

## Freedom of Thought

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

## Freedom of the Society

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

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



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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# THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

# Approaching the Divine

TIM BOYD

DURING the early days of the Theosophical Society H. P. Blavatsky was known for being critical of the practices of the Church and the form that Christianity had come to take in her time. This is understandable, given the colonial situation, particularly in India. For HPB, it was a matter of ‘a valiant defence of those who are unjustly attacked’. I believe that she felt that the imposition of a badly practised foreign religion onto a culture where the existing approaches to the Divine had great merit, was something that should be addressed. And, of course, in her warrior-like fashion, she addressed it.

What we find in her writings is that she was frequently critical of the way in which the concept of God was approached in the Church. She rarely used the word ‘God’ in her writings, at least not in the sense familiar to normal Christian practice, and when she did, it was often to point out some of the limitations that had been imposed on this potentially great and uplifting principle. She was not opposed to God, but to the distorted characterization that emerged from unsound philosophy, and to the fact that this caricature of divinity was being forced on a colonial population.

The idea that there is an absolute, infinite, supreme intelligence that then becomes personified, that is given a name, that is described in terms of human limitations such as anger, wrath, displeasure, and to which a host of limiting attributes are ascribed, she recognized as tortured reasoning. And so she spoke to that. From HPB’s point of view, in speaking about the Absolute, the only way that it could be described was as darkness and nothingness — nothingness in the sense that the Absolute is completely without attributes; it has no association with any particular thing, and so ‘nothing’, ‘no thing’ was the most appropriate way of describing it.

Those who came after HPB in the Theosophical tradition — Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, I. K. Taimni, and others — found no difficulty in using the word ‘God’ to express a particular meaning. In *The Key to Theosophy* HPB takes on the role of the Enquirer and also of the Theosophist who answers the questions. In the book she asks a very direct question of the Theosophist who was responding. The question is: ‘Do you believe in God?’ It is a direct, seemingly simple question. The response that she gives to that question is quite revealing.

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It is not a 'yes' or a 'no' answer. It is: 'That depends on what you mean by that term [God].' She goes on to describe all the things that would *not* be included in any functional belief in the Divine. Such things as a personality or anything that could be assigned a pronoun of 'him' or 'her' would fall beneath that standard. But she says that what we do believe in is a 'universal, divine essence'. Annie Besant and others had a very clear idea of what they were saying when they used the term 'God'.

Wherever you go and whatever time you examine in the world's history, there has always been some conception of the Divine, something equivalent to the God concept. Over the last 100 years we have had an opportunity to witness an experiment that has been played out in a large way, where there was the very concentrated and deliberate effort to eradicate religious belief. In the experiment that was attempted in the Soviet Union and again in communist China, you had a population that was steeped in various approaches to the Divine, who found themselves living under a new social order where religious practice or belief was no longer permitted. Not only was it not allowed, but for anyone who was found practising, there were extreme punishments that would be applied. The prevailing idea in these communist societies was that religion is something unnatural that has been grafted onto human consciousness, and if it is denied the opportunity to express itself, it will die out. That experiment was attempted

over approximately three generations. So, the children's children of the people who first came under that experiment were raised in the absence of open religious expression.

When those regimes came to an end, the fascinating part was that suddenly, as if it had never disappeared, the religious urge arose again strongly, so that even though the bodies of the people who practised these religions might have been destroyed, or their minds might have been twisted through imprisonment or 're-education', somehow those principles which give rise to the religious impulse remained untouched. From a theosophical point of view, it is clear. The source of the religious impulse lies deep within, beyond the reach of material, or even emotional, and mental forces.

There is an expression in theosophical literature that 'faith is unconscious knowledge'. The reason that there is this continual upwelling towards the Divine within the hearts of humanity is due to the presence of a 'knowledge' that exceeds the conscious mind. It lies beyond the realm of the mental grasp, yet continually reacts on the mind. We know of it, and it cannot disappear. There is an 'essential universal divine essence' that continually informs the lives of each and every one.

HPB was also quite critical of prayer, at least the manner in which it was practised in the Church of her time, and even the Church of our time. Much like her reaction to the philosophically unsound approach to God, prayer as commonly understood and practised, she felt,

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weakened the one praying. And just like with the God concept, her issue was not with prayer, but with the distorted understanding of the common practitioner. Prayer, after all, is one of the techniques of the spiritual life that is found and practised in every part of the world. Some of the greatest beings in history have been influenced by their practice of prayer.

In *The Key to Theosophy* HPB talks about prayer. First she discusses the inadequacies of an approach that places a request before a divine being for some selfish desire with the expectation that it will be answered whether deserved or not, or even whether it is something within the laws of Nature. She says that this approach is the opposite of true prayer. She says that as theosophists, yes, we do believe in prayer, but she described it as 'will prayer'. The prayer of a will that is not directed towards some exalted person, but that is directed towards the 'Father in Heaven'. She distinguished that from the prevalent belief of a divine Father figure on the clouds, who gives things to those who say the right words. The Father in Heaven is our own deepest spiritual nature: Atma-Buddhi-Manas. HPB made the distinction that genuine prayer was directed to this Father in Heaven, which is a principle because it is universal.

Annie Besant and others who came later in the theosophical tradition were very free in their use of the word 'prayer'. In fact, today, in almost any meeting that is held around the theosophical world we recite a prayer that was written by Annie

Besant which came to be known as the 'Universal Prayer'.

She wrote that prayer in response to a request from someone who was convening a meeting and asked her to write a meditation that the group could engage in. She wrote a prayer, and she said that as she wrote it, it seemed to chant itself inside of her. She felt that she could not write a meditation, as she considered that to be a more personal matter. Instead she wrote the prayer 'O Hidden Life' for this one meeting, with the idea that it could be recited two times during the day — in the morning and in the evening. It has, of course, gone on to become something that is chanted throughout the theosophical world and used in the personal practice of countless individuals.

One of the foundational points in the tradition of mysticism is the idea that God, or the divine universal presence, is something that can be experienced, and that it is only in that experience that true meaning and worth come into being. Even HPB, in her description of the will prayer, says that its effects can lead to a genuine communion, like the mingling of a higher soul with the universal essence.

There is a little book that comes from the Christian mystical tradition, written as a handbook for the practice of union with God, or the Divine. It is called *The Cloud of Unknowing*. In it there is a brief prayer that is potentially quite potent. It says:

O God, unto whom all hearts lie open,  
unto whom desire is eloquent,  
from whom no secret thing is hidden,

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purify the thoughts of my heart  
with the outpouring of your spirit  
that I might love you with a perfect love  
and praise you as you deserve.

We might just try to go a little deeper into the sense of these words. It is an inexhaustible prayer, but we can at least scratch the surface. 'O God, unto whom all hearts lie open' is the recognition, as any true prayer must be, of reality, of what *is*. It is not the specific combination of words that makes the difference, but the inner recognition that there is a universal divine essence to which all hearts are connected, unto which they all lie open. So the prayer begins with that basic recognition of what is the reality of things.

The phrase 'unto whom desire is eloquent' might be a little bit tricky. In the Hermetic tradition there is a saying that we are perhaps familiar with: 'Behind Will stands desire.' It is only from the effort that is made in cultivating desire of a particular type that the personality is influenced and becomes open to the higher nature. The desire that is indicated would be more along the lines of aspiration. In the absence of the cultivation and direction of what is named 'desire', we do not experience the descent of the higher will. The word 'eloquence' relates to persuasiveness. So, the phrase 'Unto whom desire is eloquent', describes the persuasiveness of our highest desire, that desire that borders on, and invokes the descent of Divine Will.

The next phrase says: 'from whom no secret thing is hidden'. The only place where there are secret things hidden is

within the dark recesses of our own personalities, those corners of our being where we are unwilling to allow a higher light to enter. These are the places where we feel limited, where we hide from ourselves and others, where we harbour all the complexes and difficulties that keep psychologists in business. In our relationship to the Higher Self, the Divine, secrecy is both meaningless and unnecessary. All is known, always. This recognition permits a release from the massive effort that is required in our attempts to fortify these hidden places. Again, it is simply a recognition of reality.

Thus the first part of this prayer moves us through the process of recognizing different aspects of the Divine and its potential for creative involvement within the personality. The next part of the prayer makes a request: 'purify the thoughts of my heart with the outpouring of your spirit'. The request is made that the light of the Divine may shine upon those thoughts that are generated in the deepest part of our being; not the thoughts of our normal mind, or those which seem to come and go in every moment, but the thoughts of 'my heart'.

We often think of 'Light' as synonymous with the Divine. For a person who builds a windowless house and spends their life inside, it is unreasonable to expect that the continuously shining light of the sun would find its way to them. The fact that we find ourselves cut off from this light in no way diminishes the light of the sun. It only affects our access.

This portion of the prayer is not asking

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the sun to shine more brightly, or asking the sun to penetrate the walls that we have erected around ourselves. The prayer says 'purify the thoughts of my heart with the outpouring of your spirit'. It is an expression of our will to remove the barriers that we have created so that the light may be allowed entrance. It is not a prayer intended to change the way that the Universe functions. It is an expression of our will to access the shining of the light of the divine sun.

