

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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CONTENTS

Foundation Day <i>Tim Boyd</i>	5
Tuning in to Our World <i>Diana Dunningham Chapotin</i>	10
Study, Meditation, and Service <i>Sushma Webber</i>	16
The Theosophical Society in the 21st Century – III <i>Marcello R. Serini</i>	21
Compassion and Universal Responsibility <i>Clemice Petter</i>	26
The Virgin Birth – How it Applies in Conduct <i>H. L. S. Wilkinson</i>	30
Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom	32
Convention Programme	34
Theosophical Work around the World	37
International Directory	44

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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.

Foundation Day

(17 November 2015)

TIM BOYD

NOVEMBER 17 marks a special day for us as members of the Theosophical Society. If we think more deeply about the meaning and value of our membership, we become aware that, while it is wonderful for us to celebrate and to acknowledge, the real value of 17 November 1875 is that, at that particular moment, a movement in consciousness began. This is a movement that has profoundly affected our world even though the depth and extent of its effects we only dimly perceive.

One of the difficulties for us in trying to assess what this movement and its introduction to the world has meant, is that we lose touch with the context into which the TS was born. Living in 2015 and looking back to 1875, there are many things we feel that we see clearly, but perhaps we do not. Part of the beauty of this commemoration is that we allow ourselves the opportunity for two things: (1) an expression of gratitude for having been exposed to something of great value; (2) and a remembrance of the lives of great people and the effect they have had on the world.

It was only last year when I realized that this day, 17 November, was called

‘Foundation Day’. In the United States it had always been called ‘Founders’ Day’. The focus was always on the individuals, the people that founded this Society. I think ‘Foundation Day’ is perhaps more correct; it is broader. The process involves the three aspects of Founders, the founding, and the actual foundation that is built. However, it is good to begin by remembering the people who were involved.

By anyone’s standard, Henry Steele Olcott and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB) were a couple of ‘characters’. They lived lives that were rich in ways that would be unfamiliar to us. She was born in Russia to a noble family. Throughout her youth she was surrounded by all sorts of strange occurrences. She was deeply clairvoyant from birth and was always seeing things that others did not. She was well known for telling spellbinding stories to her friends about the inner worlds. Often she would be found with her young friends, and they would be on the edge of their seats, frightened about the things she was describing that seemed to be surrounding them. She had the powers of imagination and also of ‘seeing’.

Early in her life she was aware of the presence of a tall, dark-skinned man, who

Foundation Day

seemed to be a very powerful person. Always in times of need this person would appear to her. She knew he was a high being — a guide and protector. Even though the young HPB could describe his every feature and the qualities of his character, she never saw him in the physical body — until she was twenty years old.

At seventeen, she ran away from home and began a life of remarkable travels and study that took her around the world. She had married a man on a 'dare'. The conventional story is that HPB's governess told her that with her wilful and impetuous nature 'not even Old Blavatsky', a man more than twice her age, 'would marry you'. Within three days she was engaged and soon married. It was only then that she realized what she had done, and wanted out. Her solution was to leave the country. She boarded a ship bound for Constantinople and then Egypt, spending the rest of her life traveling from place to place. Wherever she found herself, seeking out occult wisdom, the presence of a deeper knowledge, and hidden things were what filled her life.

On her twentieth birthday in London, she first met in the flesh the man she had been seeing clairvoyantly throughout her youth. He turned out to be the one who is known to us as the Mahatma Morya. She had an opportunity to talk with him, and during that conversation the course she was to follow during the remainder of her life was painted out for her to choose or not. It was made clear that hers would not be an easy life;

it would be filled with trials, with disappointments, but ultimately it would all be worthwhile. For the next forty years, that was the kind of life she led. She died at age sixty.

It is remarkable to think that what we know as the original theosophical literature, the many volumes of HPB's writings, were all done between 1875 and her death in 1891 — sixteen years produced thousands of pages and numerous volumes of wisdom teachings that live beyond her. She was remarkable in that respect. The extent of her known travels was equally remarkable.

In recent years I travel internationally — to India and other places, and sometimes I moan about how difficult it is to go to the airport, to be searched, to put up with all of the travails of travelling, sometimes twenty hours or more to get to a destination. Her travels took her throughout Europe, Canada, the United States, South America, Tibet, and India. This would be notable in 2015, but in the late 1800s she was travelling by steamer, bullock cart, horse, covered wagon, train, (sometimes by elephant!), across the entire globe; it is unimaginable. But this was the life that she lived.

Her counterpart in this Theosophical endeavour, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, was an American born in New Jersey. As a teenager his family fell on hard times and he went to live with his aunt and uncle in Ohio and became deeply interested in agriculture. Many people are not aware that what he is most remembered for outside of the Theosophical Society is the

Foundation Day

work he did on scientific agriculture. He was offered professorships and high government positions for his work in that particular field because he was such an advanced scientific investigator.

It was a very unusual time in the US. He was a young man at the time the Civil War was being fought and one out of every fifty people in the nation was killed. In the city of New York the census data for 1853 said that of every person that died half of them were children under the age of five. Everybody had neighbours, friends, and relatives dying around them; no one was unaffected. It was at this time that the enormously influential movement called 'Spiritualism' arose. It was remarkable in ways that we cannot even understand.

Every newspaper in the US featured articles about the things that were happening in the spiritualistic séances. There was the upwelling desire for contact with all of the loved ones who had suddenly been claimed by the War and in other ways. Then there was the response of the Spiritualistic Movement, which seemed to confirm the continuation of conscious life beyond the grave. This movement necessarily attracted many people who were fraudulent, but at the same time it produced real phenomena that could not be explained away. Col Olcott got involved in the investigation of those phenomena, and he was a tenacious investigator. During the Civil War he had been called upon to root out corruption in the US Army and Navy, and they said that his work for the Army was more valuable

for the war effort than winning a major battle. He was an investigator and a scientist. So he turned his attention to these phenomena of Spiritualism, and it was on that basis that HPB and Col Olcott had their first meeting.

Two brothers at a little farm in Vermont had been exhibiting a range of phenomenal occurrences: tables rising, objects materializing, sounds coming from the walls, messages coming from people who had passed on. Col Olcott went to investigate and to write about his findings for a major New York City newspaper. This was the place where he and H. P. Blavatsky had their first meeting. Their introduction came with him lighting her cigarette and conversing in French.

After their coming together in the city of New York they gathered around them a number of leading intellectuals, scientists, people from all different fields who were interested in the inner worlds, who had studied them, and who were drawn to HPB because she could demonstrate these phenomena at will. Out of this group they decided to form a Society that could study some of these ideas, test them, and prove or disprove them. They got together and drew up a charter, and on 30 October they were to announce the by-laws and formation of the organization to be called the Theosophical Society. However, on that date all of the preamble to the by-laws was not complete yet, and the founding was postponed to 17 November.

Very often we like to think that the time we live in now is one of great and

Foundation Day

rapid change. No one would dispute that. But in 1875 it was a time of no less significant change and turmoil. On every horizon the ground seemed to be shifting under people's feet. Politically, around the world, the accepted form of government that had been in place for hundreds of years of monarchy, kingships, queenships, were falling left and right. The new experimental political orders of republics and democracies were suddenly rising. The science of the day had advances occurring that were boggling the minds of people of that time. Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution threw everyone's thinking into confusion. Religious and social thinking became affected by the evolutionary idea of 'survival of the fittest'. This called into question the Christian Church's assertions about the nature of creation. Electromagnetism and radioactivity, so normal to us today, had just been discovered. One new scientific discovery after another were just falling into place. It was becoming a very confusing time for many.

This was a time when religion was battling with science for the minds and hearts of humanity — and a deeply materialistic science was winning. The science that was rooted in a base materialism and the religion that demanded an abject superstitious belief became the two poles between which the TS navigated. There is a common knowledge about what occurs at any time a new truth is revealed. It is said that three things happen: (1) The new truth is ridiculed and dismissed. It is too different and too much

in conflict with accepted norms to find any level of acceptance. This happens in the scientific world where, for example, even so great a pioneer as Albert Einstein was unable to accept the paradigm-shifting findings of the upstart Quantum Physics. The theosophical truths that came forward were equally dismissed. (2) The new truth is violently opposed and resisted. (3) It is ultimately accepted and regarded as so self-evident, so obvious, that it seems impossible for anyone to even question it.

