of us is longing to find, the truth which satisfies our very being, the truth which gives happiness, which knows no sorrow nor death nor any transitory thing. The truth that is born out of experience, such a truth needs no proof. But those of us who are on the plain must have the strength, and above all the desire, to look in the right direction.

More and more it seems that there are going to be no miracles nor strange happenings; but there will be the awakening and strengthening in the mind and in the heart of each one, the certainty of truth and knowledge, as when the Great Lord Buddha came. He taught the people the simple, the direct, the lasting and the noble truth of life that all could understand, yet so difficult to follow even for those who had had experience; and it will be the same now. Those who desire to see strange things, to have their emotions stirred

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A Talk by Krishnaji to Members

unnecessarily, will fail to recognize the beauty that is so simple, so perfect.

That is one reason why those of us who are living on the mountain tops, who have our foundations deep in the granite, must shout from those mountain tops to those people living still in the valley, to awake and see the coming storm. For the storm will not only disintegrate, but will create. The storm that will come, will uproot the weaklings; and after the storm has passed away, there will be a new crop, new trees, new birds singing, and there will be peace. And those of us who recognize that such a truth exists, that it is possible to be understood, to be handed down from generation to generation, it is for us to gather strength in order to destroy that which we know to be false. We must recognize for ourselves where lies the only hope, the only salvation, the only comfort. For beauty is truth, and truth lies everywhere around us, if we can only perceive the beauty in the lowly, in the ugly, in the sinner. But before we can recognize the truth, we must have heard the thunder in the distant mountains. And when once we have heard it, our hearts will be opened, and our minds will be cleared, and we shall be changing

everlastingly, and we shall be thinking and creating to our full capacity.

There lies the real purpose of His Coming: to live like Him after He has gone; not merely to follow and worship the sacred ground, but to become ourselves sacred, so that we leave the ground sacred after us, holy and pure. There lives the whole beauty and glory of His Coming. Those of us who have strength must gather greater strength, and those of us who have love must possess greater love; because as the storm comes on, the weaklings are thrown down, and only the strong and deep-rooted remain. There lies the real comfort of His Coming, there lies the proof, if proof be needed. Proof is unnecessary when you see a sunset and realize its beauty. You know that there lies beauty, you know that there lies truth, and you need nobody in the world to convince you of it.

The realization of His Coming, of His joy, of His happiness, will be born in each of our hearts only as long as we have seen that beauty in all things, have felt the conviction to live according to that beauty and to awaken that beauty in the hearts of others. ✧

**Native land, and home, and all possessions,
I know you all to be but empty things;
Any thoughtless one may have you.
As for me, the devotee, I go to win the Eternal Truth.**

Milarepa

Who is a Theosophist?

ISAAC JAULI DAVILA

MADAME Blavatsky differentiates in *The Key to Theosophy* between the Theosophical teaching and the Theosophical Society, by stating that the Theosophical Society is a group of members who aspire to the Theosophical ideal. She does not affirm that these members are Theosophists, but rather indicates that they have met during Theosophical teachings, which, if updated within, may convert them into Theosophists.

We should ask ourselves: do we really aspire to be Theosophists? A majority of the members would respond affirmatively. One would then need to ask: As members, what should we do to deserve this condition?

Most of us have our different distinctions to identify the individuals that participate in the activities of the Theosophical Society. We have the sympathizers who are interested in the teachings and the aspirants who in addition to sympathizing are interested in belonging to the Theosophical Society. Moreover, there are the members whom we would call beginners, due to their recent admission and little knowledge of

the Theosophical philosophy, and also the members who have spent a certain time in the Society, and have seriously studied the Theosophical literature. These again can be divided into two sections: those who attend the meetings regularly and those who only pay their membership fees and appear occasionally in some meetings.

However, distinctions merely create a classification; on the contrary, as we become aware of a situation, we can respond to the second question: What are we members to do, to be able to deserve the distinction of being called Theosophists? That is, if we have not decided to remain in our present condition, thus protecting our small personal ego. The Jungian psychologists would say this protection is an unconscious fear of the personal ego originating in the fact that somehow the ego knows about its own impermanency and transitoriness.

‘Most men may look for God, but when they find him, they turn around and escape from him.’¹

Does this act of turning into Theosophists determine the destruction of our inferior nature, or personality? To

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Who is a Theosophist?

take the allegory of the seed and the tree could help us to get closer to the possible answer.