The prayer culminates with: 'that I might love you with a perfect love and praise you as you deserve.' What is the nature of 'a perfect love'? What is the nature of 'praise'? When we speak about praise, there are different ways and types of praising that we do. Often with children if they do some little accomplishment, we will praise them so that they can develop confidence. Real praise occurs when we see something of value and acknowledge it. It is not created or made up in the moment. It is the recognition and acknowledgement of that which *is*.

And what is the praise that the 'universal divine essence' deserves. This is probably something much less complicated than we think. Perhaps it means nothing more or less than the acknowledgement

of the presence of the Divine in each and every person, in *all* things, everywhere we look. This is the praise that flows from one who genuinely has reached a point in their unfoldment that allows them to see. To falsely praise that which we do not see or have not realized is an empty gesture. But every person has had an experience that in some way has confirmed this 'mingling' of our higher soul with the divine nature that Blavatsky talks about. We have that awareness, so in this prayer we speak to that. In the *Bhagavadgītā* Krishna calls himself the Inner Ruler Immortal present in the hearts of all beings. With the appearance within us of the capacity to see it, that simple recognition is the praise that is deserved.

There are many similar prayers. This one from the unknown author is offered as an example of the potential for quickening all of the activities of our personality, so that they may be pointed towards the actual experience of this hidden Life, hidden Light, and hidden Love that Annie Besant addressed in her Universal Prayer. It is everywhere present, generally unrecognized and unacknowledged. Any tool that affords the possibility of at least momentary recognition is worthy of our consideration.

**The meeting of man and God must always mean a penetration and entry of the divine into the human and a self-immersion of man in the Divinity.**

Sri Aurobindo



# Is *The Voice of the Silence* Only for Mystics?

CHITTARANJAN SATAPATHY

H. P. BLAVATSKY dedicated *The Secret Doctrine* ‘to all true theosophists, in every country, and of every race, for they called it forth, and for them it was recorded.’ In the case of *Isis Unveiled*, HPB dedicated the same ‘to the Theosophical Society, . . . to study the subjects’ treated in that book. *The Key to Theosophy* was dedicated by her ‘to all her pupils that they may learn and teach in their turn.’ *The Voice of the Silence* was, on the other hand, ‘dedicated to the few’. It is not indicated who these few are. Besides, it is also not the case that a book is meant only for those to whom it may have been dedicated by the author. Very often it is the case that a book may be dedicated to one or more persons, but it is available to anyone who wishes to buy and read the book.

In the preface to *The Voice of the Silence*, HPB clarifies that this book is derived from the ‘Book of the Golden Precepts’, and while saying so she also clarifies that the ‘Book of the Golden Precepts’, is one of the works which is put into the hands of mystic students in

the East as their knowledge of it is obligatory. Towards the end of the preface, she further states that it has been thought better to make judicious selection only from those treatises which will best suit the few real mystics in the Theosophical Society and which are sure to answer their needs.

Perhaps these words of HPB have prompted some people to think that *The Voice of the Silence* is a work that is meant for the ‘real mystics’ in the Theosophical Society. No doubt the way HPB puts it, we can clearly conclude that ‘The Voice of the Silence’ and the two other fragments included in the book are suitable for mystic students. She also goes on to say that mystic students are those who will appreciate the words of Krishna, and she quotes from the *Bhagavadgītā*, Chapter II, verses 11, 12:

‘Sages grieve not for the living or the dead.  
Never did I not exist, nor you, nor these  
rulers of men; nor will any one of us ever  
hereafter cease to be.’

However, from the above, it is difficult

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to conclude that this book is not suitable for others or that no one else other than mystics should read it. On the other hand, HPB herself indicates on the cover of the book that it is 'for the daily use of Lanoos (disciples)' which goes to show unequivocally that the book is meant for all aspirants and not only for mystics. It would be a great loss if this wonderful little book written in sublime poetic language with vivid imagery were to be kept out of the reach of lay students and disciples.

In Madame Blavatsky's own lifetime, the book had become popular among Theosophists. She wrote to her sister Vera Petrovna de Zhelihovsky in February 1890: '*The Voice of the Silence*, tiny book though it is, is simply becoming the Theosophists' Bible.' We cannot say the Bible is only for mystics and not for lay followers. As a commentator puts it, 'Probably the best way to take the whole treatise is to assume that it is written for the absolute tyro (a beginner or a novice), with a good deal between the lines for the more advanced mystic.' (Frater O.M.) The 14th Dalai Lama says, 'I believe that this book has strongly influenced many sincere seekers and aspirants to the wisdom and compassion of the Bodhisattva Path.' D. T. Suzuki, the Japanese author, says, 'Here is the real Mahayana Buddhism.'

It is not for nothing that HPB indicates that the book should be put to daily use. The more one reads this tiny book (it fits into just twenty A4 size pages), the greater depth one reaches. Progressively

it indicates to us how much more work we need to do in this life and in the lives hereafter. As we proceed with the book, it holds a mirror to show us where we are, and it further indicates the path that we have to take. It does not give us any false promises, it indicates the difficulties ahead, without discouraging us and clearly indicating what lies at the end of the path. Sometimes, the path is described as a thorny road, full of pitfalls, sometimes it is hinted at as a ladder the foot of which is in mire but its summit lost in glorious light. Sometimes the path is described to be across the waters going on to the other shore. As Radhaji often used to point out, there is no actual path taking us from one place to another and it is all happening within ourselves.

Perhaps this is the right time to narrate an anecdote in Mark Lee's book *Knocking at the Open Door: My Years with J. Krishnamurti*. Someone told Krishnaji that Emily Lutyens (Edwin Lutyens's wife), in her book *Candles in the Sun*, says that Rukmini Arundale went through five initiations in a brief span of fifteen days. Krishnamurti suddenly sat up and asked: 'Do you know what initiation is? You wouldn't know what it is to go through even the first initiation.' He went on seriously:

The disciple approaches the master who is seated at the end of a cave which looks like a long tunnel. A harsh voice booms within: 'What is it that you want? You are not fit for anything, go away.' If the disciple is earnest and persistent he comes

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back after a while and the same voice calls out and says the same thing. The disciple, despite the rebuff, keeps coming over a period of time. Then one day, to his astonishment, he finds at the entrance of the cave a sculpted figure of himself; perhaps the eyes are cruel, the protruding jaw and the facial lines exude greed and avarice. Whatever the contortions, he realises the figure is he. As he looks it over with an uncomfortable and anxious feeling, the voice within calls out from the end of the tunnel: 'See what you are, go away and do something.' The disciple goes back, reflects, changes, and keeps coming back. As he changes, mellows, and softens, and lets go of his likes, dislikes, and attachments, the figure too gradually undergoes a change. There is no response from inside the cave. Now communication is only with the seated figure outside the tunnel. This process goes on till he drops most of the accretions of the ego. Then one day, the voice calls out his name. There is great affection in the voice and the master says: 'Come in', and receives him. This is the first initiation. (First-hand account by Dr S. Bala-sundaram in his book, *Non-Guru Guru*.)

We are fortunate to have an account of what the initial process is like from someone like Krishnaji, who knows. In each of the three fragments published under the title *The Voice of the Silence*, HPB tries to give us as detailed a view as possible of the process involved in an aspirant's progress. Everything in the book is not easily understood. By their very nature, esoteric instructions

are never made very concrete. Full understanding of a stage is said to come only when an aspirant has climbed that part and is nearing that far. It is not so much about understanding the literal meaning of the esoteric instructions as contemplating on them and putting them into practice step by step.

HPB has taken three Fragments from the 'Book of the Golden Precepts' and put them together under one title. It is perhaps safe to presume that these are three separate Fragments and not three continuous ones. For example, the choice indicated between the two paths at the end of the second Fragment can only be exercised when the aspirant reaches the seventh and last portal described at the end of the third Fragment. In a way, the three Fragments describe three approaches to the same goal, yet in a sense they are complementary to each other.

Muriel Daw, a theosophist and Buddhist, points out that in the original edition of *The Voice of the Silence* a separating line was placed under the first sentence, thereby making it a sub-title for the whole of Fragment 1. The title was 'The Voice of the Silence' and the sub-title was 'These instructions are for those ignorant of the dangers of the lower *iddhi*.' She says that the implication of the subtitle is that the whole Fragment deals with the technique of meditation, including dangers which arise through the use of the psychic faculties.

As for the second Fragment, to get a good grasp of its central theme one needs to understand what a 'bodhisattva'

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is. It is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘one whose being or essence (sattva) is pure enlightenment (bodhi).’ At a human level, any person whose essence is guided solely by the wish to attain enlightenment in order to help others may be known as a bodhisattva — the great model being Prince Gautama, who was a bodhisattva until the moment of enlightenment which made him a Buddha. It is impossible to help others without wisdom, therefore the struggle for enlightenment must come first. Only then can one choose between the Two Paths. According to one account, even Gautama Buddha had difficulty in choosing. It is said that after he became enlightened, he continued sitting under the tree for seven days enjoying the bliss he had found. Next he considered trying to help others with his new-found knowledge. He thought, ‘It is too difficult, no one will understand.’ Then the gods persuaded him saying: ‘Yes, many are ignorant; however there are some who have but little dust in their eyes.’