In the theosophical world, we had the introduction of ideas that the human being is much more than what we see with our eyes, that there is a multidimensional universe within which we live, that this could be demonstrated, and that there were hidden powers within every person that could be cultivated. These were truths that were a bit too much to simply accept. That there is one fundamental unitive Source from which all religions come was also too much to take. In 1875 the idea that there is a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity was in complete opposition to the normal way of thinking. Just ten years earlier in the United States the law allowed for one human to own another as a slave — as long as the slave was someone of African descent. Although slavery was not the general practice, in India, Africa, South America, and other places around the world the European colonial powers had very clear ideas about their racial and cultural superiority over the people they ruled. 'Universal Brotherhood' was a revolutionary idea.

Foundation Day

The Founders that began this groundbreaking work in the US ultimately came to India, where the Society flourished. In New York City, when they were leaving for India, Col Olcott joked that he had wanted to take the chandelier in the room where they met because in so many of their meetings the chandelier was the only other 'person' attending. What had started with grand hopes had died down. The time for the TS was not yet ripe in the US. Only in India did the TS find its life and then spread around the world.

The TS movement and tradition that we talk about draws its life from what is sometimes called the 'rootless root' — the One Tradition that is always present

beneath the surface, supporting the various spiritual traditions that periodically arise in different ages and cultures. In one place it appears and you have the Vedas, at another time you have the Egyptian Mysteries, the Greek Mysteries. Sometimes it appears as great individuals: in a Buddha, Krishna, Horus, Jesus, Zoroaster. In our time this root found its way to the surface through H. P. Blavatsky and Henry S. Olcott. It found its way into the life and work of the Theosophical Society. The life in that movement is sufficiently strong that on this day, 140 years after its founding, people around the world gather to remember. ✧

The sun of Theosophy must shine for all, not for a part. There is more of this movement than you have yet had an inkling of, and the work of the Theosophical Society is linked in with similar work that is secretly going on in all parts of the world.

Mahatma Morya

Tuning in to Our World

DIANA DUNNINGHAM CHAPOTIN

THE theme chosen for this international Convention, ‘Theosophy in a changing world’, could almost have been ‘Theosophy in a radically, morbidly changing world’! After all, human beings have become a geological force on the planet. The poisoning of our earth is now systemic. By tampering with the delicate balance of nature, the planet has been set on a trajectory toward desolation.

When I was International Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), people sometimes asked me if I felt overwhelmed by the state of the world — the violence, the materialism, the effects of overpopulation, urbanization, industrial farming, and so on. Some members even asked if I thought we had gone past the point of no return. This question seemed quite understandable and reasonable.

I would like to talk here about some very simple advice I received that helped me in my participation in the TOS’s endeavours to shape the change in our world in positive, constructive, spiritually-oriented ways.

When I first took up the TOS work at

the international level, I was full of energy and zeal. When you are a relatively young Theosophist and you see exploitation and abuse around you, you want to get out and *push* the world in the right direction in the light of Theosophy. You figure that it should take about a year and a half to clean up the worst of the problems and another five or six to set the planet straight on the rest!

The first thing I did was to tell my fellow members what we all needed to be doing: ‘Let’s do this, let’s do that, I’ll do this, why don’t you do that,’ and so on. My arms were waving frantically in every direction — I went instantly into a state of ‘busy-ness’, as our President Tim Boyd might say.

In my state of busy-ness all those years ago, there was not much response from my fellow members to all my suggestions for dynamizing the work of the TOS and moulding the change in the world. They remained quite passive. Now if the organizing secretary is not managing to inspire the members to participate, something is wrong. I mean the whole reason for the existence of the TOS is to

Mrs Diana Dunningham Chapotin is former International Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service. Talk given at the international Convention, Adyar, December 2014.

Tuning in to Our World

help Theosophists in their service as spiritual practice. The TOS is not meant to serve as a distraction from the main work of spreading the teachings of Theosophy, but to help spread these teachings by showing the light they shed on issues of social concern, on the practical problems of human beings. And if the members are not responding, then something is wrong.

Just listen

I mentioned this unresponsiveness to Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, former General Secretary of the TS in the Philippines for many years. He suggested that I may simply be overwhelming people. ‘Try just listening to the members, Diana’, he said, ‘Just listen to them.’ Now there does not seem anything very revolutionary in Vic’s advice, does there, and yet good things happened when I started to listen.

Almost immediately I discovered the amazing, hidden talents of my fellow Theosophists. I had always thought that we were a pretty intellectual bunch, cloistered away in the library, offices, and lecture rooms of our TS branches and headquarters buildings, priding ourselves on doing superior ‘spiritual’ work. I discovered that most members were in fact actually engaged in all kinds of service in the community as part of their spiritual practice. I learned that the TS does not just have a distinguished past in terms of service works but a distinguished present. There are members out there injecting theosophical ideas into children’s education, civic

decision-making, conflict resolution sessions in war-torn areas, and so on.

Mr Hao Chin’s advice to just listen taught me that instead of telling the members what they should be doing, the TOS simply needed to listen to their concerns about the planet and help them transform them into practical projects and campaigns in areas they felt passionate about. In recognizing and nurturing their service work instead of telling them what to do, things became less stressful for me, more joyful for them, and more productive in getting Theosophy out into our changing world.

Listening at a deeper level

But there were other kinds of listening that Vic encouraged me to try. There was not just listening to my fellow members, but listening through the heart to human beings in distress. In France, where I live, there are homeless people begging on the streets, including quite a few alcoholics. I learned that it was not enough just to look them in the eye, smile, and acknowledge their existence. It was also necessary to open up to the pain of their craving, of their chapped, chilblained hands, and of their utter solitude. An awareness of that pain needed to be allowed right into the heart.

Listening from the heart to the pain of those in distress spontaneously causes the mind to seek answers. It breaks down barriers of preconception and prejudice; it leads us to explore the social, economic, and political causes of misery. It reveals the complexity and interrelatedness of the

Tuning in to Our World

issues afflicting our planet. We learn to see media reports for what they most often are: superficial accounts written rapidly with an eye to set the astral body quivering and push up viewer or reader ratings. We learn to see through the blatantly unworkable solutions politicians often propose. We are drawn to public forums and associations where social workers, medical personnel, and others acting at grass-roots level can indicate the only measures that have a hope of resolving complex problems over the long term. When we really tune in, we are drawn to those at the coalface of social reform, to those in the front line of action to protect the environment. We discover activist sages who show, by who they *are*, the indissoluble link between individual and social transformation.

Broadening and deepening our listening allows us to get a more accurate sense of the state of our changing world and to fine-tune the projects we develop for long-term change.

I mentioned above the way we are influenced and manipulated by the media who constantly stimulate the prurient side of our natures in order to capture our attention and push up their viewer or reader ratings. Take all the media reports of terrorist acts. In the USA, the fear of terrorism as projected by the media has caused six times more deaths than terrorism itself. In the past thirteen years, thirty American citizens have died through actual terrorist acts. That is an awful lot. In the same period, 1,500 Americans have died in road accidents, however,

because they have chosen to drive from one city to another rather than take an aeroplane for fear of a terrorist attack.

Cause for hope

Because the media bring almost instantly into our living room reports of acts of great violence committed on the other side of the globe, we have the impression that the world is an increasingly dangerous place to live in. In fact individual and collective violence has been steadily declining over the past thousand years. The number of wars and the number of deaths through war all over the world has been going down for many centuries proportionate to the number of people on earth. We need to be careful of statistics in general, and of statistics from secondary sources like these (from the book *Altruism: The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and the World* by Matthieu Ricard), but it can reliably be said that today's citizens are far less at risk of being killed or subjected to violence than a century ago, and far, far less at risk than a thousand years ago.

The media do not often mention the really positive things happening. The number of charitable groups within the USA has doubled since the year 2000, bringing the total to close to a million. There are around 40,000 international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the world and a vastly greater number of national ones. In Russia there are around 280,000 NGOs; India has more than three million! Most of them are centred on humanitarian work. Again,

Tuning in to Our World

it is hard to keep up-to-date figures on all this, but it is clear that there is tremendous growth in citizenly concern and involvement in reversing the direction in which we are headed on this planet.

All the petitions that are circulated on the internet raise awareness amongst millions, if they do nothing else, but many of them achieve even more than that when backed up with real-world action. The non-profit organization, Avaaz, for instance, organizes successful global media and lobbying efforts around its on-line petitions.

