

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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Cover: Dakshineswar Temple, built between 1847 and 1855, as seen from the Ganges river, close to Kolkata

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

President: Mr Tim Boyd

Vice-President: Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy

Secretary: Ms Marja Artamaa

Treasurer: Mr K. Narasimha Rao

Headquarters: ADYAR, CHENNAI (MADRAS) 600 020, INDIA

Vice-President: ivp.hq@ts-adyar.org

Secretary: secy.hq@ts-adyar.org

Treasurer: treasury.hq@ts-adyar.org

Adyar Library and Research Centre: alrc.hq@ts-adyar.org

Theosophical Publishing House: tphindia@gmail.com & tphindia@adyarbooks.com

Editorial Office: editorialoffice@gmail.com, Website: <http://www.ts-adyar.org>

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.

To Be Silent

TIM BOYD

LET us turn our minds towards something a bit deeper than just the surface. Because many of us have been involved in one or another form of spiritual search, some maybe even for decades, from time to time it is good to ask some simple questions to remind ourselves of what has brought us to a spiritual path.

A question for us to consider is a very basic one: Why is it that we are here, trying to live the spiritual life? Probably most of us can go back and track the course that brought us to the present moment. Yet even more important than the historical question is the process.

What happens when we ask ourselves a question? Questions, by their very nature, take place at many different levels. Ordinarily we go through each day asking a number of them. If we have insufficient information, or if our knowledge or resources are not adequate, whether it is the grocery store or the internet, we ask questions. And what happens? Most of the time we are probably asking for simple information. But when we find ourselves on the spiritual path, the nature of the questioning and of the questions becomes slightly, if not profoundly, different.

The process of questioning necessarily

requires something of us. Most often, initially, we are looking for answers, and that is good enough. But answers are very small things. Questioning actually involves us in a process that requires that we listen. If we ask in the proper way, it requires us to listen to the response, or better yet, *for* the response. So we ask, we listen, and if we engage in the process properly, we hear. There is an old prayer that says: 'May I see what I see and may I hear what I hear.' On a superficial level this seems almost absurd. Of course, we see what we see, and if we hear, we hear. But do we?

In the United States, where two-wheeled vehicles and motorcycles are much less common than in other parts of the world, one major cause of road accidents is when people driving a car look into their mirror to see if it is safe to turn into the next lane, and not seeing another car, they make the turn. When they look in the mirror there is in fact a two-wheeler in the next lane, and although they see it, because their mind is used to looking for something else, they see nothing but a safe lane to turn into, and that causes the accident. So, yes, the driver did look, but he did not see.

This is also true in our conversations

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with one another. We can take the case where there is an argument or discord going on. Very often one person will tell one story about what was said, and the other will tell the exact opposite. In such a case both heard but, because of their prejudices and expectations, they really did not hear. So the process is one of listening, and there are requirements to genuinely listen. This is not merely turning our ears in a certain direction.

One of the main requirements to really listen is that, firstly, we have to drop whatever expectations we have. Whatever prejudices we have regarding the way a particular person has spoken to us in the past, they have to fall away at that moment. One of the things Confucius said was that his tailor was the wisest man that he knew, 'because every time I see him, he measures me again.' Just because he made a suit for me the last time, he does not make it in the exact same way. He measures anew. Obviously this was not given as tailoring advice. It is a counsel to us in terms of our ability to truly see and hear the things that we see and hear.

So we listen, we create an open space, and then we have the possibility to hear. This requires a certain all-important quality, the quality of entering into silence. There is an occult maxim listing four activities that are the responsibility of anyone who engages in the spiritual life: to know, to will, to dare, and, most importantly, to be silent.

It is our habit to try to increase our knowledge. How deeply we assimilate it,

is something else, but we are constantly in search of the next piece of information or knowledge. We are active in that sense. Our will is something that we learn to exert from a very early age, perhaps not properly, but that is something that we refine. But then to dare, to actually move ourselves beyond what might be boundaries that would prevent us from that next step. To dare to be quiet, to dare to listen beyond the borders of our prejudices, is something that few of us are willing to undertake. It is asking just a bit too much. And then to be silent.

One of the beauties of the spiritual life is that the major focus every time we come into each other's presence is not the things we say, nor what we hear, nor the words that we recite, but how we are able to cultivate and then enter into the realm of silence. This silence allows for a presence which we might describe as that of the Inner Founders, or the Masters, the Holy Ones, a Higher Energy, or Divinity. How do we do that?

Over the summer I was visiting with a number of groups in Europe. When I was in the Netherlands I found it a fascinating country for a number of reasons. One of them is that in terms of the way that the earth was formed, that country should not even exist. The Dutch say that 'God created the Earth and the Dutch created Holland'. They say that for a very good reason. The entire country is below sea level, and it is right on the sea.

A thousand years ago Holland was nothing but marshes and soggy land, until they started to build the walls against the

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sea they called dykes. Over the years they have developed a way to build this land to prevent the water from inundating it. Now they have a nation on dry land. In some places, when one is walking, there is the earth-covered dyke on one side and the sea on the other, and one realizes that, with only a few feet of separation, one is below the level of the sea.

This is remarkable, and it says something about the process of shaping things. For us, it is an interior process. In the case of the Dutch, they imposed their will upon the land — they dared. They developed the knowledge that was required to hold back the sea, and the land became dry. For us, we are functioning within the land of consciousness; we have to hold back a sea of mental chatter that is the normal condition of our day. We have to hold back a flood of emotions, of feelings that are constantly coursing around us, and often through us, in order for something else to become possible. When we create that space, it is always related to silence.

When somebody speaks, a process of ‘meditative inquiry’ can take place. It is the process of being silent in the presence of noise in a way that something else can register itself on the screen of the mind. Something can descend or appear, but it only can occur when the chatter, the noise, is released. The process begins with the imposition of the will. The body will not control this moment. The coursing emotions will not overwhelm this moment. In the Bible story of the Christ, he said to the raging sea, ‘Peace,

be still’, and it quieted. This is not a description of a historical event. It is a description of an interior event that we hope to engage in each time that we are in relationship, and it is for a purpose.

We learn to be silent even in the midst of our speaking, to cultivate that silent space out of which the words form. They are not projected by us. Perhaps, with time, our capacity to cultivate that silence increases.

During my recent travels I was also in Paris. For most people the prevailing image of that city is the Eiffel Tower. It is the tallest building in the centre of Paris. There are no skyscraper buildings to obstruct one’s view of the city. When the elevator arrived at the top level of the tower I was in the midst of maybe 150 people milling around and speaking about a dozen different languages. Soon I was looking out over the expanse of the city, and seeing this vista before me, everybody around me faded into the background.

I spent the next 45 minutes in that condition, just looking out over the city. The elevation allowed one to see all the winding streets, the famous old buildings, the gardens scattered around. One could see how the city had changed in appearance over time. One could see the pattern of the traffic and people that looked like little different-coloured dots. I was following them as they moved, each one thinking that it is moving in its own independent way, but each moving down these streets that channelled and limited their movement — streets that similar

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dots had walked over the centuries, each one moving to a different destination to do a different thing, but all of it taking place within this greater being that is the city of Paris.

From this elevated point of view it became very clear in one sense how small we are, but in another sense how deeply connected we are with something much greater. The problem for us tends to be that we are unable to see this. It is only in our elevated moments that we gain a deeper perspective. After a while my reverie ended. I realized that I had things to do, places to go, and I turned from my view of the city. Once again the voices of these 150 or so people and their many different languages rose just as if someone had turned up the volume. I turned my face from this vision back to the

crowd, got on the elevator, and came back down to earth.

But I had not forgotten. The fragrance, or *vāsana*, of that experience lingers. My Eiffel Tower moment was an experience of the mind and of the eyes, but for every one of us there are these elevated moments that occur from time to time. For each of us the experience is similar. We rise in consciousness only to return. In the words of the poet Robert Frost, ‘I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep’. But the one who rises is not the one who returns. The experience of seeing from a higher, more expansive perspective changes us. We are living from the memory of what we have seen. We are reminded of a Greater Presence — always present, but mostly forgotten. The hope for us is that we can remember.

It is only consciousness that is a pure undivided whole that can reflect the truth of whatever it touches, and in this truth is the significance of the thing or event. We cannot say that each moment as we live it is significant. There are a few moments in our lives which are. These are very few. They are moments of beauty, of love and happiness, of enlightenment, revelatory of something we had not known. For the rest, our lives are commonplace, often a long-drawn-out monotony devoid of any real meaning. Whether a moment is significant or not depends upon the state of mind and heart and its response at the moment.

N. Sri Ram
Life's Deeper Aspects

The Failure Archetype

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

ONE of the recurring motifs in mythological and classical literary stories is failure. Every hero has flaws which he or she has to learn to overcome. In doing so the hero undergoes transformation. This principle applies to the Buddha as well as to Arjuna, Jesus, St Paul, Giordano Bruno, Florence Nightingale, and many others. Failure is defined as ‘the neglect or omission of expected or required action’. Failure can be both paralysing and soul-stultifying, and can lead to depths of despondency and despair.

Contemporary society generally does not encourage a kind attitude towards failure, based as it is on an obsession with results and success. Every individual who fails, in whatever circumstances, is usually stigmatized and shunted aside as a ‘dead failure’. Results and success are the one binary deity worshipped in a world in which failure is its shadow side.

But it has not always been like this. Listen to St Paul exercising a profound level of soul honesty:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that

which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (Romans, 7:18-19)

St Paul gives voice to a profoundly human dilemma: the wish to do good and the compelling inability to do so. Perhaps his description is a good portrayal of how *kāma-manas* — the personal mind — works. The intimate liaison between desire and the mind generates a deep-seated sense of self-interest which, being strong, very often prevents the mind from following a direction which seems to be the right one. The result is failure and its corollary, conflict. Can such a failure become a teacher?

