

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.

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



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.

Nurturing the Seed

TIM BOYD

I would like to wish each and every one of you the happiest, most prosperous, and healthiest of New Years. To many people there is the thought that New Year's is a day just like any other, but I believe it is auspicious that the Convention of the Indian Section starts with this recognized new beginning in our year. New Year is a special day because we choose to make it so. I very much like the thinking that was expressed by one of the great Islamic scholars, when someone made the point that "the prophet Muhammad is just another man". The scholar's response was: "Yes, Muhammad *is* just another man in the same way that a ruby is just another stone."

On this day we allow ourselves the opportunity to give voice to our aspirations for the year ahead. All our prayers for one another, for this Theosophical Society that has such great meaning to us — and we would hope still retains its meaning and vitality in the world — and our wishes and blessings go out on this day; and it is the Indian Convention that inaugurates this special moment for the theosophical world on 1 January. So it is an important day in that respect.

As we all know, the TS had its beginnings in New York City. It was founded there, but something critical and special happened three years after its founding: the Founders and this movement came to India. It was *only* at that point that this movement began to flourish. These are facts. Something changed when the TS landed on this soil, and in 1882 this same ground where we sit now became its International Headquarters and has been ever since. It is a hallowed place, and it has its own influences.

Someone could ask, "What is so special about this place? This ground is earth just like any other." To the eye of a botanist this place has horticultural value; to a businessman, it is a financial opportunity; but to the eye, the *inner* eye, of those connected to this theosophical movement, this place is something much more: it is spoken of as "The Home of the Masters". I do believe that for those of us who allow ourselves those moments of quiet, which are sometimes difficult when we are attending conventions such as this — in the middle of a thousand of our Brothers and Sisters who, like us, tend to be rather talkative, and also tend to carry cell

Inaugural address to the Indian Section Convention, 1 January 2017.

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phones, which also make noise — it can sometimes be difficult to experience genuine quiet. However, those moments do occur when we are quiet, open, sensitive to the vibrations that are here among us *always*, but are somehow concentrated and more available when we come together.

During the course of these Conventions there is always something that is quite remarkable to me. So much work, busyness, and activity precedes these times. This year we even had a cyclone. One of the most destructive and powerful forces in the natural world swept through this place. Certainly Cyclone Vardah did a great deal of damage, but in a sense this crisis — as with every crisis we experience in our own lives and in our work for the Theosophical Society — is also a cleansing.

For whatever reason, each one of us has found our way to the theosophical movement. We can describe it in many ways — for some it was a lecture, a book, a person — but in every case there is an *opening* that occurs within us, an awareness, we can even call it a remembrance of something profoundly present with us at every moment. We remember it, see it, feel it, and when we find that within this movement it is most clearly expressed, we commit. So year after year, for 141 years now, we come to this place, we come together for this brief moment in time, for the opportunity to concentrate, to quieten our minds, to listen with the external ear, but mostly to listen with the internal ear, and perhaps every now and

then we have the experience of not just listening, but *hearing* the voice, feeling the presence of that which stands behind this *outer* movement that we describe as the Theosophical Society.

It is a wonderful opportunity that each one of us has had in this lifetime, to connect with this movement once again. No matter how long we live, our time here is brief. Every moment is full, is rich with potential. But potential is a strange thing. Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States of America, made the comment that “an uneducated genius is like silver in a mine”. The potential is there, but without cultivation, it is unexpressed. We have the opportunity, in each other’s presence, to refine these vehicles which we have been given — or more correctly, which we have given to ourselves by our past thoughts and actions — to make them more usable, more transparent, more fitted to the purposes of the great *inner* Founders of this movement.

One of the beauties of this Indian Section is that it is on this soil that the seed for this movement has been planted in the hearts of us as people. Our role is not to become knowledgeable, or wise, or to become good, great, better, or more recognized theosophists. The simple role for each of us is to nurture the seed — to provide the conditions for this seed that is present within us to express and to grow. How we do it is what we talk about in these meetings. These are the things that we will take back with us and try to implement. But the extraordinary oppor-

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tunity of this Adyar environment is to be able to become still, to feel the presence and that greater life within which we sit, breathe, and move. For the brief moments when we are open and aware, when we allow this deeper presence to fill us, to have its way with us, and to express itself in this world, it is a beautiful thing that we do here together.

I am always honored to be invited to inaugurate this session. I told Brother S. Sundaram and the contingent that came

to my office to invite me, that an email would have been sufficient. But the beauty of it is that for our Indian Section it would not suffice. Person to person is the way that I was invited; and person to person is the way I have tried to communicate in speaking today.

Once again, I am very happy to be here with you. I look forward to doing this in years to come. Thank you, happy New Year, and blessings on us all and our movement. ✧

... the Theosophical Society is moving on in dignity towards the goal it set up for itself at the beginning.

Silently, but irresistibly, it is widening its circle of usefulness and endearing its name to various nations. ... and creating the facts for its future historiographer. It is not in polemical pamphlets or sensational newspaper articles that its permanent record will be made, but in the visible realization of its original scheme of making a nucleus of universal brotherhood, reviving Oriental literature and philosophies. . . .

... What it is likely to do in the future cannot be forecast; but experience warrants the hope that it may be very much, and that it will enlarge its already wide field of useful activity.

H. P. Blavatsky
Lucifer, September, 1889

The Religions of the Future

VICENTE HAO CHIN, JR.

IN the past several thousand years, religions have been very significant factors in charting the course of almost all the civilizations on earth. Ostensibly they are supposed to improve mankind, make human beings more moral or help people gain eternal happiness. In many ways they have done so, but in many other ways, religions have become the sources of conflicts among people, and have caused violence, wars, and cruelty. Mankind has become so divided by religions that even political boundaries and military alliances have been drawn on account of religions. According to Samuel Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations* published in 1996, the wars in the future will be waged not according to political boundaries but according to ethnic and religious divisions.

But we do not have to wait for the future to see such a phenomenon. It has been happening since ancient times: when Joshua massacred the Canaanites and entire cities of the Holy Land, when Muhammad conquered and converted the countries in the Middle East into Islam, when the Christian countries launched the

Crusades that lasted for two hundred years, when the Catholic countries warred with the Protestant nations in Europe, when the Arab countries launched a concerted war against the newly-founded nation of Israel, and when India and Pakistan waged several wars after their partition due to religious differences.

Religious cultures have nurtured great works of art, exalted music, magnificent architecture and produced great spiritual teachers, but they have also spawned some of the worst forms of cruelties in history, such as the Inquisition of Europe and today's religious terrorism, which does not choose whether its victims are men, women, or children, enemy or friend. Such acts of terrorism are even encouraged by promises of heavenly rewards. This form of terrorism has never been seen before in history. Previously, terrorism was due to political or military reasons and only targeted government or military sites. But religious terrorism has been insanely indiscriminate as to its victims.

Furthermore, religions have sponsored great centers of learning, but at the same

Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr., is the President of Golden Link College, a theosophical institution in the Philippines. Public talk delivered at the International Convention, Adyar on 1 January 2017.

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time have delayed the progress of science and education in the past centuries by prohibiting the study, the publication or the teaching of scientific discoveries that may be contrary to their dogmas. Galileo was imprisoned for life and was banned from writing anything after being condemned for heresy for teaching that the earth moves around the sun.

The anti-scientific religious lobby can be so strong even in modern times such that in 1925, the state of Tennessee in the United States enacted a law that prohibited the teaching of evolution in public schools, and this was only repealed in 1967, at a time so modern that Russia and the US had already sent astronauts to outer space. As late as 1999, Kansas prohibited the teaching of evolution, a decision that was overturned about two years later.

Thousands of books have been written about this detrimental side of religion that has caused so much division and suffering among people. In 2006, a British government television broadcasted a series of documentary films entitled "The Root of All Evils?" hosted by Richard Dawkins on the harm that religions have done to mankind. We find a similar indictment in the Mahatma Letters in the late 19th century, where the Mahatma Koot Hoomi stated that two-thirds of the evil we find in the world can be traced to religions.

Why do many religions which are supposed to help, improve and save mankind, produce such injurious effects on human civilization? Why these conflicts

and divisions? Why not love and unity?

Allow me to share with you what I think are the main elements of religions that give rise to such effects. Let me say at this point that most of these elements are mainly found in the Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and much less in the Eastern religions.

Sources of Conflicts and Divisiveness

1. *Scriptural Inerrancy.* The first source of religious conflicts and divisions is the claimed inerrancy of scriptures. Among the Abrahamic religions, the scriptures are taken to be words of God and hence cannot be mistaken. In these scriptures, however, there are so many statements that go against our common sense, our morals, our scientific and historical knowledge, and our sense of justice. Because of such statements, religions have been intolerant, condemned other religions, and led apparently sincere people to become unjust and cruel.

Here are examples of commands of God found in such scriptures:

"Take them and kill them [unbelievers] wherever you find them."

"Utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

I doubt whether an average person will take these as reasonable commands and follow them.