Mr Hao Chin, whom I mentioned a little while ago, set me thinking about yet another kind of listening it is important to engage in if we want to make a difference in the world, and that is listening to ourselves. Really tuning into ourselves is possibly the hardest thing of all.

The greatest challenge

To be an effective server in this changing world, we have to train ourselves to look squarely at our emotions, resistances, and compulsions. We need to own up to quite natural and understandable feelings of anxiety, indignation, discomfort, nervous fatigue, impatience, disappointment, and so on. Once we have acknowledged this impatience, disappointment, and stress, it is easy to fall into the trap of growling at ourselves or preaching to ourselves: 'I must be more patient', 'I must stop getting stressed out and irritable', 'I must be more loving', and so on. I sometimes think that actually all this does is lead to feelings of guilt and

unworthiness. Preaching to ourselves, morally exhorting ourselves does not dispel these failings. In fact the impatience, discomfort, the nervous fatigue, the disappointment, the anger are really merely symptoms of something deeper, I suspect. That something deeper is subconscious fear, fear that saps our energy for constructive action.

In looking behind our emotions, we can find fear of loss of control, of powerlessness, of vulnerability; we find a fear of being overwhelmed, of having our heart broken; ultimately we can find the fear of extinction. By listening at *this* level, by becoming aware of the fears, energy can flow more freely for protecting the planet as the precious theatre of evolution it is. Listening to our deepest fears is spiritual work.

Now let us look briefly at just one or two of these subconscious fears that can block or undermine our energy for constructive action. What about fear of loss of control? Here is a small example from my own life.

Fear of loss of control

Back in the 1990s when France was still testing nuclear bombs under the sea bed at Mururoa Atoll in the South Pacific — about as far from its own shores as it could get — I joined the Greenpeace campaign to get President Jacques Chirac to renounce his final round of tests. I distributed hundreds of tracts in the streets of Paris, wrote to politicians, and participated in marches. Over the weeks of work, I convinced myself that President

Tuning in to Our World

Chirac would renounce his round of bombs. I believed utterly that we would persuade him. Then one afternoon I heard on the radio that the first bomb in the new round of tests had been set off. I was stunned. I stood by the radio, rooted to the spot. Suddenly rage rose up in me. I had never experienced rage before. My heart started to pound, my cheeks blazed, and I found myself standing above myself looking down.

I was so shocked at the strength of this rage that I could not simply growl at myself or preach to myself about spiritual calm, about detachment from the fruits of action, and so on. I was *forced* to look within. I stood, still rooted to the spot, and really listened to what was going on inside. I found that what lay behind the rage certainly was not just righteous indignation. What had fuelled it was the very simple discovery that I was in a world I could not control, a world of some wickedness I had no mastery over. And that was really scary. I am sure most of you discovered this at a much younger age than I did.

When I recognized this fear, my thought spontaneously flew to the tremendous powerlessness people must feel when a reckless driver kills their child, the helplessness they must feel when they find that their beloved has developed a serious illness, the vulnerability they feel when they become dependent on people — sometimes unkind people — through old age or illness. As my heart made the connection between my feeling of loss of control

and the countless situations in which other people find themselves powerless, helpless, and vulnerable, the rage in me receded like a tide on the shore and returned as a quiet wave of compassion. I realized then what a sheltered life I had led and how greatly, oh how immensely others need and deserve help.

There are quite a few frightening things lurking below the surface of our serving selves. When we are engaged in service to relieve suffering, the fear of heartbreak, of being overwhelmed and drowned with sadness by what we see around us, can undermine our energy and availability. It may mean that we are like oysters that open up and let in just so much pain and then snap shut. We help out on Monday and Thursday afternoons and then come home and close our front doors with a sigh of relief. When we are out in the street, we may avoid the gaze of beggars. We shy away from photos of animal abuse. There are thousands of people who need our care and attention, millions of animals being mistreated, forests being laid waste. It is all overwhelming, and deep down, a little voice is whimpering, 'If I have to answer all these calls, how will I cope? What time will there be left for me?' The pressure we put on ourselves to answer all the calls for help is quite threatening to the very existence of the self.

We cannot resolve all our subconscious fears by waving a wand. We may continue to have our energy undermined by the fear of being submerged by the immensity of the task and the sorrow of

Tuning in to Our World

it all. We may continue to have our energy sapped by a sense of impotence in the face of outrageous injustice. We may continue to run from the inner void; but I have the impression that each time we recognize subconscious fears and stare them in the face just for a second, a measure of the spiritual energy running underground in us is released.

I am very grateful to Mr Hao Chin for suggesting that in trying to bring Theosophy to a changing world, in trying to *live* our Theosophy in a changing world, one step we can take is simply to listen — to our fellow members in their giving dharma and to the pain of all those in distress. We can tune in to the complex psychological, social, and economic factors involved in tragic situations and social issues. We can listen to the wise activists in the forefront of reform. And finally, we can listen to our own deepest fears. This attentiveness, this tuning in at different levels, helps us get a sense of the real state of the world. It alerts us to the truly good things going

on in society. It alerts us to the greatly increasing numbers of citizens rallying to the defence of the planet, in spite of what the media tell us. Simply listening shows us the way.

Hand in hand

There are those who believe that if each of us takes care of our own spiritual transformation, planetary transformation will take care of itself. I believe that the two go hand in hand. Theosophy is a dynamic force for both individual and social transformation. I have an Irish friend who has pinned an epigram written by Ashleigh Brilliant to her front door saying, 'If I'm not home accepting what I can't change, I'm probably out, changing what I can't accept.'

Theosophy speaks of limitless inner resources that we can tap into to help shape the future intelligently and rapidly. It is too late to be pessimistic about our changing world. We need simply to join hands and walk gently on the earth together, listening intently. ✧

A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of Nature in its beauty.

Albert Einstein

Study, Meditation, and Service

SUSHMA WEBBER

Let our lives be great, and not petty. The great life is the happy life, and the one whose ideals are great is himself great; for matter shapes itself to the will of the informing Spirit, and a life petty from the outer standpoint may be made great by the splendour of the ideal that ensouls it.

— *The Theosophic Life*, Annie Besant

The pursuit of happiness seems to be a major preoccupation of a large number of people in the world today. We strive towards a lifestyle of comfort, seek various forms of entertainment, and focus on physical, emotional, and mental well-being to be able to enjoy life to its fullest. Is it really the pursuit of true happiness, or is it an attempt to have a few pleasurable experiences as a relief from a life of suffering? Annie Besant addresses the issue of happiness at a more fundamental level. She points to an aspect of life seldom discussed these days, namely living according to our ideals. To be able to stand up for our ideals we would have to develop spiritual resilience to cheerfully face the circumstances of life, without being swayed by them. The three limbs of a spiritual life

are said to be Study, Meditation, and Service, and integrating these disciplines in our life would help us find the great ideals we resonate to, give us the strength to live by them, and find a way to end suffering, thus living a happy life.

In recent years several studies have been conducted to find out what makes us happy. For example, the Happiness Research Institute in Denmark undertakes customized research on the well-being, satisfaction and quality of life, to empower cities, communities and governments to develop strategies to achieve greater subjective well-being for their citizens. The Positive Psychology Centre in Pennsylvania is exploring the idea that through certain practices, such as forgiveness, gratefulness, and self-reflection, people can enhance their well-being. Most neuropsychologists are saying that it is possible to hardwire happiness into our brains by being totally present to life's joyful moments.

Matthieu Ricard, a Buddhist monk and author, says it is important to 'raise the baseline' of happiness, which is different from a temporary experience of pleasure

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Study, Meditation, and Service

such as when we do things we like, that is, eating ice cream, going for a run, or watching a movie. Ricard has been the subject of intensive clinical tests at the University of Wisconsin, as a result of which he is frequently described as the happiest man in the world. Raising the baseline would mean training the mind and harmonizing the emotions so that we remain calm and centred in the deepest part of ourselves. We would be calm like the water in the depth of the ocean even in the midst of a raging storm on the surface.