Joseph Campbell approaches the subject not from a linear, judgemental way, but from the much wider perspective of the overall human experience:

Whatever your fate is, whatever the hell happens, you say: ‘This is what I need.’ It may look like a wreck, but go at it as though it were an opportunity, a challenge. If you bring love to that moment — not discouragement — you will find the strength there. Any disaster you can survive is an

Mr Pedro Oliveira is Education Coordinator for the TS in Australia and former International Secretary and Head of the Editorial Office at Adyar.

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improvement in your character, your stature, and your life. What a privilege! This is when the spontaneity of your own nature will have a chance to flow.

Then, when looking back at your life, you will see that the moments which seemed to be great failures, followed by wreckage, were the incidents that shaped the life you have now. You'll see this is really true. Nothing can happen to you that is not positive. Even though it looks and feels at the moment like a negative crisis, it is not. The crisis throws you back, and when you are required to exhibit strength, it comes.

From *A Joseph Campbell Companion*¹

Can therefore failure be seen as an archetype in the stream of human evolution? The *Oxford Dictionary* defines an archetype as 'a recurrent symbol or motif in literature, art, or mythology: "mythological archetypes of good and evil". The word originates from the Greek *arkhetypon*, something moulded first as a model.' We can see the presence of this archetype in the many recurring wars for the past millennia, in urban violence, in strained relationships, in different forms of addiction, in soul-destroying ambition, and the deep-seated belief in separateness.

The role of failure in evolution

Theosophical teachings seem to suggest that the inevitability of failure in human evolution is balanced out by the Law of Karma and the process of reincarnation. Provided one continues to exercise awareness, every failure carries

with it the germ of a new future opportunity to learn to understand more, both about oneself as well as about life's profound purpose. Does it really matter if this opportunity comes in this life or in a future life? When seen from a purely personal and self-centred way, failure can become a paralysing influence. When seen in a broader perspective, it can lead the way towards transformation.

Elaine Pagels, in her book *The Gnostic Gospels*² (Vintage Books: New York, 1989, p. 123), suggests that the Biblical terms translated from New Testament Greek (hamartia) and from Hebrew as 'sin' or 'syn' originate in archery and literally refer to missing the 'gold' at the centre of a target, but hitting the target, i.e. error. In the Christian tradition, three famous sinners became much loved saints of the Church: St Paul, St Augustine, and St Francis. They did not succumb to their failures, whatever they were, but were able to understand their own nature and thus rise to a deeper level of awareness within themselves. Before Christ could become their Teacher and Master, they were apprentices of their own failures.

Mind as the theatre for failure

The mind is a multifaceted principle within us which can manifest a number of creative powers in our lives. But the mind also becomes, inevitably, through countless ages of human evolution, a theatre in which failure takes place. And it is not difficult to understand why. The mind is the meeting ground between *purusha* and *prakṛti*, Spirit and Matter.

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This may be one of the quintessential dilemmas of being human. Within the mind, meet and engage in battle clearly opposite forces: *buddhi-manas*, the illumined mind, a field of compassionate awareness and insight, and *kāma-manas*, the desire-mind, seat of *ahamkāra*, the I-making faculty, which establishes a unidirectional relationship with life, particularly one based on self-interest, self-importance, and indifference to the sanctity of all existence.

The theosophical classic *Light on the Path* states that ‘to work for self is to work for disappointment’. The importance of such a teaching cannot be overestimated. By its very nature self-interest is bound to attract, failure sooner or later, for it reinforces, strengthens and seeks to legitimize separateness against the profound reality of unity, interdependence, and wholeness. It runs in the opposite direction to the ever-unfolding movement of life and consciousness. In a universe which is established on the principle of undivided wholeness, the attempt to maintain separation at all costs is bound to generate suffering, disappointment, and a real sense of failure. Such failure can indeed become one’s teacher if the glimmerings of humility can appear in our mind’s eye.

HPB on failure

Writing on the nature of Elementals, not only as embodied intelligences in the worlds of matter, but also as metaphysical realities, HPB suggests that failure is indeed a cosmological neces-

sity in the gradual unfolding of the universal process:

Thus, the first worlds and Cosmic Beings, save the ‘Self-Existent’ — a mystery no one could attempt to touch upon seriously, as it is a mystery perceived by the divine eye of the highest Initiates, but one that no human language could explain to the children of our age — the first worlds and Beings were failures; inasmuch as the former lacked that inherent creative force in them necessary for their further and independent evolution, and that the first orders of Beings lacked the immortal soul. Part and parcel of Anima Mundi in its Prākṛtic aspect, the *purusha* element in them was too weak to allow of any consciousness in the intervals (*entr’actes*) between their existences during the evolutionary period and the cycle of Life. (*BCW*, VI, 192-193)

The subtle as well as complex interactions between Consciousness and Matter are difficult to fathom, but the above-mentioned quotation seems to suggest that manifestation brings them together for a purpose, one which is too vast, rich, and nuanced to be fully understood until one has reached the end of the Path as the *Yogasutras* of Patañjali suggest. According to Dr Taimni’s translation in *The Science of Yoga*:

The purpose of the coming together of the *purusha* and *prakṛti* is gaining by the *purusha* of the awareness of his true nature and the unfoldment of powers inherent in him and *prakṛti*. (II, 23)

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Can failure, therefore, be perceived as a mediator in this vast process? Can it, instead of being seen as a dead-end, life-denying, negative episode, be perceived as a unique opportunity to understand ourselves, understand others, and the world we live in? The legend of Parzival, as narrated by Wolfram von Eschenbach, states that the path Parzival treads towards the Grail includes several failures, each one of them teaching him a valuable lesson.

The Voice of the Silence on failure

The following verses from Fragment III of *The Voice of the Silence* present, in their unique eloquent language, the significant role failure can have on the Path of Compassion as a force that can propel us onwards, even when we stumble and fall:

Have patience, Candidate, as one who fears no failure, courts no success. Fix thy Soul's gaze upon the star whose ray thou art, the flaming star that shines within the lightless depths of ever-being, the boundless fields of the Unknown.

Prepare, and be forewarned in time. If thou hast tried and failed, O dauntless fighter, yet lose not courage: fight on and to the charge return again, and yet again.

The fearless warrior, his precious life-blood oozing from his wide and gaping wounds, will still attack the foe, drive him from out his stronghold, vanquish him, ere he himself expires. Act then, all ye who fail and suffer, act like him; and from the

stronghold of your Soul, chase all your foes away — ambition, anger, hatred, e'en to the shadow of desire — when even you have failed . . .

Remember, thou that fightest for man's liberation, each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time. The holy germs that sprout and grow unseen in the disciple's soul, their stalks wax strong at each new trial, they bend like reeds but never break, nor can they e'er be lost. But when the hour has struck they blossom forth . . .

Annie Besant on failure

In the following passage of her book *The Doctrine of the Heart* Annie Besant points to a profound truth of the inner, spiritual life — the relative unimportance of external happenings. Although experiences are a given in life what matters is not so much the experiences themselves but how we respond to them. When we respond rightly, opportunities for further progress present themselves:

Disaster hangs over the head of the man who pins his faith on external paraphernalia rather than on the peace of the inner life, which depends not on the mode of the outer life. In fact, the more untoward the circumstances, and the greater the sacrifice involved by living among them, the nearer does one come to the final goal from the very nature of the trials one has to overcome. It is unwise, therefore, to be attracted too much by any outward manifestation of religious life, for anything that is on the plane of matter is ephemeral and illusive, and must lead to

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disappointment. Anyone who is drawn powerfully to any external mode of living has to learn sooner or later the comparative insignificance of all outer things. And the sooner one passes through experiences necessitated by past karma, the better it is for the individual. It is unwelcome indeed to be suddenly thrown off one's ground, but the cup which cures folly is ever bitter, and must be tasted if the disease is to be eradicated. When the gentle breeze coming from Their Lotus Feet blows over the soul, then you know that the worst external surroundings are not powerful enough to mar the music that charms within.

Karma as Teacher

As mentioned earlier, failure is 'the neglect or omission of expected or required action'. The consequences of failure can be indeed devastating: despondency, broken-heartedness, sadness, guilt, depression, among others. In its most difficult moments it generates a profound sense of meaninglessness and disconnect which leads to an experience of stark isolation and estrangement of oneself. This being so, the Wisdom Tradition suggests that in this deep and dark despair there is a lesson to be learned:

Oh night that was my guide!
Oh darkness dearer than the morning's pride,
Oh night that joined the lover
To the beloved bride
Transfiguring them each into the other.

St John of the Cross,
Dark Night of the Soul

When the personal nature is thus bludgeoned by the process of experience, it finds itself pliable enough to begin to learn about life and its significance. The blows of Karma are only perceived as 'blows' when the mind is still acting from a reactive centre. The depths of failure may reveal that such 'blows' are indeed the hand of Karma showing us that self-importance and self-conceit are not a true direction of inner, spiritual progress. Whatever Karma presents to us, in any circumstance, is always an opportunity for growth in self-knowledge, humility, and inner peace, necessary conditions for the realization of the unity of all life.