The Bodhisattva Vow is the motive and path of training for all Mahayana Buddhists, which is: ‘To attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.’ The would-be bodhisattva is not interested merely in personal enlightenment but in the enlightenment of all. Muriel Daw points out that Madame Blavatsky often referred to herself in humble terms as the very lowest of chelas. Therefore, it is perhaps an unusual idea to think of her as a bodhisattva. However, only someone who has taken such a Vow could have been accepted by her teachers; and,

considering her life, would any of us doubt for a moment that all her energies were spent in absorbing as much of the Ancient Wisdom as she could, and then passing it on to us? She also says that from the moment one undertakes the Vow, (the point reached at the end of the second Fragment, ‘The Two Paths’), one becomes a fledgling bodhisattva.

In the third Fragment, HPB describes the path of the Pāramitā-s, virtues, or Transcendental Perfections. She says:

O weaver of thy freedom, you have to master these Pāramitā-s of perfection — the virtues transcendental six and ten in number — along the weary Path.’

In her Esoteric School Instruction No. 3, HPB quotes from a letter received from her Master:

The six and ten transcendental virtues (the Pāramitā-s) are not for full grown yogis and priests alone, but for all those who would enter the Path. . . .

It would seem therefore that for spiritual training, even lay people like us could profit by knowing more about this particular way towards enlightenment.

In the third Fragment titled ‘The Seven Portals’, HPB introduces us to the six Pāramitā-s:

1. Dāna – giving, generosity
2. Śīla – morality, precepts
3. Kshānti – patience
4. Virya – vigour, energy
5. Dhyāna – meditation
6. Prajñā – wisdom

In the middle she introduces a new

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element called Virāga between the third and the fourth, which she names as the portal of temptations.

Beyond the six Pāramitā-s leading up to Prajñā, there are four more which are important to know about for those who have crossed the seven portals as well as those who are beginners. Sometimes these are called ‘The Four Great Perfections’:

7. Upāya – skilful means

8. Pranidhāna – vow

9. Bala – power

10. Jñāna – enlightenment (wisdom)

These Pāramitā-s imply much more than their ordinary meanings. For example, the Dāna Pāramitā does not mean merely the perfection of giving, but implies the perfection beyond giving. It is not about giving something that we have no need for or something we have in excess and want to get rid of. The perfection beyond giving implies selfless giving, like a mother who feeds a child while remaining hungry, developing an attitude of non-attachment and non-separateness. Once the Dāna Pāramitā is understood as the perfection beyond giving, it lifts one to a stage where there is sheer joy of giving, and an aspirant knows he is on the right path. Incidentally it is not confined only to giving material things, but also giving gifts of teaching, fearlessness, and even one’s own life.

So is the case with all the other Pāramitā-s. The Śīla Pāramitā for example, has to be understood as perfection beyond the precepts, or morality. It consists of the five elements (usually known as Pañchaśīla):

1. No killing – respect for life

2. No stealing – respect for others’ property

3. No sexual misconduct – respect for our pure nature

4. No lying – respect for honesty

5. No intoxicants – respect for a clear mind

These can also be briefly summarized as harmlessness, not taking what is not given and purification of body, speech, and mind.

It is not the case that these Pāramitā-s are to be pursued separately or strictly one after another. Practice of one helps in the practice of another. This is reflected in the Buddhist practice of taking Pañchaśīla before giving Dāna. Even among Hindus, there is a practice of purification of body, speech and mind on the part of the giver and the receiver before Dāna is given or received.

The first three Pāramitā-s Dāna, Śīla and Kshānti — form a triad and represent love, harmony, and patience. Love creates harmony, but without patience harmony cannot be sustained. Similarly the last three Pāramitā-s Virya, Dhyāna, and Prajñā form another triad. With dauntless energy, when contemplation is pursued, the result is full spiritual perception. To reach and to hold a new position in a higher spiritual world requires spiritual energy.

Between these two triads of six Pāramitā-s, HPB introduces the Pāramitā Virāga (*vairāgya*) without which neither the illusion can be conquered nor the truth perceived. In more than one sense,

## Is *The Voice of the Silence* Only for Mystics?

detachment, or dispassion, is the most important of all the virtues. It is essential that the mind is detached from desires and passions without which an aspirant will slide back to square one. HPB reminds us that ‘stern and exacting is the virtue of Virāga’.

Consider the following few stanzas from each of the three fragments of *The Voice of the Silence*. (The text in square brackets is taken from the glossarial notes at the end of the book, and the stanza number is given within round brackets.) These go to show that even lay disciples can benefit from this wonderful little book.

### Fragment I

- Give up your life, if you would live. [Give up the life of physical personality if you would live in spirit.] (21)
- The name of the first Hall is Ignorance, in which you live and shall die. (24-5)
- The name of the second Hall is Learning. In it you will find the siddhis (psychic powers), but be aware of their dangers. Do not seek your teacher in this hall of astral illusion. (26, 29)
- The third Hall is called Wisdom, where you may seek the Master. For reaching the Vale of Bliss through this Hall, guard against the sense of separateness. Before the Path is entered you must destroy your desire-body and clean your mind-body because the pure waters of eternal life cannot mingle with muddy waters. (27, 32, 37, 51-2)
- You cannot travel on the Path before you have become the Path itself. (58)

- Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard you as one of her creators and bow before you. (66)
- There is but one road to the Path; at its very end alone the Voice of the Silence can be heard. (69)

### Fragment II

- Do not believe that sitting in dark forests in proud seclusion and apart from men, or living on roots and plants and drinking from snow, will lead you to the goal of final liberation. (132)
- To reach Nirvana one must reach Self-knowledge, which is born from loving deeds. The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life — has lived in vain. (136, 153)
- Be humble if you would attain to Wisdom, and be humbler still, when you have mastered it. (161-2)
- The way to final freedom is within yourself and that way begins and ends outside of the personal self. (169-70)

### Fragment III

- Any sensation which arouses the feeling of ‘I’ will make you forfeit the prizes you have won along the path. (245)
- Your true self is like a deer, and your thoughts are the hounds that weary and pursue his progress to the stream of Life. (260)
- Remember, you that fight for man’s liberation, each failure is success and each sincere attempt brings its reward in time. (274)

This is a book that uplifts and enrap-

*Is The Voice of the Silence Only for Mystics?*

tures one's whole being by sheer poetry:  
Know, Conqueror of Sins, that once a  
'Streamwinner' has crossed the seventh  
Path, all Nature thrills with joyous awe and  
feels subdued. The silver star now twinkles  
out the news to the night-blossoms, the

streamlet to the pebbles ripples out the tale,  
dark ocean-waves will roar it to the rocks  
surf-bound, scent-laden breezes sing it to  
the vales, and stately pines mysteriously  
whisper: 'A Master has arisen, a Master  
of the Day.' (281)      ✧

There is a road, steep and thorny,  
beset with perils of every kind,  
but yet a road, and it leads to  
the very heart of the Universe:  
I can tell you how to find those  
who will show you the secret gateway  
that opens inward only,  
and closes fast behind the neophyte for evermore.  
There is no danger  
that dauntless courage cannot conquer;  
there is no trial  
that spotless purity cannot pass through;  
there is no difficulty  
that strong intellect cannot surmount.  
For those who win onwards  
there is reward past all telling —  
the power to bless and save humanity;  
for those who fail,  
there are other lives in which success may come.

*H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*  
vol. XIII, p. 219

# The Neurophysiology of Compassion — II

JOSÉ FOGLIA

**W**HEN, how, and why did the left hemisphere supremacy overpower our conscious reality?

Answering this question involves specifying the meaning that we give to the words ‘awareness’, ‘attention’, and ‘mind’ during this development. Our approach is exclusively reductionist and does not incur philosophical disquisitions, on what they call beliefs, superstitions, and religions. The premise of this approach is that awareness and attention are the result of neural processes and not ‘things’. We do not consider that ‘consciousness’ is the one realizing this when it pays attention. This phrase, repeated frequently in everyday life, acquired, over the millennia, has an undeserved veracity and could be misleading. What happens, however, is that after a successive appearance of stimuli, progressive activation of the cerebral cortex occurs. The activation process is conditioned by the meaning of the information at the time it reaches the brain. And at the same time, it is conditioned by interest and motivation, which bring about a positive feedback in

the activation of the cortex of the brain. Accordingly, as the focus of attention moves intensely towards the stimuli, the brain becomes increasingly more aware.

In the reptile, for example, attention is due to stimulation from the reticular activating system that powers the structures containing survival programmes. Thus the reptilian brain is put on alert to condition body movements according to circumstances.

Attention in the mammal is, besides the activation in the primitive brain, the activation of all modules concerning motivation as well. As a result, the movements are also conditioned by a reaction of neuroendocrine mechanisms. Alertness then creates a feeling of pleasure or displeasure according to the stimulus that caused it.

Attention in the human brain, in addition to all the previous mechanisms, is a process that activates sophisticated and complex modules in the prefrontal lobes, which allow the abstraction of the different kinds of information processed in the form of words, canons

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## The Neurophysiology of Compassion — II

of thoughts, memories, and feelings.