One reason for the emphasis on happiness research in recent years might be the fact that since the 1970s there has been an increase in emotional distress (a 'mental illness' like depression, anxiety, or psychosis), especially amongst the younger generation. According to Oliver James, a clinical child psychologist and author of *Affluenza: How to Be Successful and Stay Sane*, the great majority of people in English-speaking nations (Britain, Singapore, Australia, Canada, USA, New Zealand) now define their lives through earnings, possessions, appearances, and celebrity status, and these things are making them miserable because they impede the meeting of fundamental needs.¹

James calls it the 'Affluenza Virus', a set of values that entails placing high merit on acquiring money and possessions, looking good in the eyes of others, and wanting to be famous. Urban China and India are not far behind in adopting these values even though they are not as

badly affected as the other nations. James points out that being infected with the 'Affluenza Virus increases your susceptibility to the commonest emotional distresses: depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and personality disorder (like "me, me, me" narcissism, febrile moods, or confused identity)'. However, not all mental illnesses are due to adopting the Affluenza Virus values. It could also be the result of the environment and conditions created by such values in several countries which affects everyone whether they are individually infected by the Affluenza Virus or not.

In 1910, in her lecture 'The Coming Race', Annie Besant points out a more fundamental cause for mental instability when talking about the emergence of a new human body type known as the Sixth Root Race:²

. . . what are the special marks of that Race in consciousness and in body. In consciousness, clearly the recognition of unity. . . . With that unfolding consciousness will come a type of body of which there are beginning to be many amongst us today. When there is going to be a variation which will start a new evolutionary type, it is always noted that those out of whom variation grows are what is called unstable. Instability is the mark of progress, or of degeneration. . . . Nervous troubles of every kind, and most marked amongst the most highly developed. . . . The greater tension of the nervous system shows itself out amongst us in all kinds of different ways; saddest of all,

Study, Meditation, and Service

in the extraordinary increase of madness in the most highly civilized nations of the world.

In those days the word ‘madness’ was used to describe mental illnesses, especially extreme cases. Even though the environment and conditions, especially in urban areas, are ruinous for the evolution of a finer, more delicate nervous organization; yet the forces of Nature press onwards whether the human race is ready to move on or not. It is one of the lessons that needs to come out of these studies for the immediate guiding of our own lives today. Besant continues:

We are living in an environment that is destructive of the higher evolution, and at our peril we leave it as it is . . . If we would go on we must adapt ourselves, . . .

Though Besant talked about conditions prevalent over 100 years ago, the building of a Root Race is not the work of a few hundred years, but takes thousands of years. It is in our hands whether we help or hinder the evolution of humanity. Some important questions need to be asked if we decide to adapt to the evolutionary forces of Nature.

The solution must be sought at a much deeper level in the illumined mind and beyond. What is required is a focus on ‘a spiritual regeneration of man’³, the exalted purpose for which the Theosophical Society was founded 140 years ago. However, there is a tendency to regard theosophical principles and teachings as merely theories or interesting

information. We seldom think of them as guides to inform our lives, our attitudes, our relationships, our duties and responsibilities to ourselves and others.

The three limbs of the spiritual life, Study, Meditation, and Service, might be able to help us in our work towards spiritual regeneration. However, no strict guidelines can be found in theosophical literature on how to study, meditate, or be of service. It is up to each one of us to make the necessary effort to apply the hints given in various sacred texts, scriptures, and theosophical literature to find our own way to prepare for the next evolutionary step. It must be remembered that a failure to focus on even one of the limbs could lead to spiritual bankruptcy.

Often when we are faced with questions and challenges we assume that we already know the answers on how to resolve them. However, we must go beyond our functional, dual, and fragmented mind that has ready answers, by stopping it in its tracks so that the true answer can emerge. One way to do it is to keep an ‘I don’t know’ mind:

Q: What does it mean to ‘study’? Is it reading sacred texts? Is it a study of the Self? Is it information gathering? Do I have to read the theosophical classics? Do I have to study the *Secret Doctrine*?

A: I don’t know.

Q: What is ‘meditation’? Is it a technique? Is it observing my breath? Is it focusing on an object? Is it ‘choiceless awareness’?

A: I don’t know.

Study, Meditation, and Service

Q: What is meant by ‘service’? Is it volunteering for organizations like the Red Cross or SPCA? Do I have to serve on a Committee or Board? Or is it just helping others whenever and wherever I can in my daily life?

A: I don’t know.

Pausing after saying or thinking ‘I don’t know’ will help us find a different answer to what we might expect. For if we are not careful we would be repeating old patterns of thought and action.

The questions given above are examples for individuals to ask themselves. However, we have to remember the context in which we are asking them. Are we asking only in the context of personal spiritual progress, or the spiritual regeneration of humanity? The world of matter is exerting a constant pressure and we must be aware of it. There are also influences playing on us from the spiritual planes. It is our choice whether we succumb to the world of matter or attune ourselves to the spiritual influences.

The next challenge is for those who would like to work for the benefit of humanity through the Theosophical Society. How do we apply the principles of Study, Meditation, and Service to group work in our Sections, Federations, Lodges/Branches, and Study Centres/Groups. Again the ‘I don’t know’ mind might help us find creative solutions to effectively carry on the work, both for the members and the public.

Q: How can these three limbs be included in the Lodge/Branch activities of the

Theosophical Society? Do we have to organize study classes, meditation groups, or donate money or volunteer collectively to help other charities or community organizations?

A: I don’t know.

Q: What is the purpose of the Theosophical Society? Is it merely to share information on theosophical subjects or is there a higher purpose?

A: I don’t know.

Q: What is our responsibility towards fellow members and the world at large? Is public work more important, or is helping members grow in their understanding of Theosophy a priority?

A: I don’t know.

Formulating questions is an interesting exercise. It is said that you can ask a question only if you already know half the answer.

We are fortunate that at the present time we have a great deal of resources to tap into in the form of experts, books, access to libraries and archives, meditation teachers, religious leaders and philanthropists, altruistic organizations, and so on. Theosophical leaders and workers over the years have shared their experiences and suggestions through books and articles. The enthusiastic theosophical worker can find hints in *The Theosophist* of the early 1900s onwards and magazines of the different Sections at the time. The people of those days seemed to have confidence and clarity about the purpose of the organization.

Study, Meditation, and Service

Dr I. K. Taimni's suggestions are worth pondering on:

The Lodge's work as far as the members are concerned are threefold:

- a) To help them to acquire knowledge of the fundamental principles of Theosophy, taking the word Theosophy in its widest meaning.
- b) To fit them as far as possible for any kind of service for which they have special aptitude or inclination.
- c) To help them develop a strong and noble character and to acquire a spiritual outlook.⁴

Due to ready access of experts in all things spiritual, we seem to take the easy way out and focus on topics that might loosely come under Theosophy, especially when it comes to the public work. The usual comment when someone talks about the writings of early theosophical leaders is, 'It is old stuff'. Fewer and fewer members are making the effort to focus on the three points mentioned

above. They seem to forget that the theosophical principles will always be ahead of time, for we draw attention to the Divine Wisdom which points to the inevitable perfection of humanity. Dr Deepak Chopra, in his address to the employees of Google in Seattle, suggested that they had helped with consolidating the 'Age of Information' and that now it is time to usher in the 'Age of Wisdom', in technology.

What greater ideal could we ask for than to be co-workers in ushering in the 'Age of Wisdom', not only in science and technology but also in religion, philosophy, social life, culture, and other fields of human endeavour. For, our deeper understanding of Theosophy will reveal itself in every aspect of our lives. There is an anecdote about a Zen neophyte who later became one of the greatest Zen masters. He went to visit the monastery of a Zen master. He said to the person sitting next to him after a Dharma talk in the temple, 'I did not come here to listen to the Master's Dharma talk, I came to see how he ties his shoelaces.' ✧

Endnotes

1. Oliver James, *Affluenza: How to be Successful and Stay Sane*, Vermilion, London, 2007.
2. Annie Besant, *The Changing World and Lectures to Theosophical Students*, the Theosophical Publishing Society, London, 1910.
3. N. Sri Ram, — *The Real Work of the Theosophical Society*, TPH Adyar, 1970.
4. I. K. Taimni, *Principles of Theosophical Work*, TPH, Adyar, 1991.

The work of sharing and learning together can only be done in a suitable environment in which right companionship for learning together exists; also a spirit of finding in order to help and share.