Today, most biblical scholars are in agreement that these scriptures were written and compiled by people, and while

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many teachings are indeed inspiring, many of the accounts were based on the prevailing beliefs and traditions of those times. It would be incredible that God would say many of those things attributed to him which are evidently ungodly.

Today, for example, the Catholic Church no longer believes that the world was created in six days. It recognizes the validity of archeological discoveries and their implications on the evolutionary processes in Nature, contrary to what is literally said in the scriptures. But there is still a lot of fundamentalism in thousands of major and minor religions and sects. It will take perhaps hundreds of years before mankind will collectively transcend such narrow literalism and fundamentalism, and be able to accept the fact that spiritual liberation can also be found through alternative pathways other than one's own religion.

2. *Institutional Authority as a Source of Dogma.* The second source of religious narrowness is reliance on institutional or hierarchical authority as a source of truth or dogma. I grew up as a Catholic, studied in a Catholic college. In the Catholic Church, the Pope is considered infallible, and the magisterium, the collective body of officials in the church that includes the bishops, are recognized as sources of authentic truths. Such authority can be official, or can be traditional, or based on popular impressions, and often carries with it the power to judge, to excommunicate, to condemn, and even to punish. When it is coupled with military and political power, then it can arrest, stone, or execute.

Such power has not only been abused in the past, but it is the source of the perpetuation of harmful doctrines and practices. Giordano Bruno and Joan of Arc were just two of the tens of thousands of people who were burned or executed for heresy or alleged witchcraft. Mansur al-Hallaj was imprisoned and executed for declaring his spiritual realizations.

3. *Exclusive Claims to Salvation.* The third source of religious harmfulness and divisiveness is a religion's exclusive claim to salvation, that is, that only those who belong to a particular church or religion will be saved or go to heaven. This is one of the most pernicious because it makes religious authorities feel justified in persecuting and even massacring non-believers. The genocide of American natives by the Spanish conquistadors is an example.

For centuries, the Catholic Church declared that "outside of the Church there is no salvation" (although it does not do so any longer). Many present fundamentalist churches say the same thing. This tendency is still very strong. Here is another statement from another religion: "Whoso opposes the messenger . . . and follows other than the believers' way, we expose him unto hell."

But the wind is changing. A recent declaration by the Catholic Pope Francis has undermined this view at its very roots. In a homily through Radio Vatican and in a letter to an Italian newspaper, the Pope declared that even atheists can go to heaven provided they are good people and they follow their conscience. This is

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absolutely revolutionary. It means that belief is secondary to ethics. Whether one believes in God or Jesus Christ or not, does not really matter. What matters is ethical living.

4. *Belief in an Anthropomorphic God.*

The fourth source is belief in an anthropomorphic God — a god that can get angry, jealous, vindictive, punitive, insecure, or dualistic; a god that evokes fear rather than inspires spirituality. Such fear compels loyalty to a particular God. As a result, human religious authority acts in the same way: angry, jealous, vindictive, punitive and fearsome. Thus, instead of having a religion of love, a religion of fear and hatred is engendered.

These four sources of religious divisions and dogmatism are not likely to disappear within the next one thousand years or more, based on the experience of human civilization in the past two thousand years. Human culture will carry on to later generations these same factors that have caused religious divisions.

It is to be noted that these sinister qualities of religion are less seen in Eastern religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Jainism and Shintoism. Buddhism, for example, has easily blended with other religions that it encounters in other cultures, without creating hostility, violence, or animosity. In the Philippines, for example, the two major centers for Zen Buddhist meditation were founded by Catholic nuns. In India, China, and Japan, Buddhism easily intermingled with Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shintoism.

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If we look farther into the future, what might be the qualities of the more enlightened religions of the future that will foster harmony and unity? I believe that such religions will have the following characteristics:

1. *Scriptures Not Considered Inerrant.*

Religions of the future will no longer believe that their scriptures are infallible. They will see that no matter how inspired some portions of their scriptures are, they are still the products of human hands and hence subject to the limitations of the human mind. People will repudiate those parts that are evidently unscientific, unethical, or go against reason, common sense and intuition.

But the question arises in the minds of many believers: “How can mere mortals like us decide as to what is true or false, valid or invalid, if we don’t rely on scriptures?” Unfortunately, there is no other way but that we should make the decision whether something is true or false, valid or invalid. If I, for example, accept a particular scripture as true, then I have just made a judgment. I made the decision, it was not made for me. It means that I have also judged that certain other scriptures are false. Tomorrow, if I change my mind, then I make the opposite judgment. All these are done by oneself and not by any external power or authority. If God were to show himself or herself to us at this very moment in this hall, each of us will have to make a judgment whether it is an illusion or it is valid. Hence in finding out about the

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truth, there is no other way but to develop our faculties of judgment and discrimination through reason, common sense, and intuition.

This brings us to an important principle in the human quest for truth. The final responsibility to decide on what is true or not cannot be assigned or relegated to an external power, be it God, man or scriptures. If a book says that Antarctica exists, it is the individual who makes the judgment that the book can be trusted. Even if an individual tries to arrive at truth by proxy, it is still the individual who decides to whom to give that proxy.

And thus we will see that the final goal of all educational, social, and religious efforts to improve mankind should be centered on the task of developing individual maturity by awakening one's highest faculties of perceiving reality.

2. *Non-dogmatic and Open.* The second quality of future religions is a consequence of the first. The religion of the future will no longer be dogmatic and will not enforce belief on its adherents by expulsion, excommunication or sanctions.

The word "dogma" is currently defined as a principle or teaching "laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true". But the original meaning of the Greek word "dogma" is "opinion", and this ought to be how it is understood — only an opinion.

For example: In the third century, Christians were confused as to whether Jesus was God or not. A prominent Christian theologian named Arius said he was not God. Another young leader

named Athanasius said that Jesus was God. This controversy lasted for more than half a century. Sometimes the view of Arius was the more popularly accepted, and at other times it was that of Athanasius. Their supervising bishop, Alexander, did not intervene. But Emperor Constantine did not want disunity in religion because of the potential trouble it could cause in his Empire. So he ordered the bishops to convene a council to vote on it, and Athanasius won. An opinion became a fixed dogma, which prevails up to today. If the voting was made at a time when Arius was more popular, the Christian world today would be teaching about a human Christ.

Dogmatizing is no guarantee that something has become true. The best that a wholesome religion can do is to convince its sympathizers of the truth of its teachings without threats of organizational punishment. A religion truly interested in truth will not be afraid of heresy, for if the heresy is wrong then it will be found out later; if it is right, then it would be adopted without hesitation.

To some people this freedom of belief in a religion may sound strange, but it is the basic spirit in both Buddhism and Hinduism. Buddha is said to have stated: "Don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture . . .", that is, do not accept something as true just because a scripture or a prophet said so.

The second reason why the religions of the future will be non-dogmatic is because the most important realizations about Reality are transcendent and inef-

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fable. Transcendent truths simply cannot be dogmatized, for dogmas are attempts to limit or crystallize the ineffable in words. Such truths may be symbolized or represented but not defined in words.

3. *Ethics as Core*. The central emphasis of the future religions will be on moral uprightness, rather than theological positions or scriptures. Such ethical judgments will ultimately come from our moral intuitions rather than dogmatic declarations by scriptures or institutions. Doctrines that violate such intuitions will fade away in importance. For example, one scriptural verse says that unless one hates one's father, mother, brother, or sister, one cannot become a disciple of Christ. Deep within us, we cannot resonate with this. We can be non-attached perhaps, but we cannot hate our parents. It does not make sense.

I have asked many people: who will be saved — a person who believes in a doctrine but who is bad, or a person who does not believe in a doctrine but who is good? Most of them will readily say the good person will be the one saved, but others hesitate to answer because they are confused.

We have within us a deeper moral sense that can distinguish between right and wrong, justice and injustice. Religions must help awaken this inner faculty to help people become more mature and moral.

4. *Mystical Experience as Core Religious Experience*. Religions will recognize the mystical elements of their own faith as the core religious experience. As such

they will similarly recognize the validity of the mystical insights and experiences of people of other religions. What is widely acknowledged among mystics of various religions, will soon become commonplace knowledge among the religions of the future. Today, people like D. T. Suzuki, Hazrat Inayat Khan, Thomas Merton, Abraham Maslow, and Frithjof Schuon all recognize the commonality of the mystical experience among various religions.

Abraham Maslow stated:

To the extent that all mystical or peak-experiences are the same in their essence and have always been the same, all religions are the same in their essence and have always been the same. They [religious practitioners] should, therefore, come to agree in principle on teaching that which is common to all of them, i.e., whatever it is that peak-experiences teach in common (whatever is different about these illuminations can fairly be taken to be localisms both in time and space, and are peripheral, expendable, not essential). This something common, this something which is left over after we peel away all the localisms . . . we may call the "core-religious experience" or the "transcendent experience".

(Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences)

The Sufi teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan declared:

What is religion to the mystic? The religion of the mystic is a steady progress towards unity. . . .

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No one can be a mystic and call himself a Christian mystic, a Jewish mystic or a Mohamadan mystic. For what is mysticism? Mysticism is something which erases from one's mind all idea of separateness.

(The Inner Life)

The well-known Jesuit priest and author, William Johnston, wrote:

All authentic religion originates with mystical experience, be it the experience of Jesus, of the Buddha, of Mohammad, of the seers and prophets of the *Upanishads*.

(The Inner Eye of Love)

5. *Humanistic and Spiritual.* The religions of the future will be humanistic and spiritual, rather than theocentric and doctrinal. They will not be about the jealousy or anger of a god, but rather the growth and development of human beings. They will be less about worshipping of any god, but about the experience of holiness within the heart. They will not be about the punishment by any angry god, but rather the reaping of consequences due to one's own thoughts and actions.

Parallel to this, the concept of a divine being or divine reality will no longer be human-like, but transcendent and impersonal, just like the Ein Sof of Kabbalah, the Parabrahman of Hinduism and the Godhead of mystical Christianity. But the religions of the future will recognize the existence of divine beings, the Buddhas, the Christs, the perfected human beings, the divine beings who are beyond humanity but cannot be considered as the Supreme Being.

When the time comes that religions of the future will have these qualities, there will be much greater peace and harmony among faiths. Religious differences will be due to local culture, historical traditions, or preferences among religious leaders and founders. Religions will no longer be oppressive or tyrannical.

What Can We Do?

What can we do to help accelerate the emergence of such religions?

1. Promote and disseminate the importance of the ethical life as the basic core of religious life — a life that does not harm or do injustice to others, of altruism and selflessness, of compassion and love. This is far more important than whether God is a unity or a trinity, whether Jesus is God or not, or whether one believes in a God or not.

2. Popularize mysticism and mystical insights, that is, put greater attention on spiritual experience. This is the second but higher core of religious life. This is the true basis of religious unity. The mystical or spiritual life should be emphasized rather than doctrinal beliefs or dogmas. The central role of spirituality is such that Meister Eckhart, one of the greatest Christian mystics in history, even boldly declared: "When a person has true spiritual experience he may boldly drop external disciplines, even those to which he is bound by vows." (*Sermons*)

3. Oppose the aggressiveness or abuse of sectarian powers. Oppressive power increases when people tend to be meek and silent. When those handling

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such power feel that there is a growing collective opposition, they begin to be more careful. It is the duty of the more knowledgeable citizens to voice their concerns or opposition, especially in this age when social networks or forums allow anyone to express their views.

4. Promote non-sectarian education. A religious or sectarian school promotes mainly one religion. Some sectarian schools may be liberal, and others intolerant. The general effect of religious education is that it nurtures young minds in a particular mould with an unconscious prejudice against other religions. This perpetuates religious divisiveness for yet another generation.

In some countries, government schools which are supposed to be non-sectarian may still be sectarian in an informal manner. It depends upon how dominant a particular religion is in the community. When it is dominant, the teachers and students may tend to pray or do rituals as if their religion is the de facto religion of the school, even if there are many others in the school who belong to other religions. These minorities tend to be silent or submissive for fear of being treated as outcasts by the majority.

It would be best if parents, teachers or students can propose that non-sectarian government or private schools should truly be non-sectarian. If they will have a common prayer, then the prayer should be something that all members of the community can resonate with. Or they can have two or three kinds of prayer coming from different religions. In this

way, the school community will feel that the school respects religion but does not favor any particular religious denomination. If they want to teach religion, then teach comparative religion so that students become familiar with the diverse religious outlooks in the world and learn to respect them.

5. Teach young people to be open-minded and to discriminate between blind belief and the use of reason, science and common sense. The key to the transformation of religion lies in the children and youth of each generation. When the young are not unduly indoctrinated by the elders with views that tend to look down upon other religions, they grow up with a more open mind, tolerant of alternative views, and will tend not to discriminate against other faiths.

I teach Comparative Religion and Philosophy in Golden Link College. The students usually come from traditional religions, and quite a number come from fundamentalistic denominations. Through the years, I have realized that when young people are exposed to basic questions that broaden their views about things, they no longer go back to the narrow views that were based on traditional beliefs. This is not an attempt to undermine religious beliefs. It is to teach young people to learn how to approach the quest for truth — with openness, with reason, and with intuition.

Minds that have been allowed to open while young, are almost impossible to close when they have become adults. On the other hand, young minds that have

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been taught to be closed are very difficult to open in later life.

The best way I believe to teach young people is to ask deep and basic questions and allow them to explore, reason out, and discuss. Once they see by themselves what is sensible and reasonable, they cannot be blind to them anymore. Then the methods of the old narrow religions will no longer shackle or imprison their minds. They will become free and more capable of finding out what truth is.

Religion in its highest mystical and spiritual aspects is a blessing to human life, for it brings out the deepest and profoundest in human nature; but religion

as a vehicle for control, fear, and dominance, has been a curse to humanity, for it has engendered superstition, oppression, cruelty, violence, and wars.

Our task is to help make this world a place where religion is a blessing rather than a curse, where it is a fount of love rather than hatred, where it is an ashram of spirituality rather than a school of dogma. For those among us who see this as an urgent agenda in human and social development, we must take action, individually or collectively. Then in our own little way, we are helping the coming of the more enlightened religions of the future. ✧

We need to use education to create awareness of ethics and ways to work without emotions in order to lead a happy life. Our modern education system would be improved if it included training in how to deal with mind and emotions. And this should be done in a secular way. That is what I wanted to share with you.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The Theosophical Society: Body, Soul, and Spirit

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

IN *The Key to Theosophy* Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) says that the Eclectic Theosophists from Alexandria, in the third century CE, were also called Analogeticists. She writes:

As explained by Prof. Alex. Wilder, FTS, in his “Eclectic Philosophy”, they were called so because of their practice of interpreting all sacred legends and narratives, myths, and mysteries, by a rule or principle of analogy and correspondence: so that events which were related as having occurred in the external world were regarded as expressing operations and experiences of the human soul.

The word “analogy” comes from the Greek *analogia*, “proportion”, and *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as “a thing which is comparable to something else in significant respects”.

Also in *The Key to Theosophy* HPB suggests that there are different views of the human constitution, although her favourite was the septenary one. One of the views she presents is the ancient Greek one, which was adopted by St Paul in his epistles: body, soul, and spirit.

The body, as science has shown, is the product of physical evolution. Its ultimate purpose, though, is to become a pliable, sensitive, and responsive instrument for the indwelling consciousness. At present it tends to behave as the lord over consciousness and countless industries have been created to cater for its illusory needs. Its essential needs are few, but the imaginary ones tend to multiply every week.

The soul, still outside the province of modern exact science, is that which seeks to express itself through the body, and in the process becomes frequently identified with its appetites. The word “soul” comes from the Greek *psukhe*, “breath, life, soul”. In its inner nature it becomes a duality — mind and emotions, activated by images — one aspect yearning for communion with that which is beyond it, *buddhi*, and the preponderant, or stronger, aspect consolidating a sense of personal self, the me, which ends up being strengthened by the process of experience. The essence of the personal self is a sense of abiding isolation.

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The spirit is consciousness in its own essential nature, *svarupa*, ever free, boundless in its intelligence, while being at the same time a field of radiating love-awareness. Spirit is beyond time and all its processes, is free from decay, and its very life is the splendour of Truth eternal.

The decisive factor in human evolution is how the mind sees itself. When it loses its capacity to see itself and the patterns that have their origin in that lack of awareness, it becomes like a rag being tossed by the winds of existence, without a purpose and bent on repeating mistakes again and again.

However, when awareness grows it starves the errant patterns of thought-behaviour and institutes a steady flow of understanding, which grows when every experience is seen for what it is — an opportunity to purify oneself from the malady of self-centredness — and thus prepares the mind for the beginning of the journey towards Wisdom.

The Theosophical Society (TS)

Is it possible to view the TS, analogically, as a complete being, travelling on its own evolutionary way and facing similar vicissitudes as a human being does?

The body of the TS is the collectivity of its members guided by its Objects and the Resolutions on Freedom of Thought and Freedom of the Society. Although the body is more than 140 years old, it remains strong by a dedication to human transformation, as expressed in the three Objects, and by refusing to yield to the

temptation of a dogmatic, exclusivist, power-seeking and narrow-minded view of its own role in the world.

But the body of the TS has had its hard knocks over its many decades and still goes through them. Such vicissitudes invariably begin with one individual or group of individuals who claim to know better. Dr George Arundale had a very inspiring motto: “Together differently.” HPB called the TS a “Republic of Conscience”. Both expressions seem to indicate something vital: that the Society is not a church with a common creed, but more importantly, that the essence of its work advocates the principle of self-responsibility. To put it more succinctly: perhaps we need to learn to hold our opinions responsibly, without pointing fingers — or a laser — at those who think differently.