Several programmes were developed in the prefrontal lobes of *Homo sapiens*. To give an overview of their complexity, only some of them will be pointed out here. Our Central Executive, the venue where we operate and where we determine our actions, is very complex. It is the seat of conscious will. It is where we stand when we say 'I want'. It is also composed of all the programmes that allow us to be conscious of having an experience at this precise moment, having had an existence in the past, and allows us to say 'I am.' The anterior cingulate cortex is located on the inner side of the frontal lobe. When activated we become aware of internal sensations.

It is the cortical area that informs us how we feel and allows us to say, 'I feel'. To succeed in the goal that was proposed by the conscious will of the Central Executive, it depends essentially on the anatomical and functional integrity of the upper area and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, those areas of the brain that guide and maintain the focus on the thoughts and ideas, and thus make us aware of the information stored in working memory. Thus we can use the information accumulated throughout life and say, 'I know'. The integrity of the orbitofrontal cortex, however, would be central to the action in the immediate present because it would activate the mechanisms of self-control to the various impulses that are generated deep in the brain.

For that action to be complete and consistent with its intention, it is also

necessary that the orbitofrontal cortex in the prefrontal lobes become aware of the emotions that come from the limbic system. Understanding the meaning communicated by feelings is essential for social adaptation and allows a proper response to circumstances. This area would control compulsive antisocial behaviour. It is the area that consciously places us in the here and now. Our actions have a meaning in reality if we understand the meaning — which is redundant — of the feelings while acting at every moment. This allows us to place ourselves in time and space and to have a behaviour in accordance with the present moment.

And paradoxically, to properly use the reasoning it is essential to be aware of the array of emotions released by the countless programmes that the limbic system has in the deepest part of the brain. The ventromedial cortex becomes conscious of emotions and then processes intellectually their meaning in a more elaborate context. This gives a sense of coherence to our everyday lives.

We have identified some areas of the prefrontal lobes that are essential for the proper functioning of our intellectual abilities, our psychological integrity and the rationality of our behaviour. The Central Executive controls the focus of attention and processes the information together with the circuits of the Phonological Loop and the Visuospatial Sketchpad. The limited and transient capacity of the short-term memory allows storage and processing of information

simultaneously. This type of memory is necessary for a wide range of multimodal cognitive abilities such as learning, language comprehension, playing cards, or reasoning. It is the ability to immediately remember specifically what is needed at any given time. The working memory operates with a central executive coordinator, the Central Executive and two subordinate sub-systems: the Phonological Loop and the Visuospatial Sketchpad. It is a system of care and control of these two circuits to store and enhance information-based language for verbal working memory and image-based information for nonverbal working memory. They also integrate with a fourth component, the 'episodic buffer' that enables a functional link between the two circuits with the system of long-term episodic memory as well as semantic memory. Working memory is in turn the functional integration of short-term memory of Phonological Loop and Visuospatial Sketchpad with the long-term memory circuits. The Central Executive is also actively involved with the hippocampal episodic memory circuits and connections of the hippocampus with extensive cortical areas.

The process then requires the attention of a steady flow of neurotransmitters that activate neurons in all these modules. And, as these modules are activated, they consciously develop the information they are processing. Over the millennia the Phonological Loop was applied with increasing frequency as the information constantly entering the brain grew.

It seems that the information one received as a human being in the seventeenth century can be found today on one page of a newspaper. Today, information is constantly entering the brain at every moment; it is too much, so it is very difficult to be silent for long. Naming has become a habit for *Homo sapiens*. Addiction to thinking is accordingly brought to our focus; it is constantly immersing our minds in a universe of information from printed publications, online sources, or television, radio, and so on. That is why the executive power of the human brain today cannot consider the same information or work on one theme for a long period of time without becoming bored or tired very quickly. The interest decreases rapidly and the brain needs a new stimulus that motivates it anew. Reliance on finding new stimuli has created beings with limited values and superficial feelings. The difficulty of the brain in the 21st century to maintain the focus of attention has stimulated the need to escape reality through distractions. In the most vulnerable psyches a clear tendency to addiction to psychotropic drugs, alcohol, antisocial behaviour, and so on, manifests itself. The increased interest in all that is offered by the digital world is ignoring the analogue universe of the right hemisphere more and more. And with that, a lack of empathy and compassion is now observed in society.

What could reverse this dramatic situation? What happens in the brain during the state of meditation? What are its effects on the nervous system and the body?

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Technology today allows us to study the brain in different states according to each circumstance. Three-dimensional images that magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and also computed tomography (CT) provide, allow us to study the brain in serial sections. Functional scanners, which show — with up to four images per second — the activities of various brain lobes, as these are activated and begin to consume more oxygen, are also possible. At the same time, a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) allows observation of the increase in blood flow when different areas of the brain are activated. It is also possible, using the next generation Infrared Spectroscopy, to obtain images that highlight the different modules of the brain as they start to work. The evolution and development of electroencephalography (EEG), which records the different waves of brain activity, allows us now to distinguish changes in electrical waves of neurons with certain stimuli. One can now explore the various areas of the brain in living individuals with minimal or no invasive action.

Thus it is possible to identify the profile of the neural activation during different circumstances: in the wakefulness state, during periods of calm and relaxation, in stressful situations, in warnings of danger or other extreme situations of life, during each sleep stage, in different degrees of coma, during hypnosis sessions, in hypnotic trances, in self-hypnosis, and in meditation at all levels. Each one of these states has

a pattern of neural activity, which can be properly and fully identified.

Meditation, for example, has a profile on EEG tracing and on studies with CT, PET, and MRI scan, which is unique and exclusive. It is easy then to identify a brain that is meditating, since it has well-defined characteristics that are peculiar to it. There is a group of brain areas that are activated only during meditation. The same applies to the electrical activity, the characteristics of the EEG waves, type, amplitude and frequency. That is, one may see a pattern of behaviour in easily identifiable neural functionality with the state of meditation.

The EEG tracing shows a change in the electrical activity of the cortex, when the brain goes progressively into a state of very deep meditation. It begins with a shift in the electrical activity from the left hemisphere to the right, a progressive increase in alpha waves and coherence in the EEG lines between the two hemispheres. It also features the appearance of theta and delta waves, and as the state of meditation progresses, the activation of certain brain areas is also observed. The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis presents a parasympathetic dominance and a certain neuroendocrine pattern can be observed as well. There is an increase of the functions of the right hemisphere, including the active presence of an Internal Observer (Sensed Presence). The transitory intrusion of the Internal Observer of the right hemisphere during the practice of meditation is the equivalent of the

## The Neurophysiology of Compassion — II

sense of Self of the left hemisphere.

Accordingly, the sense of separation that produces the activation of the left hemisphere is lost and there starts a state of complete integration. The thoughts are calmed and the brain is in total silence. The attention is fully focused on the present. However, it is possible that, once the brain has achieved a predetermined depth, it may achieve an abstract metaphysical ideation of high content. The activation of the right hemisphere does not prevent language functions in the left hemisphere. However, activation of the Phonological Loop determines the full activation of the right hemisphere. The conscious will cannot create a state of meditation. This must be activated passively. The state of meditation comes about spontaneously when the conscious will is calm.

What does all this have to do with the creation of an entirely new culture?

Over the millennia we have enhanced the activity of the left hemisphere, especially the areas of the Phonological Loop. This means that the process of our conscious state is a fragmented reality, our 'Self Consciousness'. The left hemisphere is the seat of criticism, judgment, measurement, comparison, award values, discrimination, identification, and self-awareness. It is separated from the rest of cognition and creates a virtual reality, the Self. The Self is the identification in a centre, conditioned by thoughts, beliefs, superstitions; it is a fragment of our brain separated from the rest of the universe. Every time something is named, there is

a separation from the named object. The duality between what 'it is' and what 'it should be' appears. It is this internal insulation that produces the feeling of frustration and consequent pursuit of pleasure in all aspects of life. This in turn leads to pleasure dependency and pain intolerance being developed in the human brain resulting in the creation of psychological time, 'past and future', and therefrom, the frequent occurrence of panic attacks.

Over the course of millennia, the left hemisphere has also developed a dependence on knowledge and experience. This gives one the sense of security and continuity to work with energy in daily life. However, this dependence on continuity and security is responsible for the appearance of psychological fear. The habit of continuity does not allow thought to be quiet because this means that the 'Self' dies psychologically. Thought refuses to die and clings to the fragmented reality that it creates. The fear of stopping thought perpetuates a mechanism that leads to a vicious circle characterized by dependence, 'the dopamine reward'. Life separates itself from the whole and bases its existence on a fragment of life. Therefore we cannot get rid of the fear of losing what is known and familiar to us, which gives us security. For millennia, as a result of all these neurotic mechanisms, there appeared in the human family various cults promoting a sense of nationalism, and also a magical thinking that caused religions and cults to unleash innumerable ideologies and fundamentalisms,

the result of which has been violence and endless wars. The creation of psychological time allows the human brain to be content living in its own abstraction. The fear of losing what is known is the root of all the tragedies that haunt humanity today.