Radha Burnier

The Theosophical Society in the 21st Century — III

MARCELLO R. SERINI

IN a world where religion or the established customs and ways of old that acted as fundamental linchpins to guide society matter little or are being lost out of sight, the fundamental problem becomes one of finding out what matters, and what can be most useful to humanity by way of guidance in this obvious age of transition. More importantly, when seeking to help, finding how ‘new selective choice elements’ could be best imparted and counted to achieve the goal of offering a greater vision, and assisting in establishing harmony for the newly emerging 21st century global civilization, becomes a paramount issue.

In the previous articles it was pointed out that a level of global interaction had been achieved between nations that made separateness a thing of the past; also, that by studying the dynamics of interacting systems an insight could be gained as to the consequences of these interactions. And that, these very interactions could be used to demonstrate the workings of karma, not as an abstract hypothetical law, but as a tangible dynamic response

mirrored by interacting fields. These fields are no longer operating as independent units, but functioning in unison within a broader, hyper-responsive, and vastly more complex new system, itself evolving to a higher operational level with as yet unforeseeable outcomes, towards an ultimate *equilibrium* state.

From the above we could therefore deduce the following postulates: ‘Old values’ are being eclipsed, ‘new values’ are being formulated; these the TS may assist in flourishing in an uncertain dynamic environment.

We know that the theosophical works mirror ageless teachings that are probably as old as humanity. We also know that these teachings are given out in accordance with the needs of the times in various forms and levels of significance or, indeed, obscurity; and that, in this cycle of the Kali Yuga (etymologically, not a ‘dark age’ but the age of iron), for whatever the reason, teachings that were hitherto given only to the select few are now openly given to the public. The works of HPB stand as proof of that,

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and their impact upon the Western world as well as India in dissolving dogmas and sheer past ignorance have not been insignificant.

What is one to make of all this? Can we expect ‘new teachings’ or at least meaningful reinterpretations of the existing ones, formulated in such a way as to render them, once more, significant to present-day society, as they were in the 19th century after the founding of the TS?

Much has been and is being made by many members of the TS of the Masters and their influence, but how much is being done in seeking to cooperate with them, or indeed, with the workings of that mighty being — the Manu — who shapes the destiny of our race(s) now and in the millennia to come? Did these Beings give out teachings in some obscure archaic language or were these communicated in plain English? Were these given to synchronize with the high literary development and scientific advances of the Victorian Age, or by pure coincidence?

Can anyone deny that at present, we do not stand in parallel with that past age, that the globalization of the internet and the advances of modern science offer greater possibilities for the promulgation of the Ancient Wisdom? What are we, members of the TS, doing about it?

We know that at present ‘consumerism’ is running rampant and that vast efforts, techniques, and considerable psychological knowhow is being employed to achieve market goals, often to the detriment of the environment and regret-

tably, the very health of the people. Can we not make a study of *some* of these methods and apply them *constructively* to impart the pearls of the Ancient Wisdom for the good of humanity, but in such a brief and potent way so as to stop people in their tracks? Recall that when radio was first installed on-board ships, that urgent appeal for assistance, ‘Save Our Souls’, reduced to a simple ‘SOS’ would — time and again — literally galvanize the world to urgent action. Can we not do the same again with the Higher Teachings? Are we, members of the TS, after so many years of exposure to these Teachings, so lacking in insight and confidence that we are not able to come up with similar results?

One of the positive contributions that can be made to substantiate these teachings is to begin to ‘clear the mists of time’ through re-cataloguing and comparative studies of ancient traditions. Additionally, to establish ways of ‘bridging’ the gap to be found in the dating between ancient lore and modern assessments, and to reconcile placing and origins of cultures with present-day findings or *assumptions*. For example, we know that according to the Hawaiian Cohuna tradition, their people arrived on this planet from another system, at a time when dinosaurs were still extant. Indeed, their records assert that these reptiles were intelligent and they had to contend with them for a place. According to modern science, this is an impossibility; yet the scientific approach — dependent as it is on systematized (previous)

learning — stays clear of seeking to explain the congruent similarities to be found amongst many such ancient cultures, often separated by oceans and continents, yet mirroring similar traditional records. These, if placed side by side, would furnish information not easily dismissible and demanding answers that could not be ignored.

The antiquity of the long-lived ‘Divine Dynasties’ of Egypt is another example. Here, we have ancient records being disregarded as legends (read fables) despite the fact that modern satellite surveys of the Nile valley point, for the most part, to only a fraction of the ancient archaeological sites having been excavated. Therefore, basing origins of a civilization on existing excavated data alone may be precocious if not downright erroneous, with perhaps the last words as yet, going to the ancient records? It is along these lines that the TS could help to furnish credible, systematized (ancient) knowledge, pointing to the antiquity of human civilizations as maintained by the Ancient Wisdom, thereby validating in parts at least, its value.

Whilst on the subject of comparative studies of ancient traditions and teachings, the demystifying of Tantric lore and its placing as a line of thought and practices, independent of (as claimed by the Kashmiri teachings), and not evolved from the Vedic tradition as thought to be by modern scholars, would not only help to establish its uniquely genuine value, but also provide a practical bridge between the deeper esoteric yogic practices

and modern neuropsychology in establishing — quite conclusively — that the human being is more than just a functional animal chance-evolved through Darwinian selection.

There have already been such undertakings by various kindred cultural institutions along the above lines: the exceptional tome, *Forbidden Archaeology: The Hidden History of the Human Race*, a 1993 book by Michael A. Cremona and Richard L. Thompson written in association with the Bhaktivedanta Institute of ISKCON, and the more elaborate compendium of five seminars on ‘Consciousness’ held over a period of ten years by the Ramakrishna Institute of Kolkata. These may prove outstanding examples to emulate, despite the open criticism (if not fury) that these generated on publication. Yet, one cannot deny that it is along these lines, through engaging in selective, sophisticated scholarship, that the TS could greatly advance, *in a new light*, the value of the Ancient Wisdom, thereby helping to offset the shallowness of the present world outlook.

Despite the enormous panorama that theosophical teachings open to our souls and vision, it can be reduced to a number of key elements that could be elaborated in concert amongst the various sections in the years to come, so as to produce a new wave of interest in the Ancient Wisdom and galvanize the Theosophical Society into dynamic activity. For example, just like we see the universality of the law of gravity that scientists tell us

holds true throughout the universe, so we also perceive a law of equilibrium that underlies anything from our bodies to constructions, ethics, music, poetry, and (the very functioning of) civilization. These two, equilibrium counterpoising gravity manifesting as 'Dharma', can be used to inspire and formulate creative works to help our transition to a world civilization (being the work) of Vaivasvata Manu. Attributed to him are the ancient *manusmriti*-s that laid the basis of the past Vedic civilization. These could now be adapted and condensed into a modern work able to assist present-day needs and, perhaps, even help to reassert the fast-disappearing equilibrium of our Western-influenced world.

We are told of the existing correlation between the macro and micro cosmos; and given that our universe is one of energy, this must likewise apply to our bodies. Hence, assisting in the development of 'energy studies' such as Pranayama and Kundalini yoga — directed to further the understanding of our essential nature — would be of enormous help. To these, we must also include our sexual energy.

The sexual act is practiced, eulogized, condemned, written, and dreamed about by the whole of humanity. Indeed, it may be said that the whole of our biosphere exists because of it. Without sex there would be no embodied life. Yet, this truly 'divine creative energy and power of manifestation' is often shunned, generally debased, or regarded as a taboo. But just as we do now find ourselves having to

deal — squarely — with the fate of our planet; so must we also come to understand the nature and power of sexual energy. The two are inseparable. Its understanding must arise from the very depth of our being and the unravelling of esoteric teachings. To have these acting as pointers, and in order to help humanity understand its power, this must become one of the major tasks to be undertaken by the TS in the years ahead, without burying its head in the sand as it did in the 1930s, when the subject of 'sex' was dropped off the agenda by a singularly obtuse General Council of delegates.

The often mentioned though little studied Third Object of the Society, holds the key to disentangle our 'embodied' consciousnesses through the charting of a way beyond the gunas. This may be achieved by categorizing and expanding existing works on yoga and by encouraging cutting-edge research on this subject. Thus assisting the scientific study of yoga is another task awaiting the TS, especially if we consider that it is through yoga and yoga-trained scientists that our essential spiritual nature will be formally studied, and a bridge between matter and spirit established. This will offer a counterpoint to our present almost totally materialistic society, as well as establish the likely basis and source of religions.