Boundless Compassion

In an article published in *The Theosophist* (March 1946), Clara Codd reveals, in a passage of the *Bhagavadgītā* (*The Song Celestial* by Sir Edwin Arnold, Twelfth Discourse) the depths of the compassionate response to failure from Sri Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of universal love and compassion. It is a consciousness that excludes no one from its boundless field of ineffable sympathy and understanding. For it, there is no ultimate failure:

Cling thou to me!
Clasp me with heart and mind! But if thy
thought
Droops from such height; if thou be'st
weak to set
Body and soul upon Me constantly,
Despair not! Give me lower service!
Seek To reach Me, worshipping with
steadfast will;

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And, if thou canst not worship steadfastly,
Work for Me, toil in works pleasing to Me!
For he that laboureth right for love of Me

Shall finally attain. But if in this
Thy faint heart fails, bring Me thy failure!
Find refuge in Me. ✧

Endnotes

1. Joseph Campbell Foundation, 2003, San Anselmo, CA, USA.
2. Vintage Books New York, 1989, p. 123.

If we admit that we are in the stream of evolution, then *each* circumstance *must* be to us quite right. And in our failure to perform set acts should be our greatest help, for we can in no other way learn that calmness which Krishna insists upon. If all our plans succeeded, then no contrasts would appear to us. Also those plans we make may all be made ignorantly, and thus wrongly, and kind Nature will not permit us to carry them out. We get no blame for the plan, but we may acquire karmic demerit by not accepting the impossibility of achieving. If you are at all cast down, then by just that much are your thoughts lessened in power. *One could be confined in a prison and yet be a worker for the cause.* So I pray you to remove from your mind any distaste for present circumstances. If you can succeed in looking at it all *as just what you in fact desired*, ('You' meaning the Higher Self. We are as we make ourselves.) then it will act not only as strengthener of your thoughts, but will act reflexly on your body and make it stronger.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831 - 1891)
Practical Occultism

The Theosophical Society in the 21st Century — II

MARCELLO R. SERINI

ACCORDING to the Ageless Wisdom teachings that allude to a Great Plan which we are taught is underway involving the spiritualization of matter and the evolution of consciousness, humanity stands at a midway point — between the physical kingdom and the spiritual kingdom — and combines elements of both.

We know little or nothing of the spiritual kingdom closest to us except that it is far more advanced than we are; and distinguished by beings of great wisdom and love who give rise to those great teachers that have appeared throughout the ages with the aim of pointing people to a dharmic and harmonious way of living, until further (re)development is required; as is the case at present when institutions throughout the world — religious, political, economic, and social — are either experiencing deep crises or in disarray.

What are the underlying consequences of the above? We can assume that new values and new settings imply amongst others:

1. Understanding one's relationship to these, and
2. The ensuing consequences arising thereof
3. The means of achieving these
4. What (New) Teachings?

Because of historical circumstances, depth of teachings, systematized knowledge and need, one may say that to date, the Theosophical Society, when expounding *some of the tenets* of the Ancient Wisdom related to the 'human condition', has been relying mainly upon traditional Hindu teachings; more explicitly what may be called the path of 'Vivekaja Marga' embodied by Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and Śankara Vedanta (Singh, 2012); essentially, teachings or perspectives that deal with distinction/discrimination as the means of coping with the influence of Prakṛti/Maya and of liberating the entangled Self.

Significantly, not much thought has been given to notions that there may be alternatives to the above — different

Marcello R. Serini is a long-term student of the Ancient Wisdom residing in Australia.

paths. For example, hardly any efforts have been made towards promulgating teachings that deal with *the integration of the individual Self to the Universal Self* — the ‘Yogaja Marga’. Yet since the mid-1970s, with the near universal interest and acceptance of the ‘yoga movement’ in the West, this is precisely what has been taking place in the contemporary world — a path/teaching that appears to be more ‘in tune with the times’.

It was proposed in the introductory article (see the September 2015 issue of *The Theosophist*, pp. 21-24) that, the dynamics of an integrating world may best be understood in terms of ‘system thinking’ that, fundamentally, implies understanding and developing linkages between interacting units, or parties, and disciplines, leading to (in the case of the world) international cooperation and, in the field of knowledge: inter-disciplinary studies. However, this ‘new’ approach — to be fruitful — must not be seen as being similar to a conglomerate rock formation that loosely retains its separate components; but, rather, one that evolves a binding essence between the parts, giving, as it were, rise to new and more powerful materials or outcomes, as for example, is the case of cement in the formation of concrete as used in the construction industry; whilst in the psychological sphere, the ‘binding agent’ may be seen to be ‘meaningfulness’. Which is precisely the task facing the TS in promulgating the Ancient Wisdom in the world of the 21st century.

Since the 17th century we had the historical succession of three paradigms highlighted by Kuhn on his view of the world: the religious, on ethics; the Newtonian, on mechanistic practicality; and the scientific, on value-free objectivity. Each of these had its ultimate drawbacks stemming from seeing through the coloured lenses of the particular prevailing world view, or ‘Weltanschauung’ of any given age, that regularly and inevitably give way to a greater ‘integrative approach’ reflecting the actual (or closer) reality of Nature or Life, which is holistic and transactional between all parts, based on interdependence and mutual involvement (Taylor, 1974). Interestingly this is the most fundamental tenet of the Ancient Wisdom.

It was von Bertalanffy that in the second decade of the last century, when grappling with issues arising in biology and the behaviour of organisms in Nature, pointed out that explanations of summative isolated components are not sufficient to describe the complexity of living organisms within their environment; for these can only be best understood in terms of relations that are constitutive and dependent upon specific relations, that is to say, holistic in nature. It was this mode of thinking that gave rise to General System Theory (GST) that through its application cuts across disciplines, ideology, gaps in science and philosophy, as well as the humanistic disciplines.

Because the GST approach reflects (or mimics) so vividly the ‘higher’

workings of Nature based on ‘integrative principles logically compatible with one another’, and upon hierarchically based systems functioning through time and space, involving levels of progressive complexity, subject to quantization, symmetry, and equilibration that responds to negative and positive forms of feedback, this approach may be used with profit to meaningfully expound Theosophical teachings and the more abstruse spiritual tenets of Life that could be summed up into two Integrative Principles:

1. Isomorphism: (In mathematics: a one-to-one correspondence between the elements of two or more sets, showing the same abstract nature). Therefore one can show attributes that may be shared as organized systems *even though these may be dissimilar in nature*.

2. Successive levels of organization: That deal with complexity away from the reductionism of material science, to the level of complexity found in biological science and social systems.

Integrative levels or principles form part of deeper GST studies that perforce include Time, Space, Motion, Energy as constructs, plus the principle of regulations (symmetry, equilibrium, binary factor(s), continuity/discontinuity) as well as the previously nominated negative/positive feedback loops, to which can be included modes of thinking in accordance with the two hemispheres of our brain.

From the above, we can therefore see that there exists the means of explaining and cogently showing ‘karmic

functioning’ (causality processes), the interrelationship of all living things, multi-plane dynamics, and the significance and existence of meta-systems or studies of the cosmos. Simply put: ‘A systems approach seeks out isomorphisms of structure and function in all domains of Nature, and the principle of integrative levels enables these isomorphisms to be classified and compared’ (Taylor, 1974), leading logically into the realm of ontology.

The GST approach, with its description, analysis, and prediction capabilities is one of the means through which the TS could graphically demonstrate important (often disparate) tenets of the ancient teachings — as meaningful relationships — or plausible demonstrations, perhaps even able to legitimate their significance to contemporary sceptics.

It is now up to the science groups and the more qualified members of the TS to begin to come up with examples of such nature that can meaningfully expound the Ancient Wisdom with insight and hope, and so assist those caught up in the present conflicting times and rapidly changing world.

Changing perspective:

One of the most interesting aspects of the Ancient Wisdom are the tenets pertaining to the ‘Doctrine of the Seven Rays’ whereby the creative impulse of the Logos manifests along specific ways or wavelengths that influence not only the essential soul characteristics but the means of expression — and possibly

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perception — of the whole of humanity.

These rays, though acting simultaneously, increase or decrease in their specific influence from age to age, in accordance with the prevailing needs of the time. We are told — and there is some fair evidence for this — that we are at one such time when a transition is taking place from one ray to another. Whether this ray is the 7th or perhaps even the 5th will become apparent before long; what is relevant to the TS is to see what approach could best be used to assist in promulgating the Ageless Wisdom through the *use* of these rays.

Given that the nature of interacting systems gives rise to ‘turbulent fields’ — as is the case of the present world situation — it would be sensible to assume that, the most positive contribution that could be made to facilitate a peaceful transition by humanity to an integrated world, would be through recognizable means that are at once elevating and peaceful, which is precisely the keynote of the 4th Ray.

We are told that with **the 4th Ray**, the harmony aspect will be uppermost; and that its influence will provide the stimulus for the unfoldment of the intuition and art of all kinds; including — for the masses everywhere — the art of living. That the virtues to be acquired are serenity, confidence, self-control, purity, unselfishness, accuracy, mental and moral balance, qualities desperately needed if today’s world is to persevere constructively along the path of an evolving ‘globally integrated humanity’.

Thus for ‘Ray 4’ the keynote is one of Harmony, Beauty, Art, and Unity qualities that render themselves for ease of expression within the sphere of the Theosophical Society, and that, should be earnestly implemented and promoted from its centres and Lodges to assist in these difficult times of transition. Suggestions on how to do so together with other types of Ancient Teachings more compatible with today’s outlook may be discussed in the future. ✧

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There is a road . . .

FEMMIE LIEZENGA

WHEN H. P. Blavatsky passed away, Annie Besant found a poem in one of the drawers of HPB's desk. The first sentence reads:

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.

The words are very profound and invite us to meditate upon them.