In contrast, in the right hemisphere, the seat of the Inner Observer, there is only the eternal present. Because it is unable to name anything, it is unable to be separated into a fragment. The view of reality and the Inner Observer are one and the same. You cannot measure or compare, but instead, accordingly, you can develop analogical thinking, finding similarities in diversities. Intelligence lies in establishing analogies with their cognition. The right hemisphere processes all the information that comes in a very different way to its contralateral brother. It is the empathic brain that establishes its relationships on the basis of emotions and feelings. It is the brain that was muted by the arrogance of knowledge. It means living in the present, paying attention to the present. And therefore it is also love in the present. The paradox is that it has the ability to be active while accessing the capabilities of the left hemisphere. Not so in the left hemisphere, because while it is active it fails to access the peace of the right hemisphere.

### **Creating a New Culture**

The new culture that we must create should consider this fact. So, then, it is not about creating a new paradigm or a new ideology. The human brain must

transcend motivation. Motivation was very important for the mammalian brain. Prefrontal lobes of *Homo sapiens* must also operate from discernment, avoid incorrect behaviours and attitudes, and put the focus of attention in righteousness, intelligence, and respect for life. We should aim towards education to increase self-knowledge and to be empathetic.

Empathy is Ethics. We should educate *Homo sapiens* to operate from love and affection. Love has no motive. Intelligence has no choice. Love is the highest expression of intelligence. Ethics is much more than moral values. What is 'good' or 'bad' is relative in every culture. Values can be relative and changing, as those values that are listed on the stock exchange. Ethics is absolute. Ethics is what is correct or incorrect, right or wrong. Everything that causes damage to someone or something is wrong. The brain must be empathetic to feel what is happening in others. The word empathy derives from the Greek word 'pathos', which means 'sorrow', 'pain', 'suffering'. Empathy means to feel the pain of others, to understand the circumstances of others. How can the brain be aware when it is causing damage to someone or something, if it cannot feel it? How can it act with integrity in every circumstance if it is processing all the information in just a fragment of its self-awareness?

The new culture then, is education to awaken compassion for all creation. We must develop awareness of our abilities to learn self-knowledge; that we are, as

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beings, one with the whole universe. This is what we feel when, during the state of meditation, we feel an immense peace and bliss. The awakening of the intelligence in each circumstance of our life is essential if we work towards a humanity living in peace. Today this is our responsibility.

It is feeling peace in our heart, so that one day we would be able to create a world in peace. We have ample evidence in our history that we can be tremendously creative. What prevents us from facing up to this unprecedented crisis which challenges us today? ✧

**Anger is like a storm rising up from the bottom of your consciousness. When you feel it coming, turn your focus to your breath. Breathe in deeply to bring your mind home to your body. Then look at, or think of, the person triggering this emotion: with mindfulness, you can see that they are unhappy and suffering. You can see their wrong perceptions. You will feel motivated by a desire to say or do something to help the other person suffer less. This means compassionate energy has been born in your heart. And when compassion appears, anger is deleted.**

Thich Nhat Hanh

# Compassion: Goal of Theosophy and the Spiritual Life

ABRAHAM ORON

**I**N all the main religions of the world we find some teachings concerning compassion and loving kindness. This is also the case with Judaism. There are 613 commandments in the Jewish religion, many of which are dealing with the way we should treat others. In general, we find well known commandments such as:

Love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Do not do to others what you do not like being done to yourself.

More specifically, there are commandments for helping the poor, visiting the sick, comforting mourners, and even celebrating with the bride and groom in their marriage feast.

As in other countries, we have hundreds of philanthropic organizations actively helping others: providing food, clothing and medical supplies, protecting children and women in need, and so on. Knowing the sad history of this land, one may ask, how can there be so many manifestations of charity and loving-kindness along with the walls of hatred and hostility between

two nations that are destined to live side by side?

In *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter 8, Master KH, a master of wisdom and compassion, acknowledges this sad situation of humanity:

For it is 'Humanity' which is the great Orphan, the only disinherited one upon this earth, my friend. And it is the duty of every man who is capable of an unselfish impulse to do something, however little, for its welfare. Poor, poor humanity! It reminds me of the old fable of the war between the Body and its members: here too, each limb of this huge 'Orphan' — fatherless and motherless — selfishly cares but for itself. The body uncared for suffers eternally, whether the limbs are at war or at rest. Its suffering and agony never cease.

But having deep knowledge of the divine potential which lies dormant in the human soul he adds: 'Since there is no hope for man *only in man* I would not let one cry whom I could save!'

There are moments when difficult events caused by extremists on all sides,

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human beings immersed in ignorance and illusion, make a person lose sight of what the Master was talking about. How can it be that with all the long history of destruction and suffering, we still experience so much hatred and violence in many parts of the world?

Meditating on the sentence 'there is hope for man *only in man*' and observing these feelings of despair that arise within, with compassion they dissolve, and gradually there begin to appear some bright spots that exist within this harsh reality.

These sparks of light are present in many men and women, many of them young, who dedicate, and sometimes even sacrifice, their lives doing the sacred work of healing the sick in undeveloped countries, defending the human rights of the oppressed, helping refugees and those who are trapped in fighting zones; who fight ceaselessly against the ecological damage caused by governments and organizations, and help to prevent cruelty to animals. There are many light workers, who are really the hope of humanity, and who are practising compassion in action and universal responsibility.

I would speculate that many of those who dedicate themselves to alleviate human suffering in all its forms have been influenced directly or indirectly by the principles of morality and spiritual philosophy of Hinduism, Buddhism, Theosophy and many other currents. Principles such as the interconnectedness and unity of life, non-violence, and non-

duality have found their way into many spiritual groups and into psychology, psychotherapy, ecology and even quantum physics.

Here we may ask how Theosophy can play a greater part in expanding the circle of those who can feel this interconnectedness and the urge to serve humanity? How can we make these principles which are inherent in Theosophy more practical and friendly?

All the wonderful teachings of Theosophy about the hidden aspects of Nature and man, about laws of Nature such as reincarnation, karma, evolution of consciousness, periodicity and other teachings dealing with the creation of the universe and man, and so on, are all forming the 'hall of learning', that leads to the 'hall of wisdom', or to the realization that one has to concentrate all his energies on freeing one's self from separateness. This consists mainly in the development of the quality of a wide open heart, of feeling close to others, really sharing their pains and joys, and being able to work for their wellbeing; this realization or active compassion is the aim of the spiritual life.

The importance of this quality is expressed in the following two quotations, the first is from *At the Feet of the Master*:

Of all the Qualifications, Love is the most important, for if it is strong enough in a man, it forces him to acquire all the rest, and all the rest without it would never be sufficient.



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Most of us will agree with this saying, but how many of us (including the speaker) are willing to abandon learning, and concentrate all our efforts on the realization of our inner love-nature?

The second quotation is from H. P. Blavatsky in *The Voice of the Silence*, in which compassion is defined as the Law of laws:

Canst thou destroy divine Compassion? Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of laws — eternal Harmony, Ālaya's Self; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting right, and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal. The more thou dost become at one with it, thy being melted in its Being, the more thy soul unites with that which Is, the more thou wilt become Compassion Absolute.

Are not these quotations and many more found throughout other Theosophical books, trying to awaken us to concentrate our study and practice on the development of true compassion? Only practical brotherhood and compassion can transform us and society. Could it be, that many of us are too attracted to the 'hall of learning', and this maybe the cause for the difficulties the Theosophical Society has in reaching larger sections of society, and specially the young generation? All the separative tendencies, hatred and violence in the world, call for the healing powers of true brotherhood and compassion.

Can we find new ways of teaching Theosophy, so that the principles of Theosophy will be channelled and focused

on study, meditation, and practices for the development of compassion and brotherhood? We must find ways to demonstrate the truth that only through compassion and brotherhood, inner peace and happiness can be found. There is a simple exercise which we use in our course on practical ways to deal with harmful emotions, which helps in experiencing this truth: Think about someone who made you angry and observe the unpleasant sensations in your body, and then think about someone you love, and see how good it feels at the level of the body.

The knowledge of Theosophy gives us a very good basis for demonstrating through analogy, exercise, dialogue and meditation practices, the truth expressed in the following words of wisdom by the Buddha, all of which deal with the essential attitude needed for the development of compassion and inner peace. Here are the unforgettable words of the Buddha at the opening of the *Dhammapāda*:

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.

'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me,

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he robbed me' — in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.

He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me' — in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will cease.

For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule.

Where can this love or compassion that eradicates hatred be found? It can be found deep within because it is our own true nature, but we have to make space for it. So long as we are filled with the self and all its desires and fears it cannot appear.

The making of space for compassion to be born within us, is the result of a long process of deep inner observation, combined with a willingness to meet our accumulated anger, fear, loneliness, frustration — and feeling with compassion all the pain which is held in these emotions. We can combine this inner observation with a loving-kindness meditation on the following words from *The Voice of the Silence* and remind ourselves of the many forms of suffering we see and hear about:

Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye.

But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever

brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.

The question still remains, how can I bring a greater part of my nation to understand and apply these truths in relation to those who belong to other nations or religions?

In the teachings of Theosophy and Hinduism, we learn that this situation of ignorance, separation and illusion in which most of humanity is today, is vital to the development of individual human consciousness. All sparks of consciousness must fall from a state of unconscious unity to a state of separation and the suffering that goes with it, so that they can return in some future, fully conscious to the unity and wholeness which is their true home.