The promulgation of the Ancient Wisdom to awaken present-day humanity enmeshed as it is into sheer materiality, is the task that awaits the Theosophical

The Theosophical Society in the 21st Century — III

Society in the 21st century. To successfully achieve this, its members will have to not only open their minds, hearts, Lodges, Conventions, and estates, but also forgo cherished past notions of greatness and genuine achievements. They will have to move forward with deter-

mination and courage to play their part to skilfully contribute to a smoother formation of a world civilization (*the new equilibrium point*), and so genuinely claim to be doing their duty as co-workers with those Great Beings that guide humanity. ✧

The great mission of Theosophy is, first, the working out of clear unequivocal conceptions of ethics, ideas, and duties, such as shall best and most fully satisfy the right and altruistic feelings in humans; and, second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life as shall offer a field where they may be applied with most equitableness.

Theosophy is the quintessence of duty. That duty is giving equal rights and privileges to all — the same justice, kindness, consideration, or mercy which we desire for ourselves; or a still higher duty, giving more than to oneself — self-sacrifice. Oneself is to be viewed as a unit of collective humanity, not as a personal self only. It is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained. It is this action and interaction, this true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all, and all for each, which is one of the fundamental theosophical principles that every theosophist should be bound, not only to teach, but to carry out in his or her individual life.

H. P. Blavatsky

Compassion and Universal Responsibility

CLEMICE PETTER

IN a world that is burning, where each one feels separate from others, where children are neglected, where all kinds of cruelty take place, and very few are aware of the urgency for change, one is asked to talk about compassion and universal responsibility. It is a strange world; those who create disorder are the same who feel uncomfortable in a disorderly world.

The biggest tragedy of human beings is that we seem to be unable to see what we do. There is an immense destruction of this marvelous Earth, with all the suffering that it breeds, and human beings seem not to be willing to realize the implications of it. Or maybe we just do not want to take the trouble to change our way of life, which implies letting go of consumerism, breaking the shell of a self-centred outlook, and being one with Nature. This means being one with all that lives, with which we share the same Mother and Father; the Mother being the Earth, whether we like it or not, since all creatures are composed of the elements of the Earth, and the Father, the Divine

in all of us, that which animates the earthly body. One can give it the name one prefers — different cultures call it by different names — but the label given does not change the Divine principle that dwells in each one of its children. Somehow humans have nourished the feeling of being on the top of the evolutionary ladder, a sense of being more evolved than other species, and believing so, we never question the way we relate with those we should protect and help in this long *journey* for self-realization.

What would one say if parents leave the younger children in the trust of the older ones, expecting them to take care of and help the little ones, but when coming home they find the so-called grown-up ones mistreating those they should be helping and taking care of? This may be the scenario on Earth; we are entrusted with our younger brothers and sisters (the lower kingdoms) to be taken care of and expected to live together with them in the same home — the Earth. But we not only mistreat

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Compassion and Universal Responsibility

our younger siblings, we also set fire to the house.

Exploitation has been the tone of the human presence on this planet. It has been accepted as part of human behaviour, and very few question this destructive conduct. Humans seem to feel natural exploiting Nature; there is this feeling that Nature has to bend to man's will. It is easily forgotten that humans are also part of Nature, not above it.

And there is the terrible suffering that comes with the exploitation of man by man, which has been going on for millennia. It has changed its ways, has become more subtle, and despite all the technological advancement, it is still very strong in every society — the weak being exploited by the strong. This will never change by law, by social reform. After all, no law is able to change man's heart, if there is no love in man's heart. We believe that laws can take care of this lack of inner growth. If there was love in man, there would be quite a different society, there would be peace on Earth. This is very obvious.

So, before we dare to talk about compassion and responsibility, we need to understand what it means to have love in our hearts. Do we have love when we judge others? Do we know what happens when we judge? We do it because we think we know what is right and wrong, and how others should behave. It means we have crystallized a formula, and with this monster we go on in life, without ever seeing anything other than this crystallized stone in the heart, killing

any possibility of love, compassion, or responsibility. The only thing we do is spread unhappiness, and what an unhappy person is capable of, can be seen and heard in everyday news. We judge because we do not understand, so we quickly manage to come up with a formula, and apply it everywhere and with everyone, for the rest of our life. This makes the mind gradually lose the capacity to stay young, fresh; it is never renewed. It becomes more and more dull. One can see how it happens, particularly in many elderly people.

Unfortunately it seems to be part of human nature to talk endlessly about one thing or another, but never to do it in day-to-day life. Maybe this hypocrisy has brought us to the state that we are in. Preaching and expecting others to do it has proven ineffective. After all, there have been innumerable gatherings around the globe to deal with environmental problems, all countries have been represented, they have discussed the need to change direction to minimize global warming, and yet we are where we are. Very little has been done. There is no need to go into it, everyone knows what is happening. Again, because each one wants others to do what is needed, no one is doing it. There seems to be an unwillingness to give up any advantage that one believes is one's right, without realizing a simple fact: when the house is burning, there is no safe room left. The destiny will be the same for all inhabitants.

Human stupidity is such that in order to stop one war, a new one is created.

Compassion and Universal Responsibility

There are those who say: 'War is a necessary evil'. In feeling this way, they are contributing to all the misery that comes with it. There are those who manufacture and supply armaments to other countries. Today they send armaments, tomorrow they send soldiers to fight the same countries they have armed. It is unbelievable, but it is happening.

There are those who say: We are not like this; we work for peace. Then the question for them is: 'Are you living in peace? Do you know what it is to be in peace? If not, you are deceiving yourself'. One cannot work for peace if one is not living in peace within oneself. It is like trying to clean the house with dirty feet, never realizing that the feet are heavy with mud.

The Theosophical Society was given to humanity not only to dry our tears, but most importantly, to make sure there will be no tears to be dried; to help man to understand the destructive nature of the 'me' and the 'mine', and come to Wisdom. To accomplish this, we need to let go the feeling of separation, but it is also very important that we know with whom to cooperate, so that we can hold this precious gift.

Love and compassion go together. There is no need to ask someone who knows true love to be compassionate, because he has become love itself. Similarly, when love is there, naturally, responsibility comes with it. In love there is no separation such as 'me' and 'you'. If we only know things through the eyes of the 'me' and 'mine', obviously what

we think love is, cannot be true. We are used to imagine love as an emotional thing, so we assume that love will always be the way we fantasize it. But it is not so. Love will see clearly what is needed at each moment, not according to one's particular emotions or desires, but according to the real need of that specific situation. Many times, situations require strong action, and it is part of love to do what is required. It is like the surgeon, who in order to cure the patient, needs to open the body. Many times the doctor is not sure if the patient will survive or not, but even so, he knows that this is what has to be done. If he becomes emotional about it, he can no longer be a good surgeon.

The most dangerous thing is to think 'I know what love is'. As long as there is the 'I' that knows, love will never be there. And this separation between the 'I' who knows and others who do not know, breeds cruelty. This is very clear in the world. It has been happening through the centuries in every so-called spiritual structure, with all their sets of beliefs and dogmatic approaches to life.

Because we do not know love, we think love is the opposite of hatred. Surely it is not. In love there is no self-protection, there is no gain, there is no fear of losing, and there is no hurt. Only when there is love, the quality of compassion is there, and responsibility is its by-product. Without love, do what you will, there will be no responsibility. Responsibility is not something you can impose upon others, or upon yourself.

Compassion and Universal Responsibility

If you do, it becomes a weight. Out of this imposition comes unhappiness with all the misery we know so well. But because man, after all this long period of evolution on the Earth, has not known love, imposition has been the way, and we very well know its consequences.

One need only see the statistics, where it is shown that it is at home, in the silence of the home, where children are expected to be taken care of, that they are psychologically, emotionally, and physically abused by those who are supposed to be *responsible* for their well-being. Domestic violence is responsible for a great part of police reports, and it is well known that not even fifty per cent of domestic violence is reported. No law has been able to solve this serious problem.

To feel responsible one needs a great deal of sensibility; to be responsible means to care without the sense of the

'I' that cares. When the 'I' is the one that cares, it means that there is my way of caring, and according to that I care. But when there is no 'I', the only thing that remains is caring. And that has quite a different quality of looking at life.

How can one see what is really happening when one is concerned with only one's own approach to life? This means that one is not really open to look, because one's own conclusions are in the way as stumbling blocks, and the only thing that can be seen are one's own conclusions; thus sensibility is killed. Responsibility is buried under the heavy burden of yesterday, the accumulated knowledge, which are those readymade answers that are so often conveniently used when facing a challenge in life.