We could say that the seed needs to have in itself confidence, value, conviction and faith. Its death is not the end, but the beginning of a real existence, and a beautiful one. Perhaps the seed's fear is its own disappearance, the possibility of no longer being. Or does the seed guess that it will continue existing in the tree? Certainly, in the seed there are mechanisms that take it forward to become an immense tree. Only, to let that happen, it must die.

In our case, only a few follow the intuitive call of the soul. The majority of us remain as apprentices, students and members, that repeat the passages and opinions of older Theosophists, comfortably located in our branches.

'Theosophy must become practical; and it has therefore to get rid of useless digressions, in the sense of solemn speeches and subtle oratories'.²

The fear that holds us back is more powerful than the refulgent rays of the Divine Ego that affect our small ego and try to wake us up to the aspiration of the superior nature. We escape like the turtle into our comfortable shell.

It is a deceptive game of the personal ego. We behave as if we were Theosophists, but remain as the student or the member without taking the real step towards our elevated destiny, like the soldier who marks his step: he seems to walk, but remains in the same place. The profile of the Theosophist demands

courage, perseverance, discernment, and the commitment to leave aside our old ways and enter the right path, little by little.

'To forget themselves, when working for the others and the task will become easy and slight'.²

We can continue attending to our branches, studying or repeating the different works of well-known authors just like parrots, allowing our small egos to continue comfortably in intellectual truths or principles, thinking this gives us the merit of being Theosophists, while in fact we are far away from reality! Will we carry on with this attitude when the world cries out? Is this in reality our tone of spiritual development?

A true Theosophist would always be questioning his situation, his total condition, observing whether he rejects parts of himself or accepts himself unconditionally as he is, not to justify his growth but as a change in his being. This would lead him to accept others, to get closer to those he does not get along with.

'The code of life of the theosophist is impregnated with the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity, and fraternal love'.²

He would also observe if he is living according to the ideals that he professes, or remains unaware of his thoughts and conduct.

'The true non-conformism consists of questioning the prevailing attitudes, examining his own thoughts and desires and realizing what is really wise and progressive from the spiritual point of view'.³

He is not afraid of recognizing his

The Theosophist

failures and falls; he rises up to assume his responsibility, because he accepts being a whole and complete small egoistic personal ego.

'Remaining indifferent to insult as to praises, of those who will never be able to know him as he really is'.²

He is flexible in distinguishing the superfluous things, but he firmly defends the values of life. He does not proclaim them, but is an example with his efforts to live by them.

'The theosophist looks for communion and communication only with God within his own Soul'.²

Therefore when we look at the student and at a member, and on the other hand at the Theosophist, the distances between them are becoming wider. And although it can be uncomfortable to discover this, soon we will 'turn the page' and forget it.

The comfort of our seat in the branch immobilizes us; it influences great power, driving us towards inaction in assuming our full responsibility. We have already settled down in this indifference, in the inactive condition, and if at any moment we remember our entrance into the Theosophical Society, when we were full of yearnings, of aspirations, we nowadays turn up our nose at these images.

'An organization is condemned to become ineffective as a communication channel if its members are incapable of giving vitality to it of the Living Truth. This is what requires our work the same in the organizational as ideological level'.⁴

These questions are up in the air: What are we now? Students, aspirants, sympathizers, members, voluntary workers in the field of Truth: Theosophists? ✧

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**Rise above time and space,
Pass by the world, and be to yourself your own world.**

Shabistari
(Persian Sufi Poet)

The Bodhisattva Ideal in *The Voice of the Silence*

LYNETTE R. MULLER

IN her preface to *The Voice of the Silence* HPB writes, ‘the following pages are derived from *The Book of the Golden Precepts*, one of the works put into the hands of mystic students in the East’. In the tradition of the Southern or Theravāda Buddhism, a Bodhisattva is on the way to Buddhahood. The goal of the Arhat is liberation from the wheel of rebirth and entry into final peace.

The concept of the Bodhisattva ideal has a totally different focus and a wider meaning in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, which *The Voice of the Silence* points out: ‘To reach Nirvāna’s bliss, but to renounce it’ (v. 145). According to Lama Govinda, when a Bodhisattva appears in the form of Avalokiteśvara, the rays of his infinite light are transformed into innumerable helping arms and outstretched hands. In this way can Avalokiteśvara be ‘the guide and helper of all those who are desirous of liberation’.