Should we take comfort in this knowledge, and let Nature and karma do the work of evolution leading after countless eons of suffering to that enlightenment after which illusion and separateness will be eradicated? Or should we awaken ourselves to understand and see that everyone who came to Theosophy or to any true spiritual path must become sooner or later an emissary of Nature and karma, without which the work of the evolution of human consciousness cannot be realized. Every human being is in his essence a bridge between heaven and earth.

All who are even somewhat aware of being such a meeting point between spirit and matter, heaven and earth are mankind's hope for change towards true humanity. The Universe expects such people to take responsibility, to be their

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brothers' keepers and tirelessly teach and be models of love and wisdom. How do we, and others around the world wake up to vigorous and effective action demonstrating the vitality of developing compassion for the happiness and prosperity of humanity?

Let us focus in Theosophy on the path of the heart, on those truths on which it is written in *Light on the Path*:

These Truths, which are as great as is life itself, are as simple as the simplest mind of man. Feed the hungry with them.

Can we feed the world with these truths by doing more to simplify and 'popularize Theosophy' and focus on the teachings which motivate us towards more compassionate and brotherly living? ✧

**A human being is a part of a whole, called by us the 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

# White Lotus Day

GEORGE S. ARUNDALE

WHITE Lotus Day is the day on which we commemorate in deepest gratitude the unique service H. P. Blavatsky gave to the whole world no less than to the Theosophical Society. She was the great messenger and channel for the dawn of a new Light upon the world — though new only in form. On 8 May we pay homage to her and glorify her name.

But more than this happens on White Lotus Day, for it is a Day on which gather together literally millions of those who have cause to bless her for her blessings upon them. At Adyar there is annually an immense gathering of her devotees visible and invisible, for Adyar was her home and is, as Dr Annie Besant has ever called it, the Home of the Masters. Adyar is the great centre in the outer world of that Light of which HPB was the channel, and when Adyar celebrates White Lotus Day thousands gather from all parts of the earth and from elsewhere too to sing to her hymns of praise. Dwellers in the inner worlds gather at Adyar. Dwellers in this outer world come in their subtler bodies. Every Section and every Lodge is represented, of course for the most part invisible to earthly eyes.

And the adoration rises as fellow-stalwarts of HPB, who also have shed their physical bodies, are seen or felt near to the vibrant heart of the gathering — and HPB herself, who multiplies herself to shed her benediction wherever people gather together in her name.

White Lotus Day is a great spiritual ‘At-Home’, at which all Theosophists, be they or not members of the Theosophical Society, are at home to one another as members of one worldwide family. White Lotus Day is a family reunion — far-flung indeed on inner planes, and most potent there, but with scattered earthly counterparts where loyalty and gratitude find their expression on the physical plane itself.

White Lotus Day during wartime is naturally of special significance, for the great warrior-spirits of HPB and her immediate colleagues marshal around them all those who also are wise enough to fight in these Kurukshetra times. There is a tremendous heartening of that collective warrior-spirit which shall confound the enemies of Righteousness into desolation. The war draws more quickly to its end because of

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Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, May 1943.

## White Lotus Day

White Lotus Day and its high purposes.

Let every one of us who knows how to remember HPB, H. S. Olcott, Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, and Those who sent them forth, renew his courage and his ardour on White Lotus Day — for

Theosophy, for the Theosophical Society, for the winning of this Great War, and for an ever-increasing realization of the mighty benediction the Masters and their messengers are ever bestowing upon the whole world. ✧

## White Lotus Day

The following clause appears in the will of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB) made at the Theosophical Headquarters, Adyar, Madras, on 31 January 1885:

‘I desire that yearly, on the anniversary of my death some of my friends should assemble at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society and read a chapter of Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia* and the *Bhagavadgita*.’

A year after HPB’s passing in 1891, Col. H. S. Olcott established White Lotus Day as a day of remembrance. At the first observance in London on 8 May 1892, Annie Besant added the reading of HPB’s *The Voice of the Silence*, and this has since become part of the tradition.

## *Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom*

ONE Nature, perfect and pervading, circulates in all natures,  
One Reality, all-comprehensive, contains within itself all realities.  
The one Moon reflects itself wherever there is a sheet of water,  
And all the moons in the waters are embraced within the one Moon.  
The Dharma-body (the Absolute) of all the Buddhas enters into  
my own being.  
And my own being is found in union with theirs . . .  
The Inner Light is beyond praise and blame;  
Like space it knows no boundaries,  
Yet it is even here, within us, ever retaining its serenity and fullness.  
It is only when you hunt for it that you lose it;  
You cannot take hold of it, but equally you cannot get rid of it,  
And while you can do neither, it goes on its own way.  
You remain silent and it speaks; you speak and it is dumb;  
The great gate of charity is wide open, with no obstacles before it.

Yung-chia Ta-shih

# On Krishnaji

CLEMICE PETTER

TO talk about J. Krishnamurti is a delight, a challenge, and a great responsibility. It is easy to talk about someone whom we love. But the challenge in this case is that we are not going to speak about an ordinary person. We are going to talk about somebody who brought new light, understanding, and teachings to the world.

Former President of the Theosophical Society Mrs Radha Burnier said in a talk that she gave in 1994 at the Adyar Lodge, that Krishnaji was a mystery:

I think that no one who came into contact with him really knew him as he was; there were depths to him which none seemed to touch. The strongest feeling I had with him was that inwardly he did not belong to this world. He was like a fish out of water in various situations.

In this sense, Krishnamurti and Adyar have the same nature; there is no doubt that Krishnamurti is the beloved Son of Adyar. Although geographically located on this Earth, Adyar is a place that does not belong to this world. As Krishnamurti said: 'This place has a presence that one

will not feel anywhere else in the world.' Radhaji considered the Adyar campus as an ashram. But to call Adyar an ashram is not enough; this is a unique 'place' with a spirit of its own. A spirit that, like Krishnamurti, does not belong to this world. It is a place whose spirit knows no race, nationality, or class division, that shows no preferences, has no knowledge whatsoever about personal likes and dislikes, and so on. And not being of this world, it has an atmosphere, a unique and delicate energy, that needs to be preserved alive. To keep the spirit of Adyar alive we need to care for it. One hopes that all are aware of the sacred nature of this place, the kind of care it needs, and the utter importance of Adyar to the theosophical work in the world. One also hopes that all are aware of the responsibility for keeping the spirit alive. Each one of us, sitting in this gathering, as well as theosophists across the globe, are responsible for maintaining the sacredness of Adyar.

Krishnamurti's message to this chaotic world is one of Love and Order. He used to say: 'We need to put the house in order.'

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**Ms Clemice Petter** is a long-term member of the Theosophical Society in Brazil, now serving as a volunteer at the TS Headquarters in Adyar. Talk given on Adyar Day, 17 February 2016.

## On Krishnaji

He also said: 'It is love alone that leads to right action. What brings order in the world is to love, and let love do what it will.' How difficult it is for the mind, which is disorder itself, to understand when one speaks out of order. And how difficult it is when one does not know Love, to see the utter necessity of it. So, maybe it was just natural that at the very beginning people were not ready to listen to him. People were not able to drop their beliefs and expectations and look at him without the burden of yesterday.

In March 1986, one month after Krishnaji's passing, the Theosophical Society released a special issue of *The Theosophist* dedicated to Krishnamurti. In it Radhaji wrote:

The connection between J. Krishnamurti (Krishnaji, as he was affectionately known) and the Theosophical Society was broken, not because he left — as many members believe — but because people were not ready to listen to a profound message given in terms they were not accustomed to hearing. It is not the first time that this has happened. The Jews would not listen to Jesus when he came to teach. The majority of Hindus did not respond for long to what the Buddha had to say. Most people like to revert to their accustomed thoughts, their habits, their convenient theories and ideas even when they are shaken up, for radical change is both difficult and 'inconvenient'. But everything which is profound is radical. Truth cannot temporize and compromise, and we like to compromise and to have the best of both

worlds. In *The Mahatma Letters*, it is made very clear that one who is in earnest about the Path must abandon all his accustomed modes of thinking and ways of action. So members of the Theosophical Society should have been prepared to hear a new message. But when Krishnaji began to speak in a radical way, there were many who could not listen.

So the question is: today after almost ninety years, how earnest are we?

Even nowadays there are people who think that Krishnamurti denied the Masters. But in fact what Krishnaji did was something that the Theosophists were asked to do in 1900. And he did it in a beautiful and definite way. He stopped the cant about the Masters. And again, there were many who could not listen to it. So the question arises: Do we ever listen to anything? Or do we just go on doing only what is convenient, only what does not disturb our comfortable nest, built with our beliefs and conclusions?