Another source of problems, both historically as well as in contemporary times, seems to arise when some people, otherwise well-intentioned, want to transform the TS into what it is not. They have advocated, rather recently, that the Society is now like an old hat, and that there are much newer teachings with fresh inspiration coming through contemporary channels. A few websites suggest that some Adepts have taken a kind of retirement plan in order to promote new candidates!

How did the TS remain together as one body throughout all these difficult periods? One possible answer is that there were members within it that kept alive a clear sense of direction and who

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dared to plumb the depths of what Universal Brotherhood without distinction truly is. Mrs Radha Burnier defined it as a mind without barriers. It becomes the source for transformative action.

But the TS has remained vital also because of those members who, even if they may not have reached such depths, tried to live, to the best of their abilities, a life of service and compassionate action. The life they put into the Society strengthened and vitalized its body.

The soul of the TS consists of the twin stars of Universal Brotherhood/Sisterhood and Altruism. They shine constantly within the depths of the Society's life, and they call us to a much deeper adventure: to leave self behind while meeting the Other — the wholeness of Life in every form and under every appearance. The soul of the TS is a movement of aspiration towards union with the uncreated Ground of Being, which is Life in its ineffable sacredness.

Having visited a number of Lodges in different countries one cannot help feeling this great reality: how the soul of the Society is alive throughout the world. Sometimes, while visiting remote Lodges in India, Brazil, and Indonesia, one felt that even if no talk was given and no outer event took place, just sitting in that hallowed environment was enough to feel this radiating presence of the TS soul. It is a profoundly benign, welcoming, and motherly presence.

The spirit of the TS is indefinable Freedom, unconditioned Consciousness, Truth, and Love Immortal. It is the

embodiment of resistless Energy which is Goodness, Benediction and Salvation. It is the radical vision of a transformed Humanity, made whole by selfless action. It was this spirit that sustained the Society during the several crises that shook its existence to its very core in the past. At this hallowed level, the TS is not just a human-made organization, with a set of rules and organizing events and publishing books. The Society's *svarupa*, its essential nature, is a pure vessel into which are constantly poured the waters of newness of Life, Wisdom, and Activity that have their source in those Adept-Brothers who are the real Founders of the Theosophical Society. Its spirit belongs to them and to their work.

So, if we try to understand a little bit more of the nature of the TS — its body, soul, and spirit — the question could perhaps be asked: What is the voice of the Theosophical Society in the world today? How can the Society speak to brutal selfishness in the world? To war, violence against women and children. To the daily genocide perpetrated on animals. To the relentless war against Nature. To the fundamentalism in every religion.

We have had a lineage of distinguished Presidents, beginning with an American, Col. Henry Steel Olcott, and recently electing another American, Tim Boyd, to lead the Society in these troubled times. I am not suggesting that we should wait for another 139 years to elect or re-elect another American as President!

The President can travel, write articles, meet people, coordinate activities, and

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certainly express his view on current issues in the light of Theosophy. He represents the Society wherever he goes in an official capacity. He may voice his views on the several issues just listed, views which we and the world listen to and ponder on. But is the voice of the TS limited to his voice?

One of the central concepts in the Vedanta tradition is *vāch*, “speech”. *The Theosophical Glossary* states:

Vāch is the mystic personification of speech, and the female Logos, being one with Brahmā, who created her out of one-half of his body . . . In one sense *Vāch* is “speech” by which knowledge was taught to man; in another she is the “mystic, secret speech” which descends upon and enters into the primeval Rishis, as the “tongues of fire” are said to have “sat upon” the apostles. For, she is called “the female creator”, the “mother of the Vedas”.

The real voice of the Theosophical Society comes from the integral unity of its body, soul, and spirit. And when we truly understand that we can find its voice, its inner speech, in the depths of our hearts, then we will be able to address the questions that need to be addressed for the good of the world. Because we were meant to be an association of people, from the very beginning — a society — each one of us can be the voice of the TS and its life-transforming power. Not in the sense of speaking publicly on behalf of the Society, as the President does, but carrying its profound spiritual power with us, in complete humility and self-effacement.

Annie Besant did precisely that when she wrote:

Oh! if for one passing moment I could show to you, by any skill of tongue or passion of emotion, one gleam of the faint glimpse — that by the grace of the Masters I have caught — of the glory and the beauty of the Life that knows no difference and recognizes no separation, then the charm of that glory would so win your hearts that all earth’s beauty would seem but ugliness, all earth’s gold but dross, all earth’s treasures but dust on the roadside, beside the inexpressible joy of the life that knows itself as One.

The Theosophical Society, in its 141 years of existence, has generated an awesome amount of educational resources. Much of these are now online, although much work still needs to be done in this direction. Lodges and Sections of the Society offer a variety of programmes to the public and the members, some slightly broader than others by accommodating elements of new age spirituality.

The Society lives and moves in the world, and the measure of its progress is directly related to its capacity of addressing the causes of suffering that have turned the world into a valley of shadows. It was not founded to bring a new ideology to the world, or to become an academic body solely occupied with metaphysical questions, whether from the eastern or the western traditions. In the words of the Mahachohan: “It’s time that Theosophy should enter the arena.”

Theosophy is the quintessential voice

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of the TS. Not as a creed, a particular doctrine or teaching, or a syndicated viewpoint. The body, soul, and spirit of the TS are meant to be instruments of that timeless voice, the mother of all knowledge, “the well of infinite compassion”.

Once Krishnamurti was asked: “You say that if the individual is transformed the world would be transformed. How do you know that is true?” Krishnaji replied: “Sir, change and then see what happens.”

Let Theosophy be our voice in the world, so that we can open our hearts and minds and understand the words of the Mahatma:

Poor, poor humanity! It reminds me of the old fable of the war between the Body and its members; here too, each limb of this huge “Orphan” — fatherless and

motherless — selfishly cares but for itself. The body uncared for suffers eternally, whether the limbs are at war or at rest.

In a visit to a Buddhist temple in Los Angeles a number of years ago, I had the opportunity of asking a Buddhist nun the meaning of the name *Kwan-Yin*, whom HPB called “the Divine Voice”. She said the word “Kwan” means to hear, and explained that when we ordinarily hear the sufferings of the world, that hearing is mixed up with our own internal noises, emotions, and thoughts. But when Kwan-Yin hears the cries of the world, she does so from a state of complete emptiness. Her response is then compassion.

Compassion was the Voice at the beginning of the Theosophical Society. Can we hear it? ✧

We can really play our part as a Society in the movements of the present times, only in so far as we make it possible for fresh life to pour onto it. The phrase “fresh life” can become a kind of cliché unless we try to make clear to ourselves what we mean by it. Fresh life does not mean roping in new members, it does not mean discarding the old truths. Truth can never be old, if it is truth at all. What is really meant is that we must make ourselves fresh channels for those truths which are eternal, which can help us in the present as they have helped others in the past. And this we can do only through life, through our individual realization. Too much stress cannot be laid upon that.

N. Sri Ram
On the Watch-Tower

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

WOULD you know whence it is that so many false spirits have appeared in the world, who have deceived themselves and others with false fire and false light, laying claim to information, illumination, and openings of the divine Life, particularly to do wonders under extraordinary calls from God?

It is this: they have turned to God without turning from themselves; would be alive to God before they are dead to their own nature. Now religion in the hands of self, or corrupt nature, serves only to discover vices of a worse kind than in nature left to itself.

Hence are all the disorderly passions of religious men, which burn in a worse flame than passions only employed about worldly matters; pride, self-exaltation, hatred, and persecution, under a cloak of religious zeal, will sanctify actions which nature, left to itself, would be ashamed to own.

William Law

The World Teacher, Theosophy, and the Theosophical Society

CLEMICE PETTER

THE meaning of the word Theosophy is “Divine Wisdom”. It is well known that wisdom is not related to knowledge; it does not arise from the thinking process; it is not the result of reasoning or any process of the mind. It is a state of being that lies beyond the mind, the thought process; it begins only when the mind has complete order, which means no conflict of any kind. Conflict ends only with the understanding of that which creates it, which is the thought process.

Divine Wisdom is a state of being that lies beyond the dual mind, which divides and classifies. The dualistic mind cannot see the whole simply because its nature is to divide, it creates a centre from which it approaches everything; from this centre, which is the “me”, all judgements spring, and thought is the only instrument it has. Thought, being the outcome of knowledge, which is the accumulation of information and conclusions, has to be of the past always. This is obvious, and this dead accumulated past is the source from where thought arises with solutions for challenges that are of the present

moment. It is clear that this process of accumulating more and more can never be new, can never see what is going on in the present moment and in being so, cannot see the whole in any situation, and therefore will always create more and more problems.