HPB has also written that each Buddha manifests himself simultaneously in three

worlds of being: on our earth in the shape of a man; in the supersensuous form-world as a Bodhisattva, and in the highest spiritual world as a Dhyāni-Buddha who lives eternally from one Mahā Kalpa to another.

The culmination and synthesis of the three is Ādi-Buddha, who is absolute and beyond time and space. Thus, ‘The Dhyāni-Buddha, when the world needs a human Buddha, “creates” through the power of Dhyāna (meditation, omnipotent devotion), a mind-born son — a Bodhisattva — whose mission it is after the physical death of his human, or Mānushya-Buddha, to continue his work on earth till the appearance of the subsequent Buddha’ (*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 5, p. 365).

In our own daily existence there are three possible ways to approach the Bodhisattva Ideal: 1. The Path of Devotion, 2. The Ethical Way, and 3. The Road called Transcendental. It is possible for an aspirant to adopt the first two of these as both of them ultimately lead to the third.

The Devotional Path for example is

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often adopted by an ordinary individual who is living a life of simplicity. For this person the Bodhisattva is a much loved deity who is worshipped for his great sacrifice to humanity. This attitude of devotional love is expressed openly in the Pure Land (Japanese) Buddhism, where traditionally the teaching of the paradises of different Buddha-s, particularly the Western Paradise of Amitābha, is accepted as gospel.

In the Ethical Way it is not the Bodhisattva as a deity who is important but the Ideal of the Bodhisattva. Thus, the seekers do not identify themselves with an expression of love or devotion to a greater being, but with that which is in harmony within their own inner life. As a result of this attitude a person will naturally practise joyful sacrifice for others because it is in their nature to do so. The action becomes a love of humanity rather than devotional behaviour towards a perfected being. The image of the Bodhisattva who sacrifices himself to the very end is therefore a very good antidote for any secret hope that our effort on behalf of others will be acknowledged or rewarded.

As a reminder of this thought *The Voice of the Silence* says: 'Thou shalt attain the seventh step and cross the gate of final knowledge but only to wed woe — if thou wouldst be Tathāgata, follow upon thy predecessor's steps, remain unselfish till the endless end' (v. 309). Yet verse 179 offers the aspirant an alternative for 'At one end — bliss immediate, and at the other — bliss deferred. Both are of merit the reward: the choice is thine.'

Pause and reflect on this question, 'Does such bliss as this lie outside what we understand as time?'

The third approach is the road of the Transcendental which is that of the Bodhisattva himself. *The Voice of the Silence* records that the Bodhisattva acts from Compassion which has 'no attribute. It is the Law of laws — eternal harmony, Ālaya's Self; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting right, and fitness of all things, the law of love Eternal' (v. 300).

Another aspect of the Bodhisattva's compassion is his expression of solidarity. This solidarity comes from within the Bodhisattva's self-consciousness as he is aware that he is one with all suffering beings. Thus, the Bodhisattva is prevented from entering Nirvāna because he has made a commitment of selfless love. He thus suffers with humanity whose Dharma is to work out their own painful Karma. In *The Voice of the Silence* it is said that 'The first Path is liberation. But Path the second is — renunciation, and therefore called the "Path of Woe". The Secret Path leads the Arhan to mental woe unspeakable; woe for the living dead, and helpless pity for the men of Karmic sorrow, the fruit of Karma Sages dare not still' (vs. 182–4).

These verses from *The Voice of the Silence* have shown that the Bodhisattva ideal has great depth; however any concept becomes too narrow for the being to whom it refers because when something is named we contain it and thus limit it.

It is because wisdom consists in the recognition of the inner identity of the

The Bodhisattva Ideal in *The Voice of the Silence*

unity of all beings and the experience we have of this solidarity that we are able to accept the sufferings of all beings as our own. For 'to don Nirmānakāya's humble robe is to forgo eternal bliss for self, to

help on man's salvation. To reach Nirvāna's bliss, but to renounce it, is the supreme, the final step — the highest on renunciation's path' (*The Voice of the Silence*, v. 145). ✧

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
he makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death.
I fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff,
they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
thou anointest my head with oil,
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for ever.