In her article Radhaji goes on, in a beautiful way, explaining what happened when Krishnamurti started to speak in an unexpected way. And it could not have been differently. He had to speak in an unexpected way, because if he was to talk about something already known, what would be the need for his coming? If I think I know what the teachings are and how they are going to be presented, then I am the teacher, there is no need for somebody else. But if I am expecting someone to teach, it is because I, myself,



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do not know. That is why the Teacher was expected, to bring something new — not already known. This is logical and obvious, and the Theosophical Society was waiting for new teachings, which means that the theosophical teachings for the world were not complete with Blavatsky's work. And this is made clear by Blavatsky herself when she wrote in *The Key to Theosophy*:

If the present attempt, in the form of our Society, succeeds better than its predecessors have done, then it will be in existence as an organized, living, and healthy body when the time comes for the effort of the 20th century. The general condition of men's minds and hearts will have been improved and purified by the spread of its teachings, and, as I have said, their prejudices and dogmatic illusions will have been, to some extent at least, removed. Not only so, but besides a large and accessible literature ready to men's hands, the next impulse will find a numerous and *united* body of people ready to welcome the new torchbearer of Truth. It will find the minds of men prepared for his message, a language ready for him in which to clothe the new truths he brings, an organization awaiting his arrival, which will remove the merely mechanical, material obstacles and difficulties from his path. Think how much one, to whom such an opportunity is given, could accomplish. Measure it by comparison with what the Theosophical Society actually *has* achieved in the last fourteen years, without *any* of these

advantages and surrounded by hosts of hindrances which would not hamper the new leader.

Here Blavatsky made very clear that the Theosophical Society was to prepare the ground for the next torchbearer of Truth. Her work was to 'clean the house' (humanity's mind) from prejudices and dogmatic illusions. She insisted so many times on the danger of crystallization, she hoped we could keep the TS as a living body. If there is one thing that is certain, it is that we need to keep a learning mind, a mind that is open to the new at each moment, not a mind that knows, because the moment one knows, is the moment of crystallization. And since evolution is said to be eternal, we will never know the final, because there seems to be no final 'knowledge'. About 'knowledge' Blavatsky said that the man who says he knows, does not know, because there is nothing to know. And Krishnamurti similarly mentions in his talks, about the man who says he knows, 'distrust him completely', because he does not know.

In the same special issue of *The Theosophist* of March 1986, there is a short quotation of Annie Besant:

When the great teaching is given it will not be Theosophy as we know it. It requires a growth of the Soul, that in the beginning only scraps of it can be understood. What is needed in the world for the Reconstruction is not LCC [Liberal Catholic Church], Co-Masonry, and so on, but something additional which He only can

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give, and the world will need something which the Lord will have to bring out from humanity, some new understanding.

When she says, ‘something which the Lord will have to bring out from humanity’, it is important to note that it is not something the Lord will give, as, after all, each one has to work out one’s own understanding. Nobody on Earth or in Heaven can give us understanding. We have to work hard. It is also important to see that understanding is not conclusion; conclusion comes when there is no understanding. Conclusion is harsh, rigid, deathlike. Understanding is light, alive, moving; in understanding there is space for growth, for further understanding. It is dynamic.

There are no words to express what a great human being Annie Besant was. She was ready for the new. When Krishnamurti started to speak in an unusual way, she would sit at his feet during his talks and say: ‘I want to learn from you. You are my teacher.’ She was a woman in her eighties and she would not sit on the chair reserved for her near him on the dais. She would sit at his feet. This was telling enough and needs no other comment.

We want the new (because deep within we know that we have to move forward); and at the same time we are afraid to let go of the old. This is our conflict — basically we are afraid. But how do we move from one place to another without leaving the previous place? This is impossible, of course.

To move, to live — and life is movement — we need to learn to let go. And to let go we need to know what we are holding on to. This is what Krishnamurti talks about. He shows us our heaviness and he points out that in order to move, one needs to be light, drop all burdens; to be nothing. We *have* to be nothing. Krishnamurti said: ‘Happy is the man who is nothing.’ And to be nothing is difficult for most people, because we want to be famous, we want to be recognized by this deceptive world. Krishnamurti taught in a peculiar way; he would not give a direct answer; he would help the person to find out for himself, to work it out. He was concerned about teaching us to walk alone; to be a light unto ourselves, not to depend on anybody.

Blavatsky prepared the ground, cleaning the house of old conclusions which had given rise to dogmatism and superstitions, by telling us: ‘There is another way of living, which is beyond the mind.’ She points out: ‘The mind is the slayer of the Real.’ And Krishnaji calls attention to the need for putting the house in order. To go beyond the mind we need to understand its ways, its mechanisms. To continue cleaning when the house is already clean, leads to fanaticism, neuroticism, and so on. After removing all the cobwebs and dust, it is time to have new order in the house. This new order is a new understanding of life, a new way of living day to day with our neighbours, with our spouse and children, and with Nature. A healthy way

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of life, with care, respect, and responsibility towards all life that share existence on this planet with us, including care and responsibility for the planet itself. And this transformation in life will only come about with the understanding of what we are, what we truly are, and not what we should be, which is the projection of the confused mind.

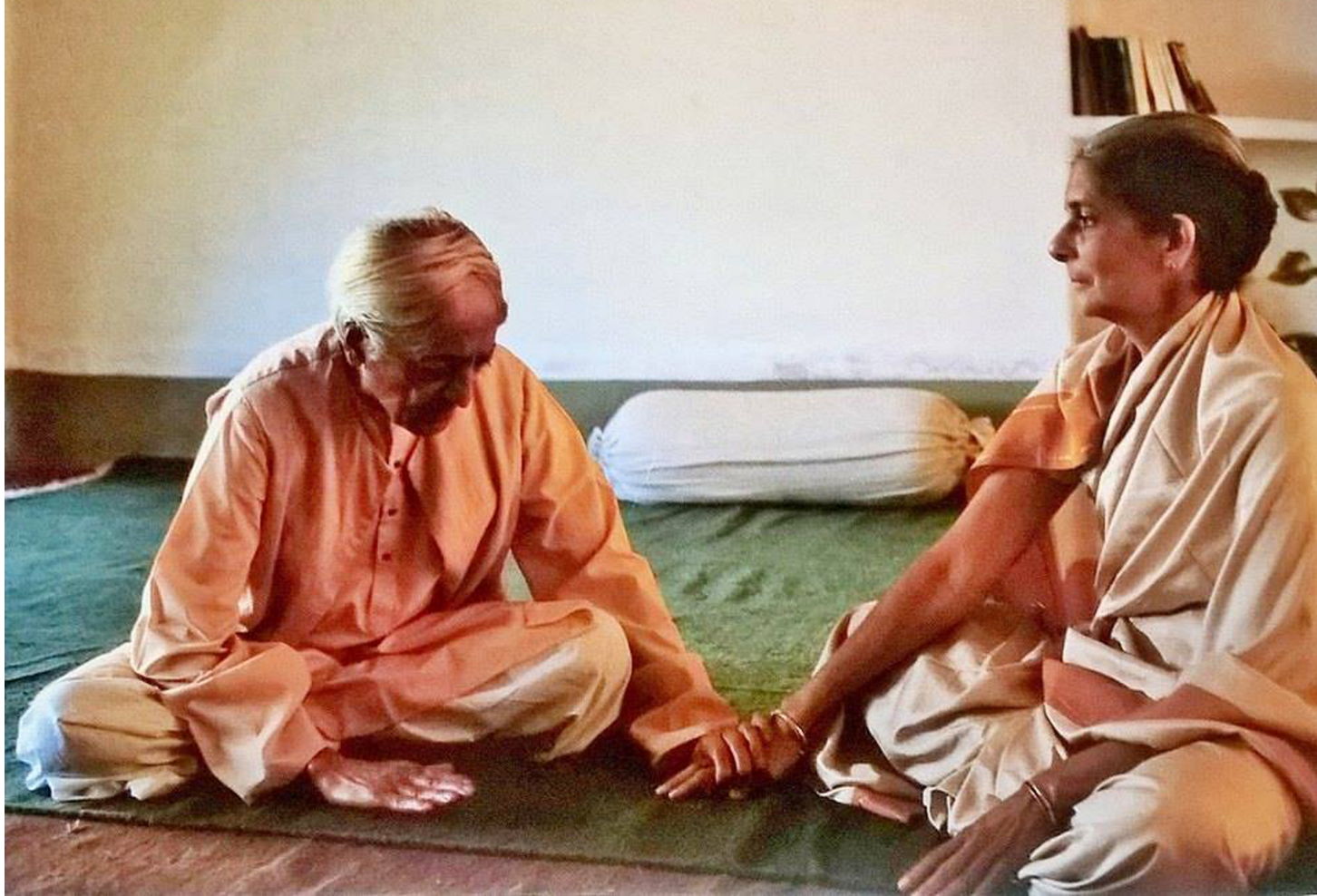
Krishnamurti was right when on his deathbed, after realizing that no one had understood what he was talking about, he said: 'You don't know what you have missed.' In his last days, when he was diagnosed with cancer and the doctor wanted to give him morphine, he rejected it at the beginning, because he did not want the medicine to interfere with the

clarity of the brain. But after some time he said that the pain was also going to interfere with it, so he agreed to take morphine to relieve the pain. After a couple of days he told Prof. P. Krishna: 'Sir, the medicine has not interfered as much as I thought it would, because the World Teacher is still here.' (*A Jewel on a Silver Platter*)

Thirty years ago, on 17 February, 1986, Krishnamurti gave back to Mother Earth the body that for more than sixty years walked the earth holding a mirror for those who are serious enough to look at themselves. Today the body is gone, but the mirror is still here for those who are strong enough to face what the mirror reveals. ✧