This self-centred mind is continuously building walls around itself, isolating, separating from “others”. This is the *modus operandi* of the ego, and there is nothing one can do to change its nature, the only possibility is to understand, see it, in order to overcome it. The fallacy that it is possible to better the “me”, to *become* something better, is what is preventing humanity to step out of this tribalistic way of life, in which it has been living for millennia upon millennia, always hoping to better this “me” without ever succeeding. To try to change the nature of the ego, which is egoistic, is the same as to try to change the nature of a dog into that of a cat. But no matter what one does with the dog it will never meow as the cat does, whenever it opens its mouth it will bark. In the same way

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the egoistic nature cannot be changed into the altruistic nature, no matter what one does; the mind that is self-centred will always think in terms of “me” and “mine”, in terms of competition — the best, the better — simply because it is its nature. Its love is possessive or self-related — the love of “my country”, “my wife”, “my children”, “my family”, and so on.

Theosophy, or Divine Wisdom, is a state of being where there is no division such as the “me” and the “mine”. There is no feeling of separation, no classifications, there is no comparison possible, simply because there is no centre from which to compare. Cooperation is its way of work. Love and compassion are the keynotes of action.

Those who understand the whole process of the dualistic mind therefore are free of it, who have no trace of selfishness, who have left behind all animalistic nature, who walk naked on this earth — by “naked” we do not mean without clothes, but stripped from the burden of yesterday, the “me” and the “mine”. Those are pure human beings; not contaminated by the animalistic “me”; they live in the dimension of wisdom. It is not wrong to say that the dimension of wisdom is also the dimension of Love and Compassion; and it is because there is Compassion that those who, even psychologically, live in another dimension, remain in touch with humanity at its present stage of selfishness. Those Beings are the Teachers of all times; they have always been with humanity.

Theosophy, or Divine Wisdom, has no

authorship; there is but one Teacher, known by many names at different times of human existence on this earth. After all, the human body, through which wisdom can manifest, has a short existence and it would be impossible to keep the same body and name for hundreds of years. To think in terms of who has or possesses Truth is the most unintelligent thing one can do, as it cannot be possessed, it is the selfish mind that thinks in terms of possession; Truth is always there for those who are willing to let go all conclusions and knowledge, which means to let go all accumulations and walk alone, without the influence of thousands of yesterdays; Truth is a delicate flower of smoke, the moment one tries to hold it, it is gone. It is not something that can be owned, just as one cannot own the wind.

Wisdom cannot be found in books, cannot be given to you, for wisdom has to come into being naturally as the flower blooms, as the rain falls from the heavy clouds when the time comes for it to happen. Books are useful only if they can be seen as a map that points to the road, but to take up the journey one has to stand up and start walking. Those who have travelled using a map know very well that the real journey is quite different from reading a map; just to keep on reading, studying the map, will take you nowhere other than where you are. To hope that someone can walk the way for you and at the end of it you will reach the destination, which in this case is no destination at all, is also not possible.

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No one can walk the way for you, for you and the way are one and the same. All you need and can know lies within you, there is nothing happening outside. In reality there is no such division as “in” and “out”.

When one understands this basic fact, one will see that to ask where J. Krishnamurti’s teachings meet Theosophy is the wrong question to ask. It is the same as if one asks “where does the head meet the body?” To meet, there has to be a separation, there has to be two, but in both cases they are one and the same. In the introduction to *The Voice of the Silence* H. P. Blavatsky wrote: “For unless a man perseveres seriously in the pursuit of self-knowledge, he will never lend a willing ear to advice of this nature.” It is clear that self-knowledge is the first step and that without it one does not go very far. Krishnamurti shows us what we are in reality, not in some idealistic nonsense. He is treading the first step with those willing to start walking. His teachings are about self-knowledge, the knowledge of that which puts the self together, which he emphasizes is thought. Krishnamurti said that there is no end to self-knowledge, in his words: “The more you know yourself, the more clarity there is, you don’t come to an achievement, you don’t come to a conclusion. It is an endless river.” He also said that it is from moment to moment that one can see oneself, that the first is the last step, and to go far one has to start very near.

About the nature of self-knowledge Blavatsky wrote in an article for the

Lucifer journal of October 1887:

The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fibre of the heart that one is *ceaselessly* self-deceived. . . . Self-knowledge of this kind is unattainable by what men usually call “self-analysis”. It is not reached by reasoning or any brain process; for it is the awakening to consciousness of the Divine nature of man.

According to JK self-knowledge is not the result of self-analysis; he introduces the insight factor, which is essential to see what is; he says that to understand, is to transform what is. He also said that insight cannot be invited, one may leave the windows open but one cannot be sure the wind will blow.

The ignorant man is not the unlearned, but he who does not know himself, and the learned man is stupid when he relies on books, on knowledge, and on authority to give him understanding.

Understanding comes only through self-knowledge, which is awareness of one’s total psychological process. Thus education, in the true sense, is the understanding of oneself, for it is within each one of us that the whole of existence is gathered.

(Education and the Significance of Life)

Krishnamurti brings a revolutionary view in the so-called spiritual world. He calls attention to the fact that understanding depends on each one of us, and

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not on anybody else; that no one can help in the process of self-knowledge; that one has to walk alone, not depend on anybody; that one needs to be a light to oneself. He said: "You are the teacher, you are the pupil, you are the Master; the guru, you are everything." He denies the so-called spiritual authority, the dependence on others for one's understanding of life; he makes it clear in so many ways that each person is entirely responsible for his or her inner growth. He throws away all crutches that humanity has been carefully nourishing for thousands of years and heals us from self-created and imposed paralysis. Krishnamurti does not offer comfort or crutches, he brings Truth. And sometimes Truth can be a difficult pill to swallow.

In a letter to the Second Annual Convention of the American Section of the Theosophical Society (TS) on 22-23 April 1888, Blavatsky wrote the following:

Orthodoxy in Theosophy is a thing neither possible nor desirable. It is diversity of opinion, within certain limits, that keeps the Theosophical Society a living and a healthy body, its many other ugly features notwithstanding. Were it not, also, for the existence of a large amount of uncertainty in the minds of students of Theosophy, such healthy divergences would be impossible, and the Society would degenerate into a sect, in which a narrow and stereotyped creed would take the place of the living and breathing spirit of Truth and an ever-growing Knowledge.

According as people are prepared to

receive it, so will new Theosophical teaching be given. But no more will be given than the world, on its present level of spirituality, can profit by. It depends on the spread of Theosophy — the assimilation of what has been already given — how much more will be revealed, and how soon.

This short extract shows that Blavatsky warns us that orthodoxy, which is the same as accepted belief, is contrary to Theosophy. That to survive, Theosophy needs space to breathe; it cannot live in a narrow, suffocating environment of conclusions and creeds. That diversity of views, within certain limits, is not only desirable but very much needed for the living, breathing spirit of Truth and an ever-growing Knowledge. In her words Theosophy is ever growing, is not a fixed point or conclusion to come to.

It is also important to see that HPB mentions the importance of keeping a large amount of uncertainty in the minds of the students of Theosophy, which means we need to doubt, to question, to have a mind that is in the state of learning, not a mind that knows. To those who think they know, we would like to share a teaching found in the Kena Upanishad, 3rd verse of 2nd chapter: "One who thinks he knows it, in fact does not. It [Brahman] is not understood by those who claim to understand it, and understood by those who claim they do not." Blavatsky taught us that, those who say they know, do not know, because there is nothing to know. And Krishnamurti teaches in his talks that, "the man who

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says he knows, distrust him completely”. This is quite obvious, because knowledge, that which is accumulated, belongs to the “me”, the concrete mind, and is a material process; whereas Truth, Theosophy, or Divine Wisdom, is of a different nature; it lives in another dimension altogether; cannot be accumulated, owned.

HPB made it clear that Theosophical teachings would be given continuously through the years to come. If one may point out, it has to be so; Theosophy, being a living thing, is ever growing, therefore it cannot be given at once in a definite way; this is quite obvious. As mentioned earlier, she says that “as people are prepared to receive it, new theosophical teachings would be given. That it depends on how much humankind has assimilated of what has been given, to assess how much more will be revealed, and how soon”. This also shows that all teachings cannot be given by one person always, because of the body-aging factor. Even to talk about all teachings is impossible, because there is no end to it, it is alive, ever growing, which does not mean that it is an ever-cumulative process, rather it is the movement of understanding and letting go, freeing oneself for further understanding. To be in a state of learning one cannot “know”, for knowing shuts the door to continuous learning whereas understanding is a different movement altogether. And she also said that “new teachings” would be given, which means that it would be something not given before by anyone, something that humanity never had before. “New”

is not the old changed a bit here and there, it is something never seen before.

We do not go to high school carrying with us all the kindergarten books from which we learn how to read and write, hoping the teacher will start the same lessons about reading and writing all over again. Because it has become part of our daily life, our being, we can move further, receive new teachings, and leave those books behind. In the same way to understand and assimilate the Theosophical teachings is to make them part of our daily life, our being, so that we can move further and be ready to listen to the next Teacher. This makes clear that one Teaching is to prepare us for the next; each Teacher will not go back and repeat again and again what has already been taught; there has to be growth. A child that is endlessly trying to learn how to read and write, without assimilating it, is not developing. In the same way humanity needs to assimilate Theosophical teachings in order to develop inwardly and move further. Mere repetition of rituals, prayers, and words does not make for understanding, after all, humanity has been praying for peace for thousands of years and where are we? To assimilate we need to give attention to the teachings, we need to be serious about it, there has to be passion.