It has been stated that spiritual light is not born of opinions or arguments. However it is also stated in the Theosophical Society that all are allowed to have and express their opinions. But, when we wish to walk the spiritual Path, is it important to have opinions and arguments? It seems to be a contradiction to the motto of the TS, which says that Truth is the highest. If so, opinions are not of value at all. We need to discover Truth, and need not spend so much time on opinions. In order to discover what absolute Truth means, we have to throw away our opinions and ideas and need to have an open, empty mind. A mind that is receptive to Truth. To admit that we really do not know gives space to walk the road in silence. In that silence

opinions and arguments or ideas do not count.

'The Golden Stairs' which was given by the Masters of the Wisdom to us through HPB, speaks of an 'unveiled spiritual perception' and also about giving and receiving advice and instruction. Let us first go into the words 'to give and receive advice and instruction'. Maybe at a certain point now it is more important for us to 'receive' advice and instructions, because who among us can say: I *know*! To be able to receive, one has to abide in silence. To be able to receive, all opinions have to stop. The Voice of the Silent Speaker can only be heard in total openness and with a learning faculty.

Let us now go into an 'unveiled spiritual perception'. What could an unveiled spiritual perception mean? It seems as if what is spoken of here is the Buddhist state, a total awareness, not covered by any veil, not touched by misleading thoughts. An unveiled spiritual perception seems to mean, not to have any conclusions, a perception that is universal and whole. It is only with an open mind that we can approach the unnameable. It is a perception that gives us space to *discover*.

Ms Femmie Liezenga is a resident worker at the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden.

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Sometimes people say that the only goal in their life is to become enlightened. If one has this goal only to become free from one's own suffering, it will be a selfish goal. There is no altruism in such a goal and no insight. But maybe people who say this mean that they wish to discover what they inherently are; maybe they mean to say they wish to find the real source of their existence.

In *Light on the Path* it is stated that in order to hear the Voice of the Silence we have to understand that real guidance that comes from *within*. This shows that we have to learn not to identify with fleeting things. It may be important to have knowledge of Theosophy, but if this knowledge is only theoretical and does not really change us, it has no value. Knowledge might block us. We have to come to the *true* understanding that everything around us is only temporary, passing by. We have to learn not to identify ourselves with that which is impermanent.

There is much beauty around us and we have the senses to perceive it. With the senses we experience and, if we are open, we learn from our experiences. But as soon as we label things and identify ourselves with the experiences, as soon as we wish to continue the so-called pleasurable experiences and avoid the so-called painful ones, the experience has become a memory, thus crystallized and stagnated. And it becomes a repetition of the known. Is it possible also to learn from that which we label painful or ugly? Is it possible not to label at all?

If we learn to see everything as an *expression* of one Reality, we learn not to identify with the ever-fleeting things. In *At the Feet of the Master* there are some sentences for guidance: 'From the unreal lead me to the Real. From darkness lead me to Light. From death lead me to Immortality'.

We have to learn to let go of our identifications. We have, so to say, to learn to change our point of focus; to focus more inwardly instead of all the time only outwardly. In this way we learn to be one with the Silence; we have to allow the Silence to come more to the front amidst all that is fleeting. If we allow this, we will not be taken aback so much by all the happenings in the outer world. They come and go, they are just transitory, like clouds in the sky.

We could say: the changeable is the total of Manifestation, from its first most invisible vibration down to the densest vibration on the material plane. We could say that everlasting Silence is the Source of this total invisible and visible Manifestation; that both exist *simultaneously*: everlasting Silence, the changeless; and the fleeting, the changeable.

We have to learn to focus differently, and by doing so we will be able to live *in* the world but *not* to be *of* it. It means taking no refuge on one or the other shore in the river of life, being able amidst all the turmoil to stand upright, unbroken, still, even when it is stormy. We might use the words 'awareness without any choice'. When we once get a view, be it just a glimpse, of the changeless, we will

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see all impermanent things in another light. We will learn to wonder and feel enveloped in a mystery we try to discover, not with our mind, but in silence. We learn only with an open, empty mind, abiding in Silence, and, in that learning process, humility comes into being in a natural way, without any effort.

When we discover, even if just a tiny glimpse, the mystery, we will not be able to translate it into words, because it is beyond words, beyond the mental state, beyond thoughts. To be able to hear the voice of the Silence we have to become *one* with the Silent Speaker.

Light on the Path states that life itself is our Teacher. Every experience, every incident in our life is our teacher, our guru. We need not look outside ourselves for a guru, the guru is closer than our hands and feet, right before our eyes. It depends on us whether we see life as our guru, our teacher. Especially amidst pain and sorrow there is something we can learn. In that way we become more and more sensitive and conscious of the beauty hidden in our innermost being and also around us. Maybe in that way the

noise recedes and maybe, for the first time, we meet the true Silence and become aware of consciousness unfolding to deeper levels of understanding.

So the true Teacher abides in our innermost nature. If we, be it just a glimpse, become aware of the truth about this nature, it will change all our actions, and we will live in a totally different way, learning without any effort, dying to the known, in the Silence which is not born from the field of the known:

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.

The little self of our ordinary mind, emotions, and body must learn obedience to the will of the divine Self within, and they will suffer bitterly until they become habituated and at peace.

Clara M. Codd
The Technique of the Spiritual Life

Countess Wachtmeister on Annie Besant

ISAAC JAULI

DR Annie Besant, the second international President of the Theosophical Society (TS), was born on 1 October 1847. She was so well known throughout the entire world, that any news related to her was read by everyone with the greatest interest. She had such a dramatic life that in many ways she symbolizes some phases of global development.

Besant's autobiography, written in 1893, describes her life until 1891, the year that marks the passing of Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), Co-Founder of the TS with Col Henry Steel Olcott. Annie Besant's autobiography reveals such sensational events, that it is one of the most fascinating biographies that can be read. But 1891 only marked the midpoint of her incomparable and eventful life.

One of those events involving W. Q. Judge ensued after the departure of HPB and raised questions from some TS members around the world. In this regard, I would like to share the following facts in the life of Annie Besant, circulated



Countess Constance Wachtmeister

in a message privately printed by the Countess Constance Wachtmeister at that controversial time ('H.P.B. and the Present Crisis in the Theosophical Society', by Constance Wachtmeister, Women's Printing Society, 66, Whitcomb St., Ltd, London, W.C.: blavatskyarchives.com/theosophypdfs/wachtmeister_hpb_and_the_present_crisis_1895.pdf).

Mr Isaac Jauli is a member of the TS in Spain and a former General Secretary of the TS in Mexico, currently working in the TS Adyar Archives. Based on a talk given at the Adyar International Headquarters on 1 October 2015.

Countess Wachtmeister on Annie Besant



Mrs Besant, Col Olcott, and Mr Judge

The Countess felt a responsibility to publish this message because she was one of the older members of the TS, and because she had been intimately close to HPB during the last six years of her life. Thus she felt deeply bound to share with TS members some thoughts that HPB had confided to her, because she felt perplexed by the events that were taking place surrounding the case of Mr Judge and Mrs Besant. The Countess stated in her printed message:

HPB always told me that her successor would be a woman, long before Annie Besant had become a member of the TS. She made several attempts with different people hoping to find one, but was quite unsuccessful, so she became terribly depressed and downhearted, saying 'There is nobody left to take my place when I am gone'. It was only when Annie Besant joined the Society that her hopes revived, for she seemed to feel that in her she would find a successor. HPB told me this.

But the Countess had strong doubts

about this candidate that HPB had found, so she continued thus:

I had been so discouraged by the previous failures [failed potential successors], so I was determined to protect myself and not to accept Annie Besant unless entirely convinced of her disinterestedness of purpose, and of her integrity. I thought it just possible that she might be an ambitious woman, entering the Theosophical Society with the thought of governing, and getting all into her own hands, so I watched her narrowly, criticizing her every action from that point of view.

However, gradually the Countess was changing her mind on hearing of the life of Besant, a life of constant sacrifice and efforts to correct her mistakes. With an indomitable will power, she was overcoming the obstacles that were presented to her. In the words of the Countess: 'I was obliged to confess to myself that my surmises had been both unjust and wrong.' The evidence that finally convinced the Countess was stated as follows:

One day I saw Annie Besant enveloped in a cloud of light — Master's colour. He was standing by her side with his hand over her head. I left the room, went quickly to HPB, and finding her alone, told her what I had witnessed, and asked her if that was a sign that Master had chosen Annie Besant as her successor. HPB replied 'Yes', and that she was glad that I had seen it.

This was not the only experience of the Countess of that kind, as she recounts:

Countess Wachtmeister on Annie Besant

Again, one evening I accompanied Annie Besant to a small hall in London, where she lectured to workmen, when suddenly the Master was by her side, and she spoke with an eloquence which I had never heard from her lips before; it came flowing from her like a torrent of spiritual force. I may add that I have since then, here in India, had repeated proof of her being in direct communication with Master.

The Countess makes clear in her message that during the last year of HPB's life, when she was living on Avenue Road, Besant was spending some time every evening with HPB, receiving occult teachings. And before Besant left for America with a message from HPB for the American brothers, HPB said to the Countess:

Master really communicates directly with Annie Besant, her development in this life is a very rapid one; it is the sudden bursting through the shell of all the development and knowledge gained in her previous lives of occultism.

The Countess finally points out that HPB wrote a letter to W. Q. Judge dated 27 March 1891, and that she was in possession of a copy. In this letter HPB described Besant as:

... the soul of honour and uncompromisingly truthful ... one single unbroken diamond, ... transparent so that anyone can see how filled to the brim it is, with pure, unadulterated Theosophy and enthusiasm.
UNSELFISHNESS AND ALTRUISM is



Annie Besant with the signet ring

Annie Besant's name. . . . Judge, she is a most wonderful woman, my right hand and my successor.