Psalm 23

Thou Art Thyself the Object of Thy Search

S. RAMU

MAN is known to be always in search, and all his search lies invariably outside of himself. In contrast, the statement, ‘Thou art thyself the object of thy search’ appears in the last paragraph of the first fragment of *The Voice of the Silence*:

Behold! thou hast become the light, thou hast become the sound, thou art thy master and thy God. *Thou art thyself the object of thy search*: the VOICE unbroken, that resounds throughout eternities, exempt from change, from sin exempt, the seven sounds in one, THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE.

The Voice of the Silence is about the transformation of an initiate to an Adept through the intermediate levels of an Arhat and Bodhisattva. Like many of H. P. Blavatsky’s works, it is a mystical treatise, different from books like *At the Feet of the Master*, which is an ascetic treatise. Hence literal interpretations may be inappropriate. Being a part of *The Book of the Golden Precepts*, its contents are predominantly ‘Buddhist’ and the teachings are ‘Lamaistic’ in nature.

The implied transformation is of the self to that of the Self. Transformation is always deep and happens in the state-of-being and is not a mere change in the outlook or even disposition. It involves meticulous preparation, critical processes, conducive states and proper methods, interspersed with many pitfalls and hurdles. In essence, the transformation covered by the first fragment, is brought about by the toilsome ascent of the pilgrim-soul to the state-of-being of an Arhat, starting from the state-of-being of an initiate, who is ignorant of the dangers of the lower *iddhi-s*. These preparations, processes and stages are not to be taken literally, but symbolically, because, as the *Ashtāvakra Samhitā* points out, paths to realization are like the tracks left behind by birds in their flights across the sky. J. Krishnamurti has said there is simply no path to the land of truth. Is it indeed possible to set a path, or map the journey of the soul, from the poles of the unreal and the real? The so-called paths laid by organized religions have failed miserably to transform man to a selfless, envy-free,

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non-violent and harmonious being.

However, the course as described in *The Voice of the Silence* is full of learning opportunities. One major learning is of the four modes of truth; namely, misery, conquest of desire (the cause of misery), destruction of sin (or purification of the mind) and entering the path. The mystical path of probation is marked by several symbolic milestones involving a journey through several stages, including seven symbolized by mystic sound and the Halls of sorrow. The learning has to culminate in wisdom.

Thereafter there are seven steps to be taken or *sādhana-s* to be practised. The pilgrim has to learn the nature of Dhāranā and practise such inward contemplation. A continuous practice of *dhāranā* should help him become indifferent to objects of perception. While doing so, he must seek out the Rājā of the Senses, the thought producer. Once initiated, the first task is to slay the mind which is the great or terrible slayer of the Real. The pilgrim must attain harmony within. He must overcome the illusion of separateness. He must attain Self-knowledge by giving up self to non-self and being to non-being. Self-knowledge is of the highest importance.

True religion is religion of the spirit, which is the same as spirituality and the quintessence of spirituality is Self-knowledge, said Dr S. Radhakrishnan. Three great sages have addressed the subject of Self-knowledge profoundly: J. Krishnamurti, Ramana Maharshi and Ādi Śankara.

According to Krishnamurti, only in self-knowledge is there salvation and liberation. The creative thinking which comes through self-knowledge is the solution to our miseries. Through self-knowledge alone can we discover truth and lasting happiness, peace or order. To understand ourselves is of the highest importance. To be in a state of self-knowledge, one has constantly to be aware of one's thoughts, actions, beliefs, habits, fears and other feelings and ideas. Self-knowledge is the understanding and choiceless awareness of the actual process of our whole being, without judgement, condemnation and self-adulation. Of course, self-deception is easier than self-criticism. To be aware of the total entity that we are and the conscious and unconscious processes of our thoughts, feelings and activities, is self-knowledge. The beginning of self-knowledge is to be aware of our mental and emotional activities, *moment to moment*. Self-knowledge is self-discovery. It cannot be learnt from others or books. Krishnamurti does not use the capital S in the word self-knowledge. In fact he has said that the higher Self is a creation of the lower self, as an escape.

According to Ramana Maharshi, Self-knowledge comes from self-enquiry or by contemplating the question 'Who am I?'. After negating all that does not answer this question, one abides in the resultant egoless state or the state-of-being of the Self or Self-realized state of being.