To live with this perfume in life — the perfume of love, compassion, and responsibility — one needs to be free. After all, love can only happen in freedom. ✧

**As social animals, human beings need friendship,
but friendship does not come from wealth and power,
but from showing compassion and concern for others.**

His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

The Virgin Birth — How It Applies in Conduct

H. L. S. WILKINSON

ALL of us who strive to serve with understanding in God's wonderful temple of this earth, must be aware that we are the offspring of something greater than our earthly parents, and that we have, in fact, two divine Parents; one a Heavenly Father invisible, the other a great Universal Mother, visible to us as Nature, being in fact the material universe in which we live and move and have our being. The All-Father is Spirit, invisible: the All-Mother is Matter, visible. These two, Spirit and Matter, unite in our bodies, which are temples of their nuptials. Every time we perform an action, moving matter from place to place, if we do the action skilfully and harmoniously, we are assisting at these nuptials; if bunglingly and with impatience, we are impeding them. We should hold the balance true between Spirit and Matter, not exalting the one or despising the other, but recognizing that both are divine, only different; one male, the other female.

The same takes place when we create anything beautiful in poetry, art, or music, or express ourselves in speech, provided

it is done skilfully and beautifully. When all such actions are done perfectly, the nuptials between Spirit and Matter are consummated, and the Divine Child, Christ, or Horus, is born. For this reason, the Perfect Man is the offspring of heaven and earth, having God for his Father, and Matter or Maya for his Mother. This is why all Christs are mythically represented as having no human father, but as begotten by God from the universal Virgin Mother, the 'deep sea' of Matter. Each such Christ is a Redeemer of Matter, and in striving to become Christs, we ourselves are redeeming and perfecting Matter.

So we should never despise even the humblest action, but perform it skilfully and with intent, as an offering and a prayer, knowing that in so doing we are joining Heaven and Earth. As for discordant or ugly actions, all we can do is to ceaselessly work at them, striving to alter them and make them perfect. This particularly applies to irritable or impatient speech, and to nervous, or hesitating, or violent action. It necessitates deliberation and balance.

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The Virgin Birth — How it Applies in Conduct

It is significant that Jesus is recorded to have said, when told that his mother and his brethren wished to speak with him, 'Who is my mother and my brethren?' And then, stretching forth his hand to his disciples, 'Behold my mother and my brethren! For whoso doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' This shows that He was more sensible of His divine parentage than of his mere earthly

ties of kindred. The Upanishads say the same thing. 'Not for the sake of the wife or husband is the wife or husband dear, but for the sake of the Self is the wife or husband dear.'

Evidently therefore, our Mother Nature, or Maya, and our Father God are our true Parents, and the Virgin Birth has a real practical meaning for us all, and need no longer be ignored as an outworn theological dogma of no importance. ✧

The deepest, purest, sweetest happiness, the peace which passeth all understanding, the joy that is unspeakable, comes from no outward state, it depends on no earthly condition. It springs from the simple, bare consciousness of rectitude in the soul. God has made every man the guardian of his own happiness by making him the keeper of his own conscience. Only be at peace with that clear, calm voice which whispers duty in the soul, and there is no power on earth that can make you miserable.

Daniel March
'Man Wonderfully Made',
Our Father's House, or the Unwritten Word

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparell'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore: —
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth. . . .

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel — I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm; —
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
— But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

William Wordsworth
'ODE: Intimations of Immortality
from Recollections of Early Childhood'

**ONE HUNDRED AND FORTIETH INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

Adyar

Theme: 'Compassion and Universal Responsibility'

31 December 2015 to 5 January 2016

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 30 December

8.00 am General Council Meeting
2.00 pm General Council Meeting

Thursday, 31 December

8.00 am Prayers of the Religions
OPENING OF THE CONVENTION
3.30 pm Reception
5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
'Compassion as Radical Living'
Mrs Linda Oliveira, *General Secretary, Australia*
7.30 pm Ritual of the Mystic Star

Friday, 1 January

8.00 am Universal Prayer and Meditation
SHORT LECTURES
'Responsibility Transforms — Compassion Transcends'
Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu,
Chairman, European Federation, France
'Human Responsibility towards Other Kingdoms'
Mr B. D. Tendulkar, *India*
9.30 am INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — I
5.00 pm ANNIE BESANT LECTURE
'Passion, Dispassion, and Compassion'
Honorable Mr Justice V. Ramasubramanian, *India*
7.30 pm Cultural Programme

Convention Programme

Saturday, 2 January

- 8.00 am Devotional Meeting
Ms Chandrika Mehta, *India*
- 10.00 am SHORT LECTURES
'Compassion Starts at Home'
Mrs Carol Nicholson, *Krotona Bookshop Manager, USA*
'Compassion and Reverence for Life'
Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, *General Manager, Adyar*
- 3.00 pm SYMPOSIUM
'Religious Intolerance and Sectarian Violence'
Ms Krista Umbjärv, *Estonia*; Dr Nagan Gowder, *India*;
Mrs Isis Resende, *Brazil* (Chair)
- 5.00 pm THEOSOPHY–SCIENCE LECTURE
'Neurophysiology of Compassion'
Mr José Foglia, *Neurologist, Uruguay*
- 7.30 pm Cultural Programme

Sunday, 3 January

- 8.00 am Universal Prayer
SYMPOSIUM
'Compassion in Different Spiritual Traditions'
Mr Abraham Oron, *Israel*; Mrs Mirva Jaatinen, *Finland*;
Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, *Vice-President, Adyar* (Chair)
- 9.30 am INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — II
'Listening to the March of the Future'
Ms Geetha Jaikumar, Mr Shikhar Agnihotri, and Mr Mahesh S. U.
- 3.00 pm THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE
'A Union of Those Who Love in the Service of All That Suffers'
Mrs Uma Bhattacharyya, *India*; Mr John Vostermans,
New Zealand; and Mrs Nancy Secrest, *USA*;
with Mr Birendra Bhattacharya, *India* (Chair)
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
'The Process of the Spiritual Life'
Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, *the Philippines*
- 7.30 pm 'An Outlook on the Future of the Adyar Estate'
Mr Tim Boyd, *President, Adyar*, and
Mr Michiel Haas, *the Netherlands*

Convention Programme

Monday, 4 January

- 8.00 am Universal Prayer and Meditation
- SHORT LECTURES
- ‘Compassion: the Basis for the Theosophical Society’
Mr Herman C. Vermeulen, *Vice-President*,
International Theosophy Conferences, Inc., the Netherlands
- ‘Karma, Reincarnation, and Buddhi-Manas:
Forces of Power and Virtue’
Mr Eugene Jennings, *President*,
International Theosophy Conferences, Inc., USA
- 9.30 am QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
- Mr Tim Boyd, Mrs Linda Oliveira,
Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, Mr Eugene Jennings
- 3.00 pm SHORT LECTURES
- ‘Sustainability and Spirituality’
Mr Michiel Haas, *the Netherlands*
- ‘Unbiased Compassion Pours Out as Universal Responsibility’
Dr L. Nagesh, *India*
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
- ‘Reversing the Flow: A Conscious Choice’
Mr Tim Boyd, *International President, Adyar*
- 7.30 pm Cultural Programme

Tuesday, 5 January

- 8.00 am Prayers of the Religions
- CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION
- 9.30 am Admission of New Members
- 3.00 pm Youth Forum

The day of the new human race is approaching, the first truly spiritual race to inhabit this earth. And with it is coming the abolition of poverty and war and a universal recognition of the approach beyond, ‘out there’.
. . . All the great Teachers have taught that great faith.

Clara M. Codd

Theosophical Work around the World

Slovenia

Within a period of six months this year, three schools were organized by the Regional Association of the TS in Slovenia, led by Mrs Breda Zagar. From 17 to 19 April the spring school was conducted at Soncek, near Koper, by Lodge Surya, with 28 participants, on the theme 'Dignity in the Light of Theosophy'. Also a video of J. Krishnamurti was shown. The summer school was held in Kranjska Gora from 19 to 21 June on the *Bhagavadgītā*. It was conducted by guest speaker Mr Bhupendra Vora with harmony and a feeling of unity, which inspired the participants and enabled them to gain a deeper understanding of this treasure of Ancient Wisdom. From 18 to 20 September, the autumn school was organized with 24 participants at the peaceful Pohorje Hills, on 'Love' from *At the Feet of The Master*, followed by a video of Krishnaji.