The Countess ends her message by saying: 'When after HPB's decease in London, I was informed that the [her signet] ring had been given to Annie Besant by her express directions, I knew that Annie Besant was her successor.'

We can finally say that 'to know a human being, you need to know about it from its birth to its death'. These are the words of Dr Besant, but we cannot fail to consider the incidents narrated by the Countess Wachtmeister, which help us have the vision of a great soul who disseminated Theosophical teachings around the world and knew how to make them reach the hearts of thousands. ✧

Towards a New World

S. C. JAMIR

TODAY I am happy to participate in the conference of the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), an organization which is committed to lessen the sufferings of living beings. The pioneering contributions made by Dr Annie Besant in building and expanding the TOS as an international organization are truly remarkable. I understand that this is the Second TOS Regional Conference organized by the Odisha Region. It is interesting to find that the conference has the theme — ‘Towards the New World’. The very words ‘New World’ do excite us. There are a few of us who have a tendency to speak frequently of the ‘New World.’ When doing so, we tend to be a bit ambiguous as to what the New World is. Is it something different from the existing world and, if so, in which way? Many philosophers and world leaders have set forth their perception of New World. Individuals like Annie Besant are often seen as the voices of reason that may be the guiding force for building a the New World.

Theosophy literally means ‘God’s Wisdom’, and it is all about hidden know-

ledge or wisdom that offers individual enlightenment and salvation. The goal of Theosophy is to explore the origin of divinity, humanity, and the world. The Theosophical Society was founded with the motto, ‘There is no religion higher than Truth’. The three primary characteristics of theosophy are: Divine/Human/Natural Triangle, Primacy of the Mythic, and Access to Supreme Worlds, that leads to the awakening within and the ability to connect to and explore all levels of reality, interpenetrating the human with Divinity and Nature.

The objective that was later modified by founding member Helena Petrovna Blavatsky is primarily to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour. The second objective is to encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy, and Science and the third is to investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man. It is incumbent upon us that we renew our effort to make Theosophy and the Theosophical Order of Service a part of mainstream society and the

His Excellency Dr S. C. Jamir is the Governor of Odisha. Inaugural speech given at the 2nd Regional Conference of The Theosophical Order of Service, Odisha Region at Bhubaneswar on 27.09.2015.

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guiding light towards the New World.

Here let me quote former President of the USA, John F. Kennedy:

I think that we could agree on what kind of a world we want to build. It would be a world which demanded of each government that it accepts its responsibility to ensure social justice. It would be a world of constantly accelerating economic progress — not material welfare as an end in itself, but as a means to liberate the capacity of human beings to pursue their talents and hopes. It would, in short, be a world that we would all be proud to have built.

Theosophy has given rise to and influenced development of many mystical, philosophical, and religious movements. Theosophical societies and organizations are doing very good work across the globe sensitizing the community.

It is indeed a great joy for each one of us to live in this beautiful world. A sense of wonder pervades the entire Earth and a sensitive mind appreciates the internal beauty and magnificent abundance of creation. Watching Nature, one is aware of the presence of an overwhelmingly benevolent force and presence which is ever-present and ever-beckoning. Looking around at people, young and old, one sees beautiful manifestations of this same life-source.

However, the overwhelming tragedy of our world today lies in the fact that we remain disconnected from our sense of belonging to a benevolent universe. On the contrary, we constantly strive to turn

the earth into a realm of fear, exploitation, injustice, intolerance and ongoing violence that blinds us to the truth that is ever-present. Thinking that we can have a world of peace, joy, social justice, and freedom for ourselves while we viciously destroy the peace and freedom of others, exposes how we are disconnecting from one another and how all our efforts become ironic and absurd.

While on one hand the world has progressed rapidly, on the other the gap between the rich and the poor has widened substantially and poverty is very much an issue that we need to address. A second area we need to address is that of intolerance towards others. We have no love for each other nor are we concerned about others. Human selfishness and greed do not allow room for those who are weak and vulnerable to exist as equals within our society. Everyone is craving for peace but peace eludes us.

If this is the kind of situation that we are in, then what is the solution? True transformation in any society can only come about when there is a transformation of the heart. This transformation cannot come about with all the information we have and with the so-called progress we claim. Though we have the knowledge and think we can change society through our will power, we are not in a position to do so. We may also use our intellect to diagnose what the problem is, but are not in a position to bring out the corrective measures in our society. It is in this kind of context that we must transform ourselves, which in

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turn will help us to transform our society and build the new world we wish. Mahatma Gandhi had well said: 'Be the change that you wish to see in the world.'

The door is open. The beautiful world is calling us — one and all. Will we hear her call and stop destructing and doing harm to others and to the environment? We are all infinitely interconnected through manifestations of boundless, radiant love and we have to discover and allow this love to shine and flow through us, in the lives we live and also in the lives of others. From this awareness will arise a sense of under-

standing for good and for noble things. As Dr Annie Besant said:

In those who cannot be happy while others are miserable; in those whose meals are rendered bitter by starvation of the poor; in those whose luxury is a burden because of the want of the miserable — in those will you find the builders of the new civilization, those who shall sacrifice that others may be happy. Theosophy basically highlights the importance of the idea of universal brotherhood of humanity and of the cardinal truths inherent in all religions. ✧

A good future does not arrive by itself. We must sow the seeds for it now, and let the Objects of the Theosophical Society show the way:

◆ **Liberate the mind of all divisive images and encumbrances and let it become universal in sympathy, understanding, even love in the spiritual sense.**

◆ **Observe and investigate the deeply hidden links and relationships in Nature, that is, learn about the laws of the universe, whether they reveal themselves in what may be called scientific, aesthetic, moral, or any other way, and work with them.**

◆ **As the consciousness grows in universality and understands the hidden laws, latent powers of perception, love and intelligence unfold, which means real Theosophy or Wisdom dawns within it.**

Help this to happen.

Radha Burnier

Inaugural Address

H. S. OLCOTT

IN future times, when the impartial historian shall write an account of the progress of religious ideas in the present century, the formation of this Theosophical Society, whose first meeting under its formal declaration of principles we are now attending, will not pass unnoticed. This much is certain.

The bare announcement of the intended inauguration of such a movement attracted attention, and caused no little discussion in the secular world as well as the religious press. It has sounded in the ears of some of the leaders of the contending forces of theology and science, like the distant blast of a trumpet to the struggling armies in a battle. The note is faint as yet, and indicates neither the strength nor purposes of the body approaching. For either side, it may mean a reinforcement that will help turn the tide of victory; it may herald only the gathering of neutrals to watch events; or it may threaten the discomfiture and disarmament of both antagonists.

From what little has been said in its behalf, it is not yet clear to the public how this 'new departure' should be regarded.



Neither Church nor college knows whether to adopt a policy of denunciation, misrepresentation, contumely, or amity. By some secular journals it is patronizingly encouraged as likely to 'enliven a prosaic age with exhibitions of mediaeval tricks of sorcery', while others denounce it as

Col H. S. Olcott was the President-Founder of the Theosophical Society. Delivered at Mott Memorial Hall, in New York City, at the first regular meeting of the Society, 17 November 1875. A few passages not so relevant to present times have been omitted.

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the forerunner of a relapse into 'the worst forms of fetishism'. The Spiritualists began, a few weeks ago, with voluminous and angry protests against its promoters, as seeking to supplant the prevalent democratic relations with the other world by an aristocratic esoterism, and even now, while they seem to be watching our next move with the greatest interest, their press teems with defamatory criticisms. Neither of the religious sects has definitely committed itself, although our preliminary advances have been noticed in a guarded way in some of their organs.

Such being the state of the case at the very onset of our movement, before one blow has been struck, am I not warranted in repeating the statement that in the coming time it is inevitable that the birth of this Society of ours must be considered as a factor in the problem which the historian will be required to solve?

The present small number of its members is not to be considered at all in judging of its probable career. Eighteen hundred and seventy odd years ago, the whole Christian Church could be contained within a Galilean fisherman's hut, and yet it now embraces one hundred and twenty millions of people within its communion; and twelve centuries ago, the only believer in Islamism, which now counts two hundred and fifty million devotees, bestrode a camel and dreamed dreams.

No, it is not a question of numbers how great an effect this Society will have upon religious thought — I will go further, and say, upon the science and

philosophy — of the age: great events sometimes come from far more modest beginnings. I need not occupy time in quoting examples which will occur to every one of you in corroboration of my point. Nor is it a question of endowment funds and income any more than one of numerous members: the propagandist disciples sent out by Jesus went barefoot, ill-clothed, and without purse or scrip.

What is it then, which makes me say what in deepest seriousness and a full knowledge of its truth I have said? What is it that makes me not only content but proud to stand for the brief moment as the mouthpiece and figurehead of this movement, risking abuse, misrepresentation, and every vile assault? It is the fact that in my soul I feel that behind us, behind our little band, behind our feeble, new-born organization, there gathers a MIGHTY POWER that nothing can withstand — the power of TRUTH! Because I feel that we are only the advance-guard, holding the pass until the main body shall come up. Because I feel that we are enlisted in a holy cause, and that truth, now as always, is mighty and will prevail. Because I see around us a multitude of people of many different creeds worshipping, through sheer ignorance, shams and effete superstitions, and who are only waiting to be shown the audacity and dishonesty of their spiritual guides to call them to account, and begin to think for themselves. Because I feel, as a sincere Theosophist, that we shall be able to give to science such evidences of the truth of the ancient philosophy and

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the comprehensiveness of ancient science, that her drift towards atheism will be arrested, and our chemists will, as Madame Blavatsky expresses it, 'set to work to learn a new alphabet of Science on the lap of Mother Nature'.