Ādi Śankara recommends Self-knowledge as the means of liberation for

those who are purified through *tapas*; in a peaceful state of being and free of cravings. Mind is a product of wrong knowledge (*avidyā*) which superimposes on the pure consciousness or *ātman* a sense of duality, creating illusions of limitations and identities and projecting the unreal as real. By negating such superimpositions and projections, the individual soul (*jīva*) realizes oneness with Brahman (the all-pervading pure consciousness).

In this context, the essence of Krishnamurti's teachings is that of 'intelligence beyond thought'. The essence of Ramana Maharshi's teaching is abiding in the ego-free state of Self. The essence of Ādi Śankara's Advaita Vedānta is of our being the non-dual Brahman. Krishnamurti's 'intelligence beyond thought', Ramana Maharshi's 'Self' and Advaita Vedānta's 'Brahman' may all be pointers to one and the same truth, as much as opposites such as thought, the thinker, the ego and duality imply the same untruth. Beyond thought or ego or apparent duality, perhaps, lies the Reality. Looked at this way, there is no contradiction among the three.

HPB asserted that 'Vedāntism' and Buddhism are nearly identical philosophies and synonymous in spirit, if not in interpretation. The Vedānta system is transcendental or, so to say, spiritualized Buddhism while the latter is rational or even radical Vedāntism.

Coming back to the disciple being addressed in *The Voice of the Silence*, for him to become the light, the sound, his

own master and god, he must be the very object of his search. He must give up life if he wouldst live, meaning perhaps the annihilation of egoism. He must constantly beware of the most dangerous pitfalls, namely, lustful tendencies. As a wise person, he must tarry not in the pleasure ground of the senses and must stifle the voice of the flesh. He must heed not the sweet-tongued voices of illusion. Perhaps, only when one becomes deaf to such sweet-tongued distracting voices of illusion and flesh can one hear the Voice of the Silence, or be capable of spiritual perception. Illusions, in the author's view, come in several cloaks of dark colour and hence the disciple should divest himself of the dark garments of illusion.

Thou art thyself the object of thy search, as from within comes true guidance. The true guide from within and the recipient of the guidance are not different. If you cease to be in the ego state, the resultant state is that of the true guide. The method is to stop reacting with thoughts to external stimuli, a state in which the mind is still and there is no *chitta-vṛtti*. There is no effort involved in seeking guidance. It is abiding in oneself. The guidance flows forth, as an automatic outcome of the state-of-being facilitated by a quiet mind.

Even though learning is necessary at the initial stage of probation, once it is over, one must quickly flee from the Hall of Learning lest knowledge should create bondage and condition one's state-of-being, as said in the *Śiva Sūtra-s* (*jñānam bandhah*, i.e., both scriptural and material

Thou Art Thyself the Object of Thy Search

knowledge is bondage). One must not allow oneself to be dazzled by the illusive radiance emanating from the jewel of the ensnarer (Māra) which bewitches the senses, blinds the mind and leaves the unwary an abandoned wreck. This is a very dangerous pitfall indeed because one will meet with the same fate as the moth that gets attracted to the dazzling flame of the night-lamp and perishes in viscid oil. The disciple must close fast his senses against the great heresy of separateness, which is important even for a member of the Theosophical Society.

The warnings to the disciple are many. The disciple must destroy his lunar body (*manas*) and make clean his heart and should not let unclean thought overpower him, by gaining the faculty to slay the lunar form at will. These cautions exercised, he himself will become the path of his travel. The disciple's noble quality should be of such order that he should kill love of life (*tanhā*) but not the thirst for eternal life.

The disciple is further cautioned not to chafe at Karma or other changeless laws of Nature but to help Nature and work with her even as he may struggle with the transitory and perishable aspects of life. There are many hints and suggestions for the disciple such as the need for renunciation to climb the ladder of 'arhathood', the need for strangling his sins and making them silent even before lifting the first foot to mount the ladder.

The disciple should also learn to silence

his thoughts and kill all memories of past experiences. Ramana Maharshi has extolled the benefits of a thought-free state-of-being and J. Krishnamurti has often emphasized the need for learning to observe and act, uninfluenced by thought, which is a product of memory.

There are also refreshing encouragements and motivating messages given to the disciple (just enough to make him persevere through the arduous journey!) such as regaining the child state (what can be better than a state of being marked by a childlike sense of abandonment?); the rose becoming the bud again; the beams of golden light, perhaps meaning grace, falling on him and thereby, the disciple progressing to the stage of *dhāranā*. He is now well on his way to be a Rājayogi, being then able to practise *dhyāna* perfectly, the precursor of *samādhi*. Further progress seems rapid as the disciple can now rest beneath the Bodhi tree of perfect knowledge, having become a master of *samādhi*.