Italy

The 25th session of the September Theosophy Seminar took place in Grado (near Trieste) from 25 to 27 September. The topic was 'Theosophy and Sufism'. The seminar was organized by the TS in Italy in partnership with the International Centre for Theosophical Studies in Cervignano del Friuli, and more than 70 people from all over Italy attended. It was a marvellous opportunity for the par-

ticipants to improve their understanding of Sufism, a highly spiritual mystical current whose bounds of knowledge stretch beyond its origins in the cultural and religious realm of Islam. There were a number of talks on Sufism by speakers from a range of cultural backgrounds, frequently underlining the ties between Sufi thinking and the school of Ageless Wisdom, epitomized by Theosophy.

In addition to the talks, there was a theatrical adaptation of 'Love is a Stranger' by Rumi, followed by a concert of ancient Sufi music and a dance performance. There was also a screening of the film 'Bab'Aziz – The Prince Who Contemplated His Soul' by Nacer Khemir.

India

The North India Study Camp was held at the Indian Section Headquarters in **Varanasi** from 17 to 20 October, in which delegates from different Federations participated. The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, directed the study on the subject 'The Three Objects'. He explained the significance of each Object in detail, and asserted that pursuing them leads one on to greater compassion, breadth of mind, spiritual awareness, and attainment of a higher level of consciousness. The life energy connects us to every other form of life all the time. Hence, engaging the mind with thoughts, ideas, and energy enveloping

Theosophical Work around the World

us, and allowing these ideas to flow within, is an opportunity of creative endeavour through which we may feel enlarged and expanded, becoming transparent and flowing to the outer world. An interesting aspect was that he shared his own life experiences to amplify the various points put across by him.

Mr Boyd also inaugurated a new building named 'Basanta Geha' (the Abode of Besant) at the Besant Theosophical School in Varanasi on 20 October, and Mrs Lily Boyd planted a sapling of the *nagalingam* (cannonball) tree. Then, he addressed the students. Later, on his birthday, 22 October, the Section organized a delicious lunch for the President, his wife and all the residents, workers, and guests.

* * *

The Annual Session of the Bombay Theosophical Federation was celebrated from 30 October to 1 November in **Mumbai**. The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, was the chief guest, accompanied by his wife Lily. The inauguration took place at the Blavatsky Lodge with 80 participants. Dr Ajay Hora, President of the Federation, introduced the Chief Guest. Mr Boyd spoke on the theme, 'The Illumined Mind'. After the talk, members who had completed 40 years were honoured with mementos.

The next day, the President spoke on 'The Root of All Problems'. The central theme of his talk was that compassion is the 'law of laws' and all must devote their lives for the helping of others. On

1 November, a full-day session was held with about 100 gathered in a Pandal set up by the Juhu Theosophical Colony and the Vasanta Theosophical Co-operative Housing Society. In the morning the President spoke on 'Applying Theosophical Principles', and after lunch a symposium on 'Today's Youth and Practical Theosophy' was conducted jointly by Dr Hora and Mr Boyd.

Ukraine

The annual convention of the TS in Ukraine (TSU) took place in Kiev on 14 November. Momentously, the official registration documents of TSU were received two days earlier. The keynote of the conference was 'Theosophy in a Changing World'. There were about 50 participants. A report on the work of TSU was presented, and then the organizational meetings of the Theosophical Order of Service and the Scientific Group were held. Lecturers, poets, and musicians all contributed with their deep and interesting talks and performances. An exhibition themed 'Seven Doors of the Heart' adorned the hall. There was a Round Table meeting on 'Service as a Spiritual Necessity of Man'. The publication of a partial translation of *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* by Josephine Ransom was a pleasant surprise.

Next year marks the 185th birth anniversary of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and the Section dreams of strengthening its links by uniting its forces and aspirations.

Theosophical Work around the World



Students of the summer school held in June in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia. *Seated, l. to r., starting with third from l.:* Mrs Breda Zagar, Organizing Secretary, guest speaker Mr Bhupendra Vora, Mrs Vora, and Dr Dusan Zagar



Participants of the 25th session of the September Theosophy Seminar, held in Grado, Italy, conducted jointly by the TS in Italy with the International Centre for Theosophical Studies in Cervignano del Friuli

Theosophical Work around the World



Some of the North India Study Camp participants, at the Indian Section Headquarters in Varanasi, 17-20 October.
Seated: Mrs Lily Boyd, Mr Tim Boyd, international President, and Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary



Front row, l. to r.: Mr Rustom Dalal, Treasurer, Bombay Theosophical Federation (BTF);
Ms Bana Mehta; Mr Tim Boyd; Mr Vinayak Pandya, Vice-President, BTF; Mr Navinkumar, President,
Blavatsky Lodge; and Mrs Lily Boyd, at their Annual Session held on 30-31 October at Blavatsky Lodge, Mumbai

Theosophical Work around the World



Mrs and Mr Tim Boyd with Dr Ajay Hora, President of the Bombay Theosophical Federation, at the Juhu Theosophical Colony in Mumbai, on 1 November



Some of the delegates attending the annual convention of the TS in Ukraine, 14 November, in Kyiv

Theosophical Work around the World



Some of the almost 100 participants attending the XI Seminar of the Caribbean Basin Theosophical gathering, from 5 to 9 November, in Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic. *Back row, from r. to l., second from r.:* Mrs Magaly Polanco, Presidential Representative of the TS in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic; and Mrs Isis M. B. Resende, President of the Inter-American Theosophical Federation



A bust of H. P. Blavatsky was unveiled on 17 November by the international President, Mr Tim Boyd, on the occasion of the Theosophical Society Foundation Day Celebrations at their international headquarters' Main Hall in Adyar, Chennai. The bust was donated by the International Charity Public Fund 'Dialogue of Cultures - United World', based in Moscow, Russia

Theosophical Work around the World

Caribbean Basin

The celebration of the XI Seminar of the Caribbean Basin took place from 5 to 9 November in Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic, with the theme 'The Illumined Mind'. The Seminar was a success, not only because it had an attendance of almost 100 members and sympathizers from various regions of the Americas, but also for the organization and hospitality thanks to the efforts of the President of the Inter-American Theosophical Federation, Mrs Isis M. B. Resende (from Brazil), and Mrs Magaly Polanco, Presidential Representative of the Theosophical Society in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

Misters Fernando de Torrijos (Spain), Gaspar Torres (Cuba/USA), and Martin Leiderman (Venezuela/USA) were some of the lecturers who gave inspiring talks, along with others such as Mrs Lissette Arroyo (Mexico) and Ms Maria de los Angeles Orlich (Costa Rica). Mr Leiderman also presented an additional programme about *The Secret Doctrine* which was received with enthusiasm by the participants. A fraternal spirit stimulated much interaction among all attendees, and also the recognition of Mrs Ondina Durán's tireless work for the TS in the Dominican Republic.

Adyar

Foundation Day was celebrated, as usual, on 17 November in the Main Hall of the international headquarters, with good attendance in spite of inclement

weather. But this time the international President, Mr Tim Boyd, had the pleasure of unveiling a bronze bust of Madame H. P. Blavatsky donated by the International Charity Public Fund 'Dialogue of Cultures - United World', based in Moscow, Russia.

After an inspiring introduction by Prof. R. C. Tampi, Mr Boyd gave an uplifting talk about the Founders, the founding, the foundation, and the worldwide influence of the Theosophical Society. A couple of excerpts from his talk follow below, and the longer version is found on pp. 5-9 of this issue:

November 17 marks a special day for us as members of the Theosophical Society. If we think more deeply about the meaning and value of our membership we become aware that, while it is wonderful for us to celebrate and to acknowledge, the real value of 17 November 1875 is that, at that particular moment, a movement in consciousness began. . . .

In our time this root found its way to the surface through individuals like H. P. Blavatsky and Henry S. Olcott. It found its way into the life and work of the Theosophical Society. The life in that movement is sufficiently strong that on this day, 140 years after its founding, around the world people gather to remember.

After a few closing words, Professor Tampi asked for flowers to be placed in front of the statues of the Founders by those who wished to honour their memory in this way. ✧

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