As a believer in Theosophy, theoretical and practical, I personally am confident that this Society will be the means of furnishing such unanswerable proofs of the immortality of the soul, that none but fools will doubt. I believe that the time will come when men will be as ashamed of ever having advocated atheism in any of its forms, as, thirty years hence, they will be of ever having owned a slave or countenanced human slavery.

. . . I feel that neither I nor this Society incurs any great danger by displaying a little moral courage in so good a cause. Let the future take care of itself; it is for us to so shape the present as to make it beget what we desire and what will bring honour upon us. If we are true to each other and true to ourselves, we shall surmount every obstacle, vanquish every foe, and attain what we are all in search of, the peace of mind which comes of absolute knowledge. If we are divided, irresolute, temporizing, Jesuitical, we shall fail as a Society to do what is now clearly within our reach; and future years will doubtless see us bewailing the loss of such a golden opportunity as comes to few persons in a succession of centuries.

But if this Society were to dissolve within one year, we should not have lived in vain. Today is our own; tomorrow may be; but yesterday is gone for ever. In the

economy of Nature, an impulse, however slight, once given to matter, is eternal; and an act once performed, its consequences, be they great or small, must be worked out sooner or later. The passing caprice of a woman has changed the destiny of nations; the speaking of a word in the mountains may bring a crushing avalanche upon the hamlet that lies at their feet; the turning of a man's footsteps to the right or left, to avoid a stone, or chase a butterfly, or gratify it matters not what idle whim, may alter his whole life, and, directly or indirectly, result in momentous consequences to a world.

About us we see the people struggling blindly to emancipate their thought from ecclesiastical despotism — without seeing more than a faint glimmer of light in the whole black horizon of their religious ideas. They struggle from an irrepressible desire to be free from shackles which bind their limping reason after their volant intuitions have outgrown them. Upon one side, the philosophical chemists invite them to an apotheosis of matter; upon the other, the Spiritualists fling open the painted doors of their 'angel world'. The clergy hold them back and hiss warnings and anathemas in their ears. They waver, uncertain which way to go. Heirs to the spiritual longings of the race, they shrink back from the prospect of annihilation, which, in their own case, when life's burden presses heavily, may not always seem unwelcome, but which was never meant for those near and dear ones who have died in their youth and purity, and left behind a sweet fragrance when

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the alabaster box was broken and they passed behind the Veil of Isis.

But when they turn to Spiritualism for comfort and conviction, they encounter such a barrier of imposture, tricky mediums, lying spirits, and revolting social theories, that they recoil with loathing. . . .

The Protestant sects begin with the fatal assumption that an infallible and inspired Bible will bear the test of reason, and so forecast their own doom; for the analytical power of reason is bounded only by the limits of ascertained truth, and fresh discoveries are daily made among the remains of antiquity, which attack the very foundation upon which the whole scheme of Christianity is based. The most audacious explorers in science are recruits from Protestantism; that would-be mistress of our conscience is stabbed by her own children. The Catholic Church having erected a theocracy upon the ruins of ancient faiths, and stolen not only their allegories but their very exoteric symbolism and revamped them for her own use, is gathering her forces for the struggle that she knows too well is close at hand, and that will be mortal. Enraged at the progress of the age, which has extinguished her penal fires, destroyed her torture-chambers, blunted her axe, and made it impossible for her to bathe her hands in human blood, she is working silently, cunningly, and with intense eagerness to regain her lost supremacy. . . .

Upon what does this Church or any

other ecclesiastical hierarchy stand, but upon the congenital longing of man for an immortal existence; the obscurity of our view of the other world by reason of intervening matter; and the urgency of material wants, which oblige us to accept the intervention of a select class of spiritual guides and expounders, or go without spiritual nourishment other than such as we can pick up beside the dusty road along which we trudge from youth to old age?

If the founders of the Society are true to themselves, they will set to work to study the religious question from the standpoint of the ancient peoples, gather together their wisdom, verify their alleged Theosophic discoveries (I say *alleged*, as president of a noncommittal society of investigation; as an individual, I should omit that word, and give full credit where it is due) and contribute to the common fund whatever is of common interest. If there be any who have begun without counting the cost; if there be any who think to pervert this body to sectarian or any other narrow, selfish ends; if there be any cowards, who wish to meet with us in secret and revile us in public; if there be any who begin with the hope or expectation of making everything bend to their preconceived notions, regardless of the evidence; if there be any who, in subscribing to the broad and manly principle enunciated in the bylaws, that we will discover all we can about all the laws of Nature, do so with a mental reservation that they will back out of it if any pet theory, or creed, or interest is

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endangered; if there be any such, I pray them, in all kindness, to withdraw now, when they can do so without hard words or hard feelings. For, if I understand the spirit of the Society, it consecrates itself to the intrepid and conscientious study of truth, and binds itself, individually as collectively, to suffer *nothing* to stand in the way. As for me — poor, weak man, honored far beyond my deserts in my election to this place of honor and of danger — I can only say that, come well, come ill, my heart, my soul, my mind, and my strength are pledged to this cause, and I shall stand fast while I have a breath of life in me, though all others shall retire and leave me to stand alone. But I shall not be alone, nor will the Theosophical Society be alone. Even now branch societies are projected in this country. Our organization has been noticed in England, and I am told that an article upon the subject is about to appear in one of the greatest of the quarterlies. Whether it shall be couched in friendly or hostile spirit matters little; our protest and challenge will be announced, and we may safely leave the rest to the natural order of events.

If I rightly apprehend our work, it is to aid in freeing the public mind of theological superstition and a tame subservience to the arrogance of science. However much or little we may do, I think it would have been hardly possible to hope for anything if the work had been begun in any country which did not afford perfect political and religious liberty. It certainly would have been

useless to attempt it except in one where all religions stand alike before the law, and where religious heterodoxy works no abridgement of civil rights.

Our Society is, I may say, without precedent. From the days when the Neoplatonists and the last theurgists of Alexandria were scattered by the murderous hand of Christianity, until now, the revival of a study of Theosophy has not been attempted.

There have been secret political, commercial, and industrial societies, and societies of Freemasons and their offshoots, but, even in secrecy, they have not attempted to perform the labour which lies before us and which we will do openly.

To the Protestant and Catholic sectaries we have to show the pagan origin of many of their most sacred idols and most cherished dogmas; to the liberal minds in science, the profound scientific attainments of the ancient magi. Society has reached a point where *something* must be done; it is for us to indicate where that *something* may be found.

If we would compare our organization with its archetype, where can it be found? It cannot be called theurgic, for the theurgists not only believed in God, but knew him through their knowledge of his attributes as they exist in the Astral Light. . . . A life of the strictest purity and self-abnegation was required for it — a life such as that of Jesus or Apollonius. Certainly the Theosophical Society cannot be compared to an ancient school of theurgy, for scarcely one of its

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members yet suspects that the obtaining of occult knowledge requires any more sacrifice than any other branch of knowledge.

The Neoplatonists formed a school of philosophy which arose in Alexandria coincidentally with Christianity, and was the last public school of theurgy. . . . [But] real theurgy having degenerated at that time, and the few remaining adepts having sought solitude with the Essenes and in India, the Neoplatonists had no longer access to the real treatises upon the Divine Science. . . . They believed in elementary spirits, whom they evoked and controlled — a point of especial interest to us.

We cannot, of course, include ourselves among the number of American Spiritualists who implicitly accept all the genuine phenomena to be produced by disembodied spirits; for while some of us unreservedly believe in the occasional return of human spirits and in the existence of true mediums, others discredit both. Moreover, of the believers, some not only admit the possibility of occult forces of Nature being directed, consciously or unconsciously, by the human will for the production of startling results, but also recognize in most of the physical phenomena called spiritual, the agency of elementary spirits who often falsely personate persons not communing with the circles, answer the thoughts which lie visible to them.

. . . There is the difference between the modern spiritualistic phenomena and the effects produced by the the-

urgists, that whereas no reliance can apparently be placed upon the spontaneous communications of the former without corroboration, the latter cannot be untruthful, since the adepts will not permit unprogressed spirits to approach or speak.

The mesmeric phenomena, which will of necessity invite us to careful study, were known in the most remote periods, and are described by Seneca, Martial, Plautus, and Pausanias.

We are not representatives of the school of the Stoics, for . . . [they] taught not only that men should be free from passion and unmoved by joy or grief, but also that they should submit to the unavoidable necessity by which all things are governed; and we found this Society in token of our discontent with things as they are and to endeavour to bring about something better.

Finally, we do not resemble the atomical atheists, who considered everything a congeries of atoms, because matter can be separated into particles, and that, therefore, there could be no indivisible incorporeal being, while the very title of our Society indicates that we hope to obtain knowledge of the existence of a Supreme Intelligence and a world of spirits, by the help of physical processes. No, we are neither of these, but simply investigators, of earnest purposes and unbiased mind, who study all things, prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good.

Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and the Neoplatonists, all worked at theurgy

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separately, and at their meetings imparted to each other the results of their study and experiment. Their neophytes were obliged to follow this rule with strictness; and all were bound to protect and aid every philosopher, especially every theurgist, no matter whence he came or what school he represented.

The hermetists of the Middle Ages were all Neoplatonists, and learned their doctrines from them. In some respects we resemble them, and yet they had dogmas to impart, which under our by-laws we have not; and, further, they were all believers in Theosophy, while we are, with two or three exceptions, simply investigators, undertaking a task far more difficult than theirs, since we have no ready-made material for belief at our hand, but must create it for ourselves.