The journey of 'arhathood' is over, the disciple *has* become an Arhat, himself having become the object of his search or a Self-realized person, capable of hearing the Voice of the Silence and being qualified to guide and help others. By doing so he may transform himself, if not into a Mahatma, at least into one who can serve a Mahatma. At this and just beyond this level, neither is there a searcher nor anything to be searched. If there is indeed a search, it is a search without seeking. ✧

Love is the soul's best sense.

Richard Watson Dixon

Books of Interest

A BUDDHIST READER, edited and translated by Henry Clark Warren, Dover Publications, 2004, pp. 520.

As a component in the highly respected Harvard Oriental Series, Warren's celebrated anthology containing principal Theravāda Buddhist documents appeared initially during 1896. This scholarly compendium was among the first English translations making the Buddha's direct words immediately available to an increasingly numerous Western audience, and covered Pāli Buddhist literature extensively. The high-quality translations and the appropriate selections, especially the passages gleaned from the *Visuddhi Magga*, makes this exposition of Theravāda Buddhism especially helpful for interested inquirers studying Eastern religion and philosophy.

BUDDHA: RADIANT AWAKENING, edited by Jackie Menzies, Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 192.

In this book, art forms gleaned from numerous countries are employed to portray the Buddha's life and present the various concepts that shaped Buddhism through the centuries. The editor incorporates textiles, mandalas, manuscripts, metalwork, sculpture, and paintings. The images range from early Indian sculptures to Japanese and Chinese scrolls, from a

Tibetan tanka to contemporary panels created from digital media. Menzies explains these images, and authorities contribute essays discussing the Buddha's life and teachings. The Foreword states: 'Gleaning just a hint of the realms of Buddhism is like looking into the stunning infinity of the night sky, recognizing in such a scale of things the absurdity of that most privileged yet tortured of species, the human animal, but seeing at the same time the extraordinary power and uniqueness of our species.'

RE-ENCHANTMENT: TIBETAN BUDDHISM COMES TO THE WEST, by Jeffrey Paine, Norton, New York; W.W., 2004, pp. 278.

INDO-TIBETAN BUDDHISM, by David Snellgrove, Boston, Shambhala, 2002, pp. 640.

In this mountainous sanctuary, the invading Chinese armies destroyed approximately six thousand monasteries and slaughtered multitudes, and Tibetan Buddhism appeared destined to disappear. When the Dalai Lama sought refuge in India in 1959, Tibet was a remote insular country where wheeled vehicles were absent. However, within a single generation, Tibetan Buddhism turned from being an almost unknown religion embraced by a remote people into a

Books of Interest

resurgent worldwide religion popularized by the Dalai Lama. Paine assists readers in appreciating the historical development of this exhilarating movement. He draws attention to the fascinating figures who assisted in transforming the prevailing Western attitude towards Tibetan Buddhism.

Snellgrove contributes substantially to a comprehensive historical perspective of Indian Buddhism which made its way into Tibet, exploring the developments during the period between the eighth and twelfth centuries. He has not ignored the Central Asian kingdoms along the ancient Silk Road, while describing the sweeping cultural changes that suffused Tibet from the seventh until the ninth centuries. He demonstrates special skill in communicating the spirit and textual interpretation of Tibetan and Sanskrit texts. Despite being a heavy, substantive study, this book provides a fascinating experience for

persons interested in the subject.

THE BUDDHA AND THE SAHIBS, by Charles Allen, John Murray, London, 2003, pp. 322.

Through these pages appear archeologists and philologists, the soldiers, administrators, and explorers who went to India under British rule and probed ancient India's forgotten history and culture. This is an extensively researched, beautifully written, eminently readable historical narrative that introduces readers to remarkable sahibs like William 'Oriental' Jones, who transgressed the Brahmins' prohibition against learning the sacred language, Sanskrit. These are pictured by Allen as Englishmen spawned by the European Enlightenment. From their pioneering, groundbreaking efforts emerged European investigations that recovered from obscurity a long-lost Buddhism. ✧

DANIEL ROSS CHANDLER

**The Kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth,
and men do not see it.**

The Gospel According to Thomas

The Theosophist

The Theosophist

The Theosophist