**I think we must see this very clearly right at the beginning — that if one would solve the everyday problems of existence, whatever they may be, one must first see the wider issues and then come to the detail. After all, the great painter, the great poet is one who sees the whole — who sees all the heavens, the blue skies, the radiant sunset, the tree, the fleeting bird — all at one glance; with one sweep he sees the whole thing. With the artist, the poet, there is an immediate, a direct communion with this whole marvellous world of beauty. Then he begins to paint, to write, to sculpt; he works it out in detail. If you and I could do the same, then we should be able to approach our problems — however contradictory, however conflicting, however disturbing — much more liberally, more wisely, with greater depth and colour, feeling. This is not mere romantic verbalization but actually it is so, and that is what I would like to talk about now and every time we get together. We must capture the whole and not be carried away by the detail, however pressing, immediate, anxious it may be. I think that is where the revolution begins.**

J. Krishnamurti  
*The Collected Works*, vol. XI, p. 62



Mr J. Krishnamurti and Mrs Radha Burnier (former international President of the Theosophical Society) in the Rishi Valley old Guest House around 1980. This month marks the 121st anniversary of Krishnaji's birth on 11 May 1895. Photographer: Asit Chandmal

## Theosophical Work around the World



Participants in the first gathering of the Inter-American Theosophical Federation of North America, in Cholula (Puebla), Mexico, from 16 to 20 March 2016. International President, Mr Tim Boyd (in a red shirt, standing in front of the poster) and his wife Lily (in front of him in a yellow dress) appear in the far right (above) and the far left (below) of a panoramic photo





Right after his visit to Mexico, Mr Tim Boyd held his first public conference in Argentina in the Assembly Hall of the University of Cuyo, San Rafael, on 'The Solution to All Problems'. To his right is his translator, Mr Guillermo (Willy) García



Participants of the 3rd Portuguese-Hispanic Theosophical Seminar from 23 to 27 March in the San Rafael Theosophical Centre, Argentina. In the centre (standing, in a pink T-shirt) is the international President, with his wife Lily seated in front of him and Mrs Isis Resende to his left

# Theosophical Work around the World

## **Mexico**

The first gathering of the Inter-American Theosophical Federation of North America took place in Mexico, in the beautiful small city of Cholula, Puebla, from 16 to 20 March 2016. The Federation organized the event, presided by Mrs Isis Resende, assisted by Mrs Lissette Arroyo (Vice President) and Ms Maria Mengelt as the delegate for North America. The international President of the Theosophical Society, Mr Tim Boyd, directed the gathering, which had as its theme 'Applying Principles of the Ageless Wisdom'. There were 75 participants attending from different countries of the American continent (USA, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Cuba, different parts of Mexico, and also Singapore). Mr Boyd held conferences on 'The Principle of Oneness', 'The Principles of Multi-dimensionality and No Empty Space', 'The Principles of Spiritual Evolution and Self-Responsibility', and 'The Future of the Theosophical Society'.

There were two panel discussions: 'The Encounter with the Inner Self', directed by Ms Lygia Montiel and Mrs Arroyo; and a very interactive panel based on J. Krishnamurti's *At the Feet of the Master*, with questions answered by the panellists. There was a social function with performances by the Great Folkloric Mexican Ballet and

the musicians 'Los Trovadores', from Puebla, who played very nice and lively music, causing everybody to get up and dance. At the end, they sat in a big circle where almost all of the participants reflected about their experience of the gathering and expressed their gratitude by thanking Mr Boyd, his wife Lily, and everyone who helped to bring about the event. Mr Boyd felt that, in general, the Cholula gathering was a wonderful opportunity to spend time with and get to know better many members mostly from all over the Americas and the Caribbean.

## **Argentina**

The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, and his wife Lily travelled from Mexico to Argentina, first visiting the beautiful old building of the TS Lodge in Buenos Aires, which houses five different study groups. Next they travelled to the city of San Rafael, where he gave a talk at the University of Cuyo on 'The Solution to All Problems'. About 200 people, mostly members of the public, were in attendance, who participated by asking questions at the end of the talk. The whole programme lasted about two hours. The President was assisted by Mr Guillermo (Willy) García as translator.

The 3rd Portuguese-Hispanic Theosophical Seminar then took place in the San Rafael Theosophical Centre from 23 to 27 March, having as its theme



## Theosophical Work around the World

‘A Change towards Individual Transformation’, with Mr Boyd as the guest speaker. The Seminar was organized jointly by the Inter-American Theosophical Federation, the Argentinean Section, and the Centre. Participants arrived from Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Argentina. There were about 100 people attending, mostly TS members and also some sympathizers. There was an atmosphere of happy and longed-for encounters and re-encounters, of joyful work at different levels, sometimes in the dining hall or the kitchen. There was also searching and enquiry in the conferences and group debates. In the informal gatherings there was sharing of remembrances and work plans for Branches or other Sections. Those attending also shared the importance that these gatherings have for getting to know the theosophical family, and for the vitality resulting from each theosophical group-work lasting several days. The Seminar programme included conferences by Mr Boyd in the mornings, and symposia and conferences in the afternoons given by TS members from different countries. Participants also were happy to see in the President an unaffected human being whose ideas were expressed from his heart and mind, stimulating reflection in all present.

### India

The 93rd South India Theosophical Conference was held as usual during the Easter holiday from 25 to 27 March 2016

at Adyar, with as many as 137 registered delegates. The theme of the Conference was *Light on the Path* by Mabel Collins, and it was inaugurated by the international Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, who introduced the book and explained the importance of its four preliminary statements. Ten speakers covered all the aphorisms dealt with in the book. The closing address was given by Prof. R. C. Tampi, General Council Member and Director of the School of the Wisdom, who also explained the essay on Karma at the end of the book. Dr Satapathy also released a new book, *The Theosophic Life and the Three Gems of Theosophy*, published by TPH Adyar, a copy of which was made available to each delegate. On the first evening, the beautiful Ritual of the Mystic Star was performed, and on the next evening, on behalf of The Great Banyan Audio Visual Centre, Mr Vinay Patri made an audio-visual presentation on ‘The Emblem of the TS’.

On 3 April Dr Satapathy gave a public talk at the Bangalore City Lodge, on ‘Ishvarapranidhāna’, or ‘Dedication to the Supreme’, which was translated into Kannada by the Karnataka Theosophical Federation Secretary, Ms K. Parvatamma, and summarised by the Lodge Vice-President, Mr Dakshinamoorthy. On 9 April Dr Satapathy visited the Sri Besant Lodge in Thanjavur to inaugurate the new meditation hall, built in memory of its past President, the late G. Swaminathan; he also gave the inaugural address at a seminar held there on ‘Theosophical

## Theosophical Work around the World

Values in a Fast-Changing Society’ and a public talk on ‘Self-Surrender’. The seminar speakers included Mr Harihara Raghavan, General Manager of the Adyar estate, and Dr M. V. Rengarajan, President of the Tamil Theosophical Federation.

### Russia

During the weekend of 26-27 March, the Moscow TS conducted the 5th All-Russia Theosophical Conference on the theme ‘Compassion and Universal Responsibility’. The symbolic figure of this year was Mother Theresa, whose life as a nun exemplified service to humanity. On the second day, Mr Pavel Malakhov, from Kemerovo, handed over the official responsibility as Presidential Representative of the TS in Russia, to Mr Alexey Besputin, from Moscow. The event was attended by around 80 participants from Moscow, Sochi, Nizhny Novgorod, Kemerovo, and Novocherkassk, and the Moscow region towns of Koroliov, Elektrostal, and Scholkovo. There were also three foreign guests: two from Argentina and one from Belarus. Greetings for the conference were received from fifteen TS Sections around the world and the international President, Mr Tim Boyd.

The participants pondered over the question, ‘What Is Compassion?’ The conference had four distinguished guests and sixteen talks dedicated both to philosophical issues, such as tracing the causes of compassion to the basic powers which lay in the manifestation of the universe; and the practical aspects of

compassion in various forms of charity. Education issues were discussed, as well as the understanding of the common good and compassion in various spiritual traditions. Two panel discussions were conducted: ‘Real and False Compassion’ and ‘Good and Evil and the Origin of Suffering and Compassion’. Membership diplomas were handed out to five new TS members and 6 applications for membership were received during the conference.

Although there were differences of opinion in trying to define the meaning of ‘compassion’, there was unanimous agreement by the participants that, regardless of the form of compassion chosen, whether at the mental or physical level, as a reflection of human responsibility to the cosmos and the higher principles, compassion should be not just a philosophical abstraction, but a part of our everyday life and activities. It should be alive, and its manifestation not be artificial or formal, for it is a natural state of the soul.

Photographs and videos of the 5th Conference will be published at: <<https://www.facebook.com/ARTconference>>.

### Latest News

As mentioned above, the TS in **Russia** has a new Presidential Representative, Mr Alexey Besputin, succeeding Mr Pavel Malakhov in March 2016; and Mrs Ana Maria Coelho de Sousa has replaced Mr Carlos Guerra as the General Secretary of the TS in **Portugal** as of April 2016. ✧

## INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

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1947	Africa, East and Central	... Mr Narendra M. Shah	... PO Box 14525. 00800, Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya	... <i>The Theosophical Light</i>	<b>narendrashahi999@gmail.com</b>
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*Date refers to the date of formation*

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