If we intend to keep Theosophy alive in the TS, we need to keep walking, always learning, open to the new and working with the present human stage, delivering at all times the Truth that has been given by the new torchbearer of

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Truth, which in our days is the World Teacher, announced by HPB and Annie Besant — He who walked the earth signing the name, Jiddu Krishnamurti. If we cling to books and words we will miss the whole thing and become one more fundamentalist sect, and the world does not need another one.

It is not fair to humanity to split the body of Truth and offer only half of the medicine that can cure all miseries and save humanity from further calamities. The world needs the whole living body of teachings brought by HPB and Krishnamurti. To split the body from the head kills both, no one benefits from it, neither those holding the body nor those holding the head. To those who are ignorant and fundamentalists, and who say that only what Blavatsky says is Theosophy or that only Krishnamurti has the Truth, we would like to remind them that it is this kind of mindset that has brought humanity to the present state of misery and degradation. It is to warn humanity that this kind of separative, fixed ideas are creating havoc in the world, and to teach us this basic and simple lesson, that the Theosophical Society was created.

Blavatsky brings the map, telling us that there is another way of living which lies beyond the mind, she says: “the mind is the great slayer of the Real. Let the disciple slay the slayer.” And Krishnamurti leads by the hand those willing to “slay the slayer” and cross to the other shore. To keep reading the map leads to fundamentalism, and to travel without the map

is very difficult. It is also said that the World never had the full teachings needed to cross with safety to the other shore. Humanity has been hoping for this since time immemorial, the medicine for all misery and degeneration created by its own ignorance. Now that it has finally come, that it is in our hands, are we going to deny it to humankind? Just think of the cruelty of it . . . only heartless people are capable of such horror. Please, let Love heal division humanity has had enough division; it is time to allow Love to come into being.

It is also important to remember that the Western world has been suffering with a materialistic, concrete mind, which has been under the influence of belief and creed for too long, and thinks in terms of conclusions, results, and acquisition. For Theosophy to survive and be available to the world, the TS has to keep its Headquarters in India, where diversity is part of daily life, a country that, according to its census, has 22 official languages and 1,652 dialects, which has in its territory all the seven major religions living together, and a continuous, unbroken tradition of wise Beings, born one after the other for millennia upon millennia. We are not saying that India is perfect, or that only Mahatmas are born in India. We are saying that a diverse environment helps to develop discernment, and that the concrete mind, not knowing how to discern, concludes, and, out of conclusion, orthodoxy is born. We must always keep in mind a simple, but powerful teaching given by Blavatsky:

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“Be humble, if thou wouldst attain to Wisdom. Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered.” We are in a jungle created by ourselves, and there is nothing to be proud of. East and West have much to learn from each other, but there has to be humility from both sides for it to be fruitful. There has to be Love.

In another letter to the Fifth Annual Convention of the American Section on 26-27 April 1891, Blavatsky wrote:

The period which we have now reached in the cycle that will close between 1897–8 is, and will continue to be, one of great conflict and continued strain. If the TS can hold through it, good; if not, while Theosophy will remain unscathed, the Society will perish — perchance most ingloriously — and the World will suffer.

We would like to call attention to the fact that Blavatsky made clear that we cannot take for granted that the TS is out of danger, that if the TS cannot face its challenges with intelligence and wisdom, it may perish; Theosophy will remain unscathed, but the World will suffer. It is also clear here that Theosophy does not belong to any organization; it was, it is, and will always be there. If we are to work for the well-being of humanity, we cannot hold flags, simply because Truth has no flag. Flags are the symbol of sep-

arateness. It does not matter if it is the flag of Theosophy, Christ, Krishnamurti, or God, it is still a flag, and will always be the symbol of the “me” and the “mine”, the symbol of division. One can see this, looking at what is happening in the world. The world needs more than ever, a body of united brotherly human beings, a body of real friendship and Brotherhood that recognizes and lives the Unity of Life. And to those who like to divide and separate, we would like to remind them that to divide and separate is not the slogan of those who work for human well-being and progress. It is just the opposite; divisions are killing humankind.

We would also like to note what the Mahatma KH has to say about the need for Unity in *The Mahatma Letters*:

Unity always gives strength; and since Occultism in our days resembles a “Forlorn Hope”, union and cooperation are indispensable. Union does indeed imply a concentration of vital and magnetic force against the hostile currents of prejudice and fanaticism.

Unity of those who love humanity, who work for its well-being and progress, uniting efforts to bring fresh water from the ever-flowing river of Truth, is the only hope. ✧

When there is a radical revolution in the very nature of thought, feeling, and action, then obviously there will be a change in the structure of society.

J. Krishnamurti

Education in the Light of Theosophy

ANNIE BESANT

THE fundamental teachings of Theosophy so alter our views of the child, that a very revolution is wrought by them in the child's relations with his or her elders. Formerly we regarded him either as a soul fresh from the hands of God, clad in bodies furnished by his parents; or as an intelligence dependent on the brain and nervous organization built up by the laws of heredity working through countless generations in the past. Some thought that the child's mind was a blank page on which his environment wrote his character, so that everything depended on the influences brought to bear on him from outside; others, that he brought his mental and emotional qualities with him through heredity, and could only be slightly modified from outside, since "nature was stronger than nurture". From every point of view, he was practically a new being, a new consciousness, to be trained, disciplined, guided, ordered, by his elders, a creature without experience, living in a world new to him, which he entered for the first time.

An Immortal Soul with New Bodies

Theosophy has placed before us a conception of the child as an immortal

Individual, taking birth amongst us after many hundreds of such births upon our earth, with experiences gathered through many lives and wrought into him as faculties and powers, with a character which is the incarnate memory of his past, with a receptivity which is limited and conditioned by that past, and which determines his response to impressions from outside. He is no longer a plastic soul, ductile in the hands of his elders, but a being to be studied, to be understood, before he can be effectively helped. His body, truly, is young and not yet well under his control, a scarce-broken animal; but he himself may be older than his parents and his teachers, may be wiser than his elders.

To the theosophist, each child is a study, and instead of imposing his own will on him and supposing that age and size of body give a right to order and to dominate, he tries to discover through the young body the features of the indwelling owner, and to understand what the Ruler Immortal is seeking to achieve in his new kingdom of the flesh. He endeavours to aid the indwelling Ruler, not to usurp his throne, but to be an advisor, a councillor, not a master. He ever remembers that

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each Ego has his own path and method, and he treats him with a tender reverence — tender, because of the youth and weakness of the body; reverence, because of the sacredness of the Individual, on whose empire none should encroach.

Further, the theosophist knows that the new bodies which clothe the ancient and eternal Spirit, while representing the results of his embodied past, may be immensely modified by the influences which play upon them in the present. The astral body contains germs of good and evil emotions, the seeds sown by the experiences of previous lives; these are germs, not fully developed qualities, and they may be nourished or atrophied by the influences which play upon them; an Ego who possesses an astral body with germs of violent temper or of deceit, may be helped by the peacefulness and honesty of his parents, and these germs, played upon by their opposites, may be nearly starved out of existence; one who has an astral body in which are germs of generosity and benevolence, may have these fostered into strength by the play upon them of similar virtues in his elders. So also the mental body possesses the germs of mental faculties, and these may be similarly nurtured or stunted. In the Ego are the qualities or the deficiencies, and in his permanent atoms are the material potentialities for the bodies; the building-up, the modifying, of the astral and mental bodies during childhood and youth is — save in most exceptional cases — largely dependent on the influences which surround him; here comes in the

powerful karma of environment generated in his past, and the heavy responsibilities of his elders; his whole future in this birth being largely determined by the influences which play upon him during his early years.

First Conditions

Knowing all this, the theosophical parents will welcome the incoming Ego, clothed in his new material garments, as a sacred and responsible charge entrusted to their hands; they will realize that his young and plastic bodies are largely dependent upon them for their future utility; just as they sedulously feed and tend the physical body, and train it with scrupulous care, developing its muscles with thoughtfully adapted and graduated exercises, its senses with encouragement to observe, its nerves with generally healthy conditions and watchful protection against all jar, strain, and shock; so will they see to it that only high and pure emotions, only noble and lofty thoughts, are allowed to play on the germs in the astral and mental bodies, during this formative period of far-reaching importance. They will remember that any undesirable vibration in their own astral and mental bodies will at once be reproduced in that of the child, and hence will realize that it is not enough to guard their words, expressions, and gestures; they must also neither feel nor think unworthily. Further, they must sedulously watch over and protect the child from all coarsening and vulgarizing influences as well as from those which are directly evil, and must

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keep away from him all undesirable company, both old and young.

These are the obvious first conditions with which the theosophical parents must surround their child. In a sense they are protective and negative. Let us see next what should be the educative and positive surroundings in the home. There are many things that are not always thought of, but which are very desirable and within the reach of most.

Home and Beauty

The home, and especially the room of the child, should be made as beautiful as possible. Beauty is far more a question of refined taste than of wealth, and simplicity and appropriateness play a greater part in it than complexity and monetary value. The living room should have little furniture, but what there is should be useful and good of its kind; . . . such a room will bring out the sense of beauty in the child, and train and refine its taste. All utensils used in the household should be beautiful and adapted to their end; metal, earthenware, should be chosen for burnish and colour, and the vessels should be well-shaped and exquisitely kept. What the Greek and Egyptian peasant did in the past, what the Indian peasant does today, cannot be beyond the power of the Western middle and manual labour classes.

It must be realized that Beauty is an essential condition of a human life, and that what Nature does for the animal and the savage, civilized man must do for himself. And let parents remember that

the best they have should be given to the child, for his surroundings are shaping the instruments he must use through his whole life in this and the two worlds connected with it. If there is a nursery, it must not be hung with cheap and gaudy daubs, the refuse of the family art possessions, "good enough for the children"; a few good prints or well-coloured pictures, portraits or statuettes of the truly great, whose stories may be told in the gloaming to the little ones; pictures of noble deeds, to be also glowingly depicted in inspiring words; these will imprint on the young brain memories that will never pass away, will vivify the germs of noble emotions, of high thoughts and aspirations.

Love and Tenderness

. . . The whole atmosphere surrounding the child should be full of warm love and tenderness. All good things grow, all evil things wither, in an atmosphere of love. If the babe is born into love, cradled in love, if the child is nurtured in love, the youth will be gentle, obedient, trustful. If punishment were unknown in the home, it would never be 'needed' in the school. Sharp words, rebukes, hasty blame — these errors of parents evoke and evolve faults in the child. Win a child's trust and love — and these the parents will have by nature if they have done nothing to repel them — and you can do anything with him. Only love is fit to educate, fit to be trusted with the frail bodies in which the Ego is to spend this life. . . .

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Love only will give the comprehension which is as the bread of life for the child. His dawning fancies, his gropings out into the new world, his confusion between physical and astral impressions, his puzzles over the reports of his untrained senses, his sense of the pressure of a huge unknown on his frail and little body, the incomprehensible comings and goings of the apparently irresponsible giants around him — all these life-enigmas environ him, a stranger in a strange land. Surely these little ones have a right to the tenderest compassion, while they feel their way through the first stages of the new earth-life, and try to shape themselves to expression in their new surroundings.

Study the Child: Give Him Freedom

The child should be *studied*; his elders should seek to know his strong points and his weaknesses, to find out the aim and purpose of the Ego in this new stage of his pilgrimage. He therefore should not be coerced, save where restraint is necessary to prevent him from ignorantly injuring his bodies, but should be encouraged to express himself freely in order that he may be studied and understood. A child who is constantly repressed ever wears a mask, and hides himself away from his elders, who are left to blunder on, unconscious of his real nature. Half the remarks addressed to many children by well-meaning parents form a string of “Don’ts”, unreasoning and unnecessary. Obedience is enforced to the will of the parents, instead of to principles vital for

the child’s well-being, of which the parent is the temporary mouthpiece; the duty and necessity of obedience to *law*, speaking through the person entrusted with its enunciation, this is of immeasurable importance; it lays the foundation of religious, moral, and civic righteousness. But arbitrary authority enforced by superior size and strength, subjection to the irresponsible whims and fancies of the parent, with no reason vouchsafed but “Because I tell you so” — these destroy in the young mind the invaluable respect for lawful authority, which is nurtured and strengthened by the former method.

The study of the child should help the parents to a general idea of his future vocation and therefore of the education which should prepare him for it. They should study his faculties, his tastes, his temperaments, with painstaking assiduity. . . .

Basic Truths and Habits

The education given in the home should include the basic truths of religion in their simplest form: the One Life, Reincarnation, Karma, . . . on these moral lessons should be based, and given in the form of stories of great men and women, of those who showed the virtues that the child should emulate, with short pithy sentences from the world scriptures, thus storing the memory with valuable material. These basic truths should be taken for granted, implied constantly rather than taught didactically.

Good manners should be carefully taught — politeness to inferiors and

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equals, respect and deference to superiors; the lesson should be enforced by good manners in the elders, for a child treated with politeness will himself instinctively become polite. Good physical habits of extreme cleanliness and order should be impressed on the child, and proper breathing should be taught; sanitary duties should be attended to on rising, and after the morning bath a few minutes should be given to breathing practice. Then should come the daily worship, including a versicle on the One Life, thanks to ancestors, to the workers who supply daily needs, to the animals who serve us. . . . Then some simple physical exercises, without apparatus preferably, for the strengthening of the muscles. . . .

The First Seven Years

The home education for the first seven years of life should, after the day begun as above described, put no strain on the child's intelligence; he should be as much as possible in the open air, should learn to observe the habits of plants, insects, birds and beasts, should be encouraged to garden, to play with animals, his lessons should be very short and conversational, mostly on objects and pictures, and should include learning by heart terse sentences and brief poems. Carefully graduated physical exercises and games to strengthen and supple the body, and to render it graceful, should alternate with easy-going lessons. These years are those in which must be laid the foundation of strong, beautiful, and healthy maturity.

The food should be simple and nourishing . . . all that builds up and does not stimulate; no meat, onions, or other coarse foodstuffs, should be allowed to come near the child.

This period of the child's life is one in which fancy and imagination are in full play, and should be encouraged, not checked. The 'making-believe' of the child is fruitful for himself and instructive for his elders who are seeking to understand him. . . .

From Seven to Fourteen

From the age of seven, more serious study should begin, but, if rightly arranged and given, it will be a joy, not a burden, to the child. . . . He will have picked up reading during the previous years; writing, after learning the form of the letters, is best practised by copying slowly and neatly passages chosen for beauty and simplicity, learning together in this way writing, spelling, and style. As writing becomes more easy to him, he can write without book on one day as much as he can remember of what he copied the day before. . . .

Teacher and Pupil

But the teacher must love the pupil, must be patient, tender, mindful of childish ways, never harsh, never provoked into hasty words, ruling by love and gentle persuasion, *never by force*. . . . Moreover, for one human being to inflict pain on another, with the object of causing pain is criminal; it is wrong in principle, as being a breach of the law of harmless-

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ness (ahimsā); . . . The child who is punished by violence is morally injured, as well as physically hurt and frightened. He is taught that the infliction of pain on another is the proper way of showing displeasure with one weaker than himself, and he becomes a bully to smaller children. His resentment blurs any possible sense he might otherwise have had of his own wrongdoing, and the seeds of revenge are sown in his heart. . . .

A child's faults for the most part can be cured by the opposite virtues in his elders, and by their showing him respect and trust. They should take it for granted that he has done his best, should accept his word unquestioningly, should treat him honourably, and as being himself an honourable person. If he does wrong, the wrong should be explained to him carefully the first time without blaming him: "I am sure you will not do it again, now you understand." If it be repeated, it should be met with an expression of surprise, of sorrow, of renewed hope. A child's self-respect must never be outraged; even if he lies, he must be trusted over and over again till he becomes truthful: "You must be making a mistake; you would not tell me a lie when you know I take your word."

Practical Work

Cooking, household work, and garden work should form part of the education of children from seven to fourteen; they should learn household carpentry, to drive in a nail (without spoiling the wall), to tie various knots, to make neat and well-

secured parcels, to use their fingers deftly and skilfully. They should learn to help, to serve, to find joy in helping — as children naturally do.

If their parents can afford to have them taught at home, or if a group of families could combine for home lessons, up to the age of fourteen, this would be better than sending them away to school. Boys and girls could all learn and play together in such a circle of homes, and would be all the better for the home influences constantly round them. During these seven years children should learn to swim, to row, to cycle, to ride, to run, to leap, to play cricket, hockey, tennis. To their reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography — taught as above said — they may, from about eleven onwards, add some simple scientific study, in a practical form, in which they can perform some simple experiments, learning from these, as they can learn from nothing else, the inviolability of natural law. During the later part of this second period of seven years, the future vocation of children should be definitely settled, due weight being given to their own ideas, which they should be encouraged to express freely, so that from fourteen onwards they may specialize along definite lines and prepare themselves for their work in the world.

Specialization

Thus the first seven years should be given to the building up of a healthy physical body, the formation of good habits, and the instilling of the religious

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and moral ideals which are to rule the life; these years are the most receptive, and impressions made during them are indelible. The second seven years should be given to the training of body and mind, to the acquiring of the general knowledge which every educated and well-bred person should possess, as a foundation for subsequent study. After fourteen, the youth should specialize, and to this question we must now turn.

If the parents or teachers of boy or girl be worthy of their responsible position, they will have watched the unfolding qualities and capacities of the child, will have noted his tastes as shown alike in study and in amusement, will have encouraged him to talk freely of his hopes and wishes, and will thus have arrived at a fairly definite view as to the line of activity which should suit the future adult. As the fourteenth year approaches, they should talk over with the child the various possibilities opening before him, explaining to him any advantages or disadvantages he does not see, aiding and guiding, but not coercing, his judgment. For the most part the child will readily accept the parent's advice, if that advice be based on a careful study of the child's aptitudes and tastes, and will be glad to lean on the more mature judgment of the elders. But now and again a child of genius or of marked talent will be found, who, even at that early age of the body, knows what he wills to do, and speaks decisively of his future work. With such a child, it is the elder's duty to cooperate in the carrying out of his ideal. . . .

Few parents, comparatively, can afford to give specialized instruction at home, and at this stage it will generally be necessary for the student to go to a boarding or day-school. Those who propose to go into one of the older Universities, choosing "the humanities" as their line of study, and the Church, the Law, Literature, Education, the Civil Service, Politics, or Diplomacy, as their career, will do well to pass through the higher classes of a great Public School and go thence to the University, learning in those little worlds something of the varieties of human nature, something of the qualities necessary for leadership among people, something of the motives which sway ordinary minds. The boy or girl who had passed the first fourteen years of life under the influences and training already described, should be able to pass unscathed through the worse side of the Public School life, and to stand unshaken on the principles they have assimilated.

Students who select other paths in life, such as medicine, other sciences, industries, . . . should enter schools with departments dealing with those paths, in a preparatory way, and pass from these to a modern University . . . for the completion of their education.

Universities Real and Ideal

Nothing, however, can be morally and physically worse for young students than living in the huge cities in which these Universities are unfortunately planted. It seems hopeless to suggest

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that they should be moved into the country, and placed in pure air and amid pure beautiful surroundings. Yet is this change imperatively needed, for purity and beauty are essential for the right development of both body and mind. . . .

If philanthropists, possessed of theosophical knowledge, would build, staff, and endow model Schools and Universities, adapted for the training of students preparing for the walks in life above-named, choosing exquisite spots for their sites, making the buildings beautiful as well as useful, and securing in perpetuity some hundreds of acres of park and farmland to surround them, they would build for themselves a name that would endure, and also incalculable benefits would be bestowed on humanity.

Above all should a theosophist be at the head of the Medical School and Hospital, where might be trained some doctors of the future, free from all the abominations which today surround preparation for this noble profession, where students should learn the art of healing rather than the art of balancing poisons, where they should study more diligently the preservation of health than the curing of disease.

The needs of some girl students might be met in first-rate day-schools in country districts, and in boarding schools in the country for the daughters of parents compelled to live in towns. In such schools literary training should not alone be given; household economy — including cookery both for the healthy and the sick — the laws of hygiene and sanita-

tion, first aid, domestic medicine, and nursing in simple illnesses, the care of little children, instruction in some form of Art, through which the nature may express itself in beauty — these things are essential parts of a woman's education. From such a school, after four or five years, the student might pass on to the University, whether she is adopting teaching, lecturing, literature, as her profession, or prefers to live as the mistress of her home. From such a school, after a two or three years' course, she might go on to the study of medicine or nursing, of science or commerce, if she selects either of these as a profession, or art — painting, music, sculpture, drama — if she has real talent in any one of these directions; the chosen subject may be pursued at such a university as is above described, where colleges should be set apart for the residence of women students.

Country Surroundings

To be away from towns and amid country surroundings, this is the need for the young life. Only thus can it grow up healthy, strong and pure. Moreover the country offers opportunities for cultivating the love of Nature which develops tenderness and power of observation. Both boys and girls should be encouraged to study beasts, and birds, and plants; they should track them to their secret haunts and watch them, learn their ways and their habits, photograph them in their play and their work — amusements far more attractive than frightening

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or killing them. The girls may learn many a lesson of nursing and of the care of children in the homes of the cottagers within reach of the school; the boys may learn many a lesson of the skilful use of land, of methods of agriculture, of woodcraft, and of animal husbandry.

It is scarcely possible today for theosophists to avoid utilizing such schools and colleges as exist for the education of students over the age of fourteen, though an attempt, may presently be made to found such a model school and university as is above suggested for those who do not wish to enter one of the first-named group of careers. But if the first fourteen years have been well spent, this need not seriously trouble them. For those who adopt one of the first group the way is easier; for the great public schools and the older universities are away from the noise and rowdyism of cities, and dominate completely the atmosphere of their several localities.

Suggestions for a School

If it is necessary or otherwise desirable — as it sometimes is — to send a child away to a boarding school before the age of fourteen, then there seems to be great need of establishing a school for children from seven to fourteen, on lines consonant with theosophical ideas.

It should be situated in a pretty part of the country, where all the surroundings will awaken the sense of beauty in the children, and where health will be their normal condition. The suggestions as to the beauty of the home should be carried

out, and especial care should be exercised in the choosing of pictures, so that they may arouse enquiry, leading to inspiring stories. Pictures of the founders of great religions should be hung in a room set apart for the beginning and ending of each day with song and grateful homage to the world's saints and guardians, and reverent recognition of the One Life in which we live and move and have our being. That room should be the most beautiful in the house, and full of peaceful joyous thoughts.

The food in such a school should be simple and non-stimulating, but nourishing and palatable, so that the young bodies may grow strong and vigorous; no flesh should, of course, enter into the diet, for the children will be taught tenderness for all sentient creatures. . . .

The teaching will be on the lines already sketched, and the teachers most carefully chosen, lovers of the young, the principles previously laid down for the training of the children in the home being applied to the students in the school.

After the age of fourteen the students would pass on into the specialized courses already described, and thus prepare for their work in the outer world.

The End

From a childhood and youth thus directed and guarded, . . . the young, arrived at manhood and womanhood, would be ready to take up and bear lightly and happily the burdens of the community, taking life's joys with gladness and its sorrows with equanimity. . . . ✧

Theosophical Work around the World



The International President, Mr Tim Boyd, giving the Convention Opening Address in an audiovisual format for the portion that presented annual reports of Theosophical units around the world on 31 December



Ms Marja Artamaa, International Secretary; Mr V. Narayanan, Indian Section Headquarters, Varanasi; Dr Rai Ajai Kumar, Secretary of Sarvahitkari Lodge, Gorakhpur, U.P.; Mr Pradeep H. Gohil, General Secretary, Indian Section; and Mr S. Sundaram, former General Secretary, Indian Section

Theosophical Work around the World



President Tim Boyd and wife, Lily, offering fruits to dancers of a classical Bharatanatyam presentation, “Shringara Vivekam — Understanding through Jayadeva’s Ashtapadis”, on 1st January



The Adyar Theatre at almost full capacity during the Global Rhythms presentation on 4 January of over 500 school-age Children's Choir directed by Mr Srinivas Krishnan, Founding Member of LEAP, India

Theosophical Work around the World

International Convention Impressions

The Convention is about to be closed and I have been asked to share with you the impressions that I have from my experience during these last days.

What can I say? How can I express the gratitude that I feel for being here during this important gathering? I may summarize by saying that it has been a very rewarding experience that will remain in my heart.

“Call to Unity” is a key subject for the Theosophical Society and I have been fortunate to receive all the inspiring Convention lectures and presentations. And, of course, I also feel a great joy for being able to live the wonderful atmosphere created during these days.

Furthermore, the Convention has given me the opportunity to experience glimpses of Universal Brotherhood by meeting with people from all around the world regardless of any language barrier. I am also very grateful for sharing the room with three wonderful women whom I had not met before and now we are like sisters.

We may have had a few challenges regarding the comfort issues of the buildings that need renovation, but beyond that I believe that we are all aware of the privilege of being here in Adyar, the holy grounds of Adyar.

I would like to finish with a quotation from J. Krishnamurti that truly reflects

the impressions, feelings, and intuitions that I am sure we all have in respect of Adyar:

It is essential for the individual member and for the Society that Adyar, as a great spiritual center, should be maintained worthy and dignified. The importance of this is so obvious that few can doubt it. Adyar is and always has been a spiritual oasis to which the weary traveller looks for comfort and repose. Though it may not be the privilege of each member in the Society to go there from the world of wilderness, yet the mere existence of such a center gives hope and encouragement.

I have visited many a wonderful land and seen many a famous sight but there is none to equal the extraordinary intangible something of our Adyar. There is an atmosphere there that does not exist in many a church and temple and there is a Presence there that we expect to perceive in a sacred shrine. One can become either a God or a pitiful sinner at Adyar. It is a wondrous spot and it must be maintained as though it were a holy temple.

LOLA RUMI

Recent Change

During the International Convention at Adyar, the Indian Section elected a new General Secretary, Mr Pradeep H. Gohil, succeeding Mr S. Sundaram, who served devotedly for thirteen years. ✧

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