

Adyar Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2008



The newly renovated Blavatsky Bungalow

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PROFESSOR SAMDHONG RINPOCHE AT ADYAR

A large gathering of members and friends from the TS and the Krishnamurti Foundation India (KFI) listened to Venerable Professor Samdhong Rinpoche at the Headquarters Hall, Adyar, on 22 January 2008. Professor Rinpoche is the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in Exile and former Director of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies at Sarnath, Varanasi. He is also a life member of the TS and a Trustee of the KFI. Not only did he lecture, but he set the tone of the meeting by chanting. He expressed the view that there had been more occasions when he could speak about Theosophy in recent times, and he welcomed the opportunity to be in this 'Holy Place'.

As a universal responsibility, everyone should try to confront the economic and social changes that have been taking place. These changes have not been to the benefit of humanity but to its detriment. To bring about a real change requires a change of mind and determination to confront the divisiveness in which we are living.

The mind has been constricted a great deal, and one should be aware of the need to create a stable mind. There is need to lead a life of one's own choice. We have come to realize that a lot of enmity has arisen over the last two centuries, and this has led to a new and violent world. Our mission should be to go in the direction of Nature, rather than to focus on consumerism and demand comfortable goods as a necessity of life. Consuming has become one of the most deficient lifestyles, and if this trend continues, there is not much hope for evolution.

In the future we shall see rising sea levels due to melting glaciers and other environmental changes. The great challenge to

human beings is to stem this degradation. In the past these issues have caused wars, and this tendency will continue in the future. The effects of Hiroshima are still fresh in our minds. The propensity for war will continue if violence is not abated. No one is safe these days. We have to look to the younger generation and ensure that they are prepared during their college years to face the future, limiting comparison and competition, which destroy peace of mind.

Regrettably, religious traditions and a religious mind are almost disappearing from humanity, and the world has become self-contradictory, used to complaints, humiliation, and internecine strife. These imbalances must be redressed so that future generations do not see spirituality as an outer condition only.

Rinpoche gave examples of people travelling to Mecca and other holy places, eager to learn, but conflict arises because of the materialistic and contradictory facts we are given. Asking, 'Is there hope for Humanity?', he suggested that spiritual wisdom has a much greater responsibility to lead communities in the right direction, if we are to save the earth. We have to work much harder, and with determination reach out to the majority of people to bring about changes which give more parity to the future of the many.

It is by this reaching out, refreshing the mind, he said, that changes will come about throughout the world, saving the earth by transforming the materialistic mind into a super-mind and transforming the religious mind, so that a good Muslim becomes a true Muslim, and so on. Claiming to be a Buddhist is not enough; it has no meaning unless one practises the teachings of the Buddha

and strives to bring more compassion and loving kindness into one's relationship with others. All religions have the potential to transform the Universal Consciousness, but this does not work without a channel. All

sides need to collaborate so that there is only one life awakening to the truth. Only with this idea in mind can each individual turn in the right direction and show kindness to those she or he considers enemies.

JK WITH CHILDREN

'Sometimes Krishnaji is not such a good influence', muttered my mother one evening. Before you come to any conclusion, permit me to narrate the circumstances leading to such a remark.

In view of requirements, a spacious plot was acquired in Greenways Road and a main building and various outhouses were built, thanks to the untiring efforts of D. K. Telang. It was named 'Vasanta Vihar'. The area was spacious enough to erect a small platform under a tree for JK to expound his thoughts to an eager audience,



which included a large proportion of delegates to the annual Convention of the Theosophical Society. (Vasanta Vihar is within walking distance of the TS gate.)

Krishnaji, being a fast family friend of ours, invited us frequently for tea at Vasanta Vihar. On one such afternoon, my mother took us (meaning Radha, my younger brother Vajra, aged four-and-a-half, and myself) to Vasanta Vihar. We were dressed suitably, though uncomfortably, for the occasion, and were cautioned to be on our best behaviour. My father was busy in his office and did not attend. Krishnaji greeted us with great pleasure and, after pleasantries, copious edibles were brought out. We children did justice to these. Krishnaji liked good food and was no small eater. He exercised regularly and kept a slim figure, and underneath his flowing kurta he had a tough body.

It was amazing how much a little boy of four-and-a-half could stuff into his tummy. Incidentally, he was not very small. He was the biggest and strongest in his class, being the favourite of both teachers and fellow pupils.

After the repast, Krishnaji made sure that Vajra had had enough by squeezing his stomach and tickling him under the ribs. This immediately led to retaliation and Vajra went for Krishnaji like a little demon. Krishnaji tickled him some more, and there was a lot of giggling and shouting. Soon Vajra was on the floor punching

and kicking. Krishnaji's well-exercised torso could take a lot of punishment while he squeezed and tickled Vajra.

Radha and I were mute, wide-eyed spectators and enjoyed the fun. Ultimately a truce was called and after downing some more ice-cream, we went back in a borrowed car. When we reached home, my mother was frustrated in her efforts

to admonish my brother properly, as he was fast asleep.

In the course of time, we children grew up and Vajra was told that Krishnaji was a teacher and should be addressed as 'Sir', but who can forget Krishnaji's boyish laughter, which was an expression of his caring nature!

S. V. NILAKANTA

Adyar Day exists to remind the members of this glorious place, and to urge them to do their best to make Adyar a worthy and dignified shrine for the Masters.

J. Krishnamurti, 1928

SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM



Two views of Blavatsky Bungalow facing the famous banyan tree

On 7 January 2008 we were able to open the second session of the School of the Wisdom in Blavatsky Bungalow, which appeared fresh and new, its white-painted walls helping to create an atmosphere of calmness and neatness. The meditation room, duly decorated with elegant curtains and new cushions, offered a quiet place for students to be prepared to listen.

The Director of the course, Mr Colin Price, General Secretary of the English Section, was pleased to hold his course in the newly renovated building.

The construction work included the erection on both sides of the building of toilets with showers, four on each side, offering additional facilities to delegates housed in the building during Convention time. All those attending the second session who had known the building earlier, commented very favourably.



BWC STALL

The International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, inaugurated the Beauty Without Cruelty stall, which is set up during the international Conventions with much information pertaining to animal rights. Visitors are sensitized to problems of cruelty perpetrated on animals for different reasons. The stall displays literature that visitors can read for their edification. Membership forms are available and cruelty-free products are sometimes sold. People are encouraged to adopt a compassionate lifestyle by

eschewing products and activities that involve cruelty.



ADYAR LODGE — RECEPTION FOR DELEGATES

The delegates attending the 132nd international Convention were entertained by the Adyar Lodge on 1 January 2008, following refreshments.

Members of the Round Table had chosen to enact a poem of H.H. the Dalai Lama entitled, 'The Sheltering Tree of Interdependence' that underlines his deep concern for people to make continued efforts to reverse the degeneration of our environment. This was followed by a dance by Marie, a Russian delegate. Thereafter, the two brothers Feroze and Rustom Pomeroy played pieces on the keyboard and violin respectively. The last part of the programme was a Bharatanatyam dance recital by Mrs Shobana Bhalchandra and her troupe.



THE MEMBERS' STONE

You might wonder why a well-constructed piece of stone masonry is called a stone. In this case, it is 'stone-shaped for a purpose, especially one of commemoration'.

This particular one stands to the west of the international Headquarters, behind Fuller Bungalow, and beside the second trilithon. Off the beaten track, fringed by greenery, it can be viewed undisturbed. It is painted mainly brick-red and bears an inscription on white and speckled granite — engraved on a more or less semi-circular background.

Like the narrow path leading to the stone, those remembered serve inconspicuously — they sweep, dust, paint, make tea, and find time also for that which is deeply felt, such as saving another member's face 'from humiliation'. They are not in the Society for

praise; in fact, they never draw attention to themselves. According to the Law, they will be rewarded.

The inscription reads: TO THOSE UNKNOWN MEMBERS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WHOSE SILENT LOYALTY AND SACRIFICE ENSURE TO IT THE MASTERS' CONSTANT BLESSING.

The inscription is supported by the TS emblem. Briefly, the tau (also called ankh or ansated cross) represents resurrection. The dark and light interlaced triangles symbolize life's descent and ascent. The sacred serpent stands for wisdom and the cyclic nature of manifestation. The svastika revolves as evolution proceeds.

Thought forms leave their mark, for the atmosphere surrounding the stone is one of dedication.



OBITUARY

Miss S. Visalakshi, former worker in the Adyar Library, passed away on 29 November 2007. After her retirement as a teacher in the Besant Theosophical School, where she received the best teacher award, she worked for 23 years until September 2004, when



she retired due to poor health. She endeared herself to one and all by her childlike nature, and many residents and staff were grateful to her for lessons on spoken Tamil.

The November 2004 issue of this Newsletter has a fuller account of her life.

A TRIBUTE TO S. VENKATARAMAN (1920–2008)

His friends of the pre-independence era recognized him only as 'Scout' Venkataraman. His association with scouting goes back to the days of Dr George S. Arundale, a British educationalist who became the third President of the Theosophical Society and also one of the pioneers of the Indian Scouting Movement. Venkataraman understood that three-fourths of the word 'scouting' is 'outing'. In his capacity as Adviser to the Besant Scout Camping Centre of the TS, Adyar, he promoted a great variety of scouting activities. With persistent effort he used to contact even reluctant scout groups in



and around the city by pulling and pushing them into tent-camps.

Despite his advanced age and the pace-maker in his heart, he was able to blend his life with that of Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting. Probably the Almighty wished the 'scout' Venkataraman to live until the centenary celebration of the Scouting Movement (1907–2007) was over; he passed away on 6 February.

'Ask not what scouting has done for you; instead ask what you have done for scouting' — this was his mantra to be repeated by his Scouts and Guides.

If I had a dozen sons . . . I would send them all into the Scout movement as soon as they could enter its lowest grade. And I would send the daughters into the Girl Guides, under similar conditions, to begin at the beginning.

Annie Besant