We are of our age, and yet some strides ahead of it, albeit some journals and pamphleteers more glib than truthful, have already charged us with being reactionists who turn from modern light (!) to medieval and ancient darkness! We seek, inquire, reject nothing without cause, accept nothing without proof: we are students, not teachers.

We should make ourselves familiar with the manifold powers of the human soul and test the claims for the potency of the human will. Mesmerism, Spiritualism, Od, the astral light of the ancients (now called the universal ether) and its currents — all these offer us the widest and most fascinating fields of exploration. At our semi-monthly meetings, we shall have the researches and experiments

of our members and of eminent correspondents in this and other countries read for our instruction, and we shall have tests, experiments, and practical demonstrations, as occasion offers. As our funds warrant, we shall print and circulate our documents, and translate, reprint, and publish works by the great masters of Theosophy of all times.

But until our now somewhat incongruous elements are harmonized, and a common interest results from increased familiarity with our subject, I do not anticipate that at our general meetings we shall witness such theurgic phenomena as were exhibited in the ancient temples.

It is as impossible for these results to be obtained without perfect community of thought, will, and desire, as it was for Jesus to work his wonders at Nazareth because of the prevalent unbelief, or Paul his at Athens, where the populace knew how to check the subtle currents which he controlled by his will. A single very positive and unfriendly will is competent when introduced at a spiritual circle to utterly destroy the mediumistic power. . . .

But here is where Mr Felt's alleged discoveries will come into play. Without claiming to be a theurgist, a mesmerist, or a Spiritualist, our Vice President promises, by simple chemical appliances, to exhibit to us, as he has to others before, the races of beings which, invisible to our eyes, people the elements. Think for a moment of this astounding claim! Fancy the consequences of the practical demonstration of its truth, for which

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Mr Felt is now preparing the requisite apparatus! What will the Church say of a whole world of beings within her territory but without her jurisdiction? What will the academy say of this crushing proof of an unseen Universe given by the most unimaginative of its sciences? What will the Positivists say, who have been prating of the impossibility of there being any entity which cannot be weighed in scales, filtered through funnels, tested with litmus, or carved with a scalpel? What will the Spiritualists say, when through the column of saturated vapour flit the dreadful shapes of beings whom, in their blindness, they

have in a thousand cases revered and babbled to as the returning shades of their relatives and friends? Alas! poor Spiritualists — editors and correspondents — who have made themselves jocund over my impudence and apostasy. Alas, sleek scientists, overswollen with the wind of popular applause! The day of reckoning is close at hand, and the name of the Theosophical Society will, if Mr Felt's experiments result favourably, hold its place in history as that of the body which first exhibited the 'Elementary Spirits' in this nineteenth century of conceit and infidelity, even if it be never mentioned for any other reason. ✧

A merry man — they tell — whose Jove-like beard,
True to conceit, masked to the very end
A jovial youth-in-age; high Wisdom's friend,
E'en as old friends should be — by use endeared,
Familiar, warm, and hearty; one that feared
But to be feared; whose lavish heart would lend
Its gold unasked for weaker hearts to spend,
Nor interest seek, save that they should be cheered.
A merry man — why not? True Wisdom's wage
It counted not in coinage of sad looks:
She hath another reckoning for her books,
And pays in gladness. He is on her roll
As one that blithely bore to green old age
Burdens that would have crushed a sadder sould.

E. A. Wodehouse

Books of Interest

A JEWEL ON A SILVER PLATTER, *Remembering Jiddu Krishnamurti*, by Padmanabhan Krishna, Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi, India, 2015, pp. 418, Rs. 450.

Prof. Krishna, a long-standing member of the Theosophical Society, has written a collection of personal accounts about this modern spiritual teacher by the author and others who knew him well. Prof. Krishna is not only a Trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation in India and was Rector of the Rajghat Besant School in Varanasi, he also knew Krishnamurti for many years and has a deep grasp of his teachings. All this puts him in an ideal position to write this book.

The author first seeks to provide a sense of who Krishnamurti was, not just as a teacher on a platform, but as a person in real life. A record of personal interactions, especially those during the last months of the life of this renowned teacher, illustrates his responses in different situations, which always revolved around the primary motive of his life — a deep concern for the welfare of human beings. Interesting interviews with senior associates, such as Achyut Patwardhan, Vimala Thakar, Radha Burnier, and Mark Lee, convey their experiences and their struggle to understand this extra-ordinary individual. These reports and a collection of anecdotes about Krishnamurti allows the reader to access intimate aspects of

his personality that are not widely known.

The book also presents a fine collection of short essays written by Prof. Krishna that serve as a good introduction to Krishnamurti's work. They examine either the fundamental aspects of his teachings or enquire into important matters of life in the manner Krishnamurti furthered. There is a glossary of terms provided that the novice student will find useful.

The author does not shy away from some interesting aspects of Krishnamurti's personality and life, constituting what is sometimes referred to as 'the mystery of K'. Prof. Krishna enquires into Krishnamurti's role as the 'World-Teacher', something the latter typically refused to discuss in public. Several passages also show that Krishnamurti did not deny the existence of the Masters of the Wisdom but, rather, challenged the misunderstandings of who they really are, and the consequent dependence this generates. For example, Prof. Krishna reports a dialogue in which Krishnamurti asked Radha Burnier, then international President of the Theosophical Society, 'Do you know what the Masters meant to *amma* (Annie Besant)? She would give her life for it! Knowing that, now tell me, do you believe in the Masters?' 'Yes,' said Radhaji emphatically. Krishnaji held her hands and said, 'Good!'

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The book also explores Krishnamurti's remarkable sensitivity, which brought to him perceptions and abilities most would regard as miraculous. There are accounts of instances in which he sensed invisible disturbances in places, perceived people's thoughts, healed illnesses, and other related phenomena. Although he had these 'occult abilities' he was not attracted to them because, as he stated, this is 'another form of power, it has nothing to do with goodness.' As the author remarks, 'To him freedom from the ego was more essential than the cultivation of any power, because the ego can misuse any power, including occult power.'

For students of Theosophy, Krishnamurti's life is a concrete embodiment of many of the Theosophical principles. They may recognize in his attitude and, at times, cryptic statements, interesting and enlightening examples of how a person who knows first-hand 'the hidden side of things', acts in everyday life. For example, after finding out that a person they both knew had been arrested, Prof. Krishna tried to talk about it with Krishnamurti. However, says the author,

'Before I could repeat the words I had heard on TV, he stopped me, saying: "Don't utter those words, Sir! They attract evil. Just say 'poor fellow' and move on." That was his level of purity.' Students of Theosophy familiar with the effect of negative thought-forms and their association to elementals and skandhas, will recognize in Krishnamurti's attitude the same advice repeatedly given by H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant, and C. W. Leadbeater.

There are a few statements regarding the Theosophical Society that its members may find inaccurate, but as the author states, this is a truthful record of actual conversations and they simply reflect the views of the speakers at that time.

A Jewel on a Silver Platter: Remembering Jiddu Krishnamurti is a valuable addition to the literature about this influential world-teacher. All those interested in his life, teachings, and approach to education, would do well to add to their bookshelves this significant resource.

PABLO SENDER

So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Theosophical Work around the World

India

The 2nd Regional Conference of the TOS Odisha Region was organized by its President, Mrs Deepa Padhi, on 27 September 2015 in Bhubaneswar. His Excellency, the Governor of Odisha, Mr S. C. Jamir, graced the occasion along with the international Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, and the Asst. Secretary, TOS India, Mrs Uma Bhattacharya. The conference was attended by about 250 persons, including a large number of college students.

Dr Satapathy spoke about the life and work of Annie Besant at the joint meeting of the Cuttack and Barabati TS Lodges in Cuttack on 1 October, and at the concluding session of the week-long programme of the Young Men's Indian Association on 7 October in Chennai. In both places, he emphasized the spiritual dimension of Dr Besant's work. He was also the chief guest at the well-attended annual functions of the Mahabharat TOS group in Bhubaneswar, and Bharadwaj and Mayfair TS Lodges in Kolkata, where he spoke about selfless service, self-transformation, and *isvara prani-dhāna* (self-surrender), respectively.

France - Neuroscience and Spirituality Seminar

On 10 October 2015, Dr José Foglia, neurologist from Uruguay, conducted a seminar in Paris at the Headquarters of

the TS in France on 'Neuroscience and Spirituality' for around 20 participants. The seminar dealt with the effect of meditation on our physical and mental health. Dr Foglia noted that a recent experiment concluded that only after eight weeks of meditation participants became more compassionate, the mass of grey matter grew in various parts of their brain, and lessened in the regions related to anger and aggressiveness. The theoretical part of the seminar was accompanied by a relaxation exercise.

ITC Silent Retreat

From 14 to 18 October around 20 people gathered in the Besant Hall of the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, The Netherlands, for Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu's eighth Silent Retreat there, with talks, meditative enquiries, seated and walking meditations, and above all, silence. The subject was based on I. K. Taimni's *The Ultimate Reality and Realization*, or Siva-Sutra. Thanks to the receptive attention during earlier retreats, many participants were able to open their minds fully to the profound and inspired experiences Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu shared, and to the meaning beyond words. The connection with Taimni's *The Science of Yoga* or Yoga Sutras, and with *Pratyabhijñā-Hrdayam*, or *The Secret of Self-Recognition*, was explained to further the studies.

Theosophical Work around the World



Front row, left to right: H. E., the Governor of Odisha, Mr S. C. Jamir; the international Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy; Asst. Secretary, TOS in India, Mrs Uma Bhattacharya; and Mrs Deepa Padhi, President of the Odisha TOS Region, at its 2nd Regional Conference

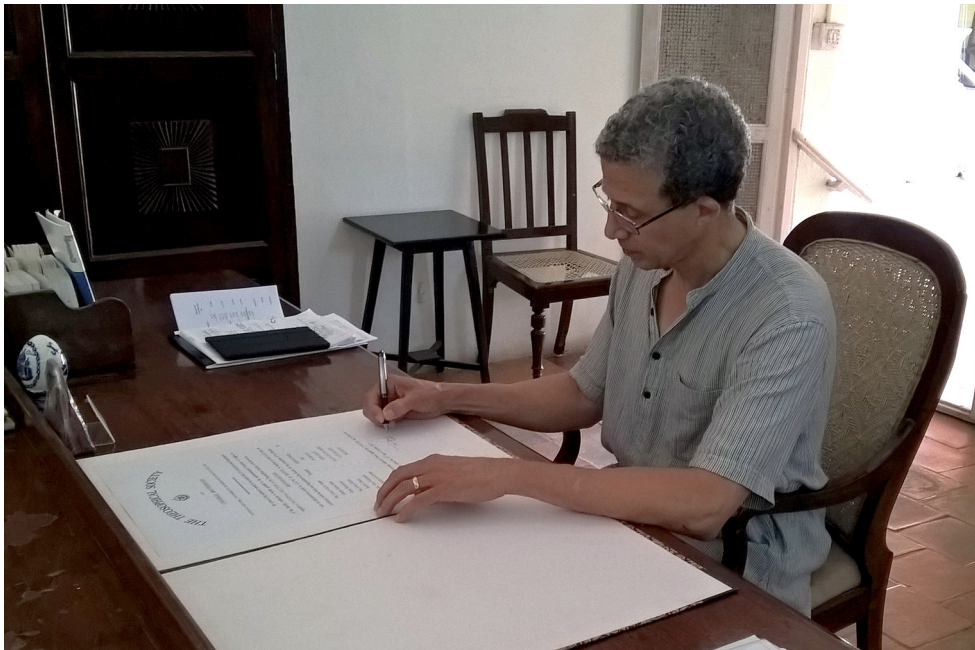


Participants of the eighth Silent Retreat held at the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden (ITC), The Netherlands, guided by Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, President of the European Theosophical Federation (seated on the sofa, 2nd from left). Seated in front of her are Mr Arend Heijbroek, Director of the ITC, and Ms Els Rijncker, former General Secretary (GS) of the TS in the Netherlands; the current GS, Mr Wim Leys, is standing in the back row (fourth from the right)

Theosophical Work around the World



The recently-installed General Secretary of the TS in Bolivia, Mrs Guillermina Rios de Sandoval (seated, third from the left), with members of the new Section



The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, signing the Bolivian Section Charter

Earthquake Relief for Nepal

A young Theosophist from Austria who resides partly in Nepal, Mr Raphael Langerhorst, reports that the heavy earthquake that struck Nepal in April affected about 14 out of 75 districts, where almost all houses in the villages (traditionally built with stone and clay) were destroyed. National and international NGOs have been cooperating to provide temporary shelter in many places, particularly with corrugated tin sheets. People still live in such buildings, often five or more, in less than ten square metres. The upcoming winter will be a challenge, as there is hardly any protection from the cold, and water tends to condense inside the tin sheet roofs during winter nights.

Although the immediate need is for healthy and reasonable places to live in, the earthquake has also caused people to cooperate, help each other, and realize their true needs more than ever. As a result, the attitude of people is now more tuned to seek meaning and understanding. Theosophy is thus in high demand, but it must be applied practically through the needs that have arisen and are arising.

A project has been started to help meet people's needs in a sustainable way. Initially this means to provide healthy housing. But other needs also go hand in hand. Nowadays, pure Theosophy is needed more than ever for people to better understand their situation and purpose in life. You can find places in Nepal where ordinary people, now living in tin sheet sheds with water coming in on the muddy ground during the night,

still read Sanskrit texts on topics aligned with Theosophy. This is no surprise given the historical and actual relation of the Theosophical Society with the Himalayan region and the heart and true way of every dharma.

Yet, the modern approach Theosophy provides may be very supportive for Nepali people to better understand and appreciate their own culture, still so unique. The project mentioned earlier can establish such a supportive environment to help Nepal move towards its special place in this our globalized world.

Link to the project website: <<http://www.gracetech.org/nepal>>.

Bolivia is now a Section

The TS in Bolivia, with 113 members and 11 Lodges, became a Section this year after functioning as a Presidential Agency for 50 years. It has headquarters in La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz. The Founding meeting was held in January, with presidents and members of all their Lodges. More recently Mrs Guillermina Ríos Sandoval was elected General Secretary. This makes a total of 53 Sections in the TS Adyar, the last of which, West Africa, was formed in 1991.

The International Convention (from 31 December 2015 to 5 January 2016) will be webcast live again this year. Please refer to the TS Adyar website, <<http://www.ts-adyar.org>>, for the schedule during those days. The programmes will be based on the theme: 'Compassion and Universal Responsibility'. ✧

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

Date	Section	General Secretary, etc.	Address	Magazine	Email address
1947	Africa, East and Central	... Mr Narendra M. Shah	... PO Box 14525. 00800, Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya	... <i>The Theosophical Light</i>	narendrashahi999@gmail.com
1909	Africa, South	... Mr Jack Hartmann	... 9 Ronean, 38 Princesses Ave., Windsor E. 2194	... <i>The South African Theosophist</i>	hartmann.jack.c@gmail.com
1956	Africa, West	... Mr John Osmond Boakye	... PO Box 720, Accra, Ghana	... <i>The West African Theosophist</i>	tswafrica@gmail.com
1929	America, Central *	... Mrs Beatriz Martínez Pozas	... Colonia Universitaria Norte, Calle Julio Mejía, Polígono E-7, Mejicanos. San Salvador, El Salvador C. A.		bemapo@hotmail.com
1920	Argentina	... Mr Jorge Garcia	... Santiago 257 — 2000, Rosario	... <i>Teosofía en Argentina</i>	stargentina@sociedad-teosofica.com.ar
1990	Asia, East and Southeast †	... Mr Chong Sanne	... 540 Sims Avenue, No. 03-04 Sims Avenue Centre, Singapore 387 603	... <i>Newsletter</i>	sanne@theosophyasia.net
1895	Australia	... Mrs Linda Oliveira	... Level 2, 162 Goulburn St., Surry Hills, NSW 2010	... <i>Theosophy in Australia</i>	tshq@austheos.org.au
1912	Austria *	... Mr Albert Schichl	... Oberbaumgarten 25, 4204 Haibach im Mühlkreis	... <i>Theosophie Adyar</i>	theosophie.austria@aon.at
2013	Bangladesh †	... Mr B. L. Bhattacharya	... B/4-3, Iswarchandra Nibas, 68/1, Bagmari Road, Kolkata 700 054		blbtos_2005@yahoo.com
1911	Belgium	... Mrs Sabine Van Osta	... Place des Gueux 8, B1000 Brussels	... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i>	sabine_van_osta@hotmail.com
1965	Bolivia	... Mrs Guillermina Rios de Sandoval	... Pasaje Jauregui No. 2255, La Paz		guillieriosandoval@yahoo.com
1920	Brazil	... Mr Marcos L. B. de Resende	... SGAS Quadra 603, N. 20, CEP 70200-630 Brasilia (DF)	... <i>Sophia</i>	marcos.resende@riedel.com.br
1924	Canada *	... Mrs Maryze DeCoste	... 3162 Rue de la Bastille Boisbriand QC., J7H 1K7	... <i>The Light Bearer</i>	modecoste@hotmail.com
1920	Chile *	... Mr Cesar Ortega Ortiz	... Casilla 11 Sucursal Paseo Estacion, Estacion Central, Santiago	... <i>Revista Teosófica Chilena</i>	sociedadteosoficachile2010@gmail.com
1937	Colombia †	... Mrs Nelly Medina de Galvis	... Carr 22, # 45B-38 (Cons. 404), Barrio Palermo, Bogotá	... <i>Selección Teosófica</i>	nmedinaga@yahoo.es
1997	Costa Rica †	... Ms Maria Orlich	... Apartado 8-6710-1000, San José		orlichsm@gmail.com
2007	Croatia ▲	... Mrs Nada Tepeš	... Krajiška ulica 24, 10000 Zagreb	... <i>Teozofija</i>	z.zemlja@gmail.com
1905	Cuba	... Ms Barbara A. Fariñas Piña	... Apartado de Correos 6365, La Habana 10600		teocuba.sociedad@gmail.com
1987	Dominican Rep. †	... Mrs Magaly Polanco	... Calle Santa Agueda 1652 Les Chalet Col San Juan Puerto Rico Apartado 23 00926		polancomagaly@yahoo.com
1888	England	... Mrs Jenny Baker	... 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA		president@theosoc.org.uk
1907	Finland	... Mrs Mirva Jaatinen	... Teosofinen Seura, Vironkatu 7 C 2, Fin 00170, Helsinki	... <i>Teosofi</i>	info@teosofinenseura.fi ylisihteeri@teosofinenseura.fi
1899	France	... Mrs Jeannine (Nano) Leguay	... 4 Square Rapp, 75007 Paris	... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i>	editionsadyar@wanadoo.fr
1902	Germany	... Mrs Manuela Kaulich	... Hauptstr. 39, 93138 Lappersdorf	... <i>Adyar</i>	theosophie-adyar@gmx.de
1928	Greece	... Mr Antonios Papandreou	... 25 Voukourestiou St., 106 71-Athens	... <i>Ilisos</i>	info@theosophicalsociety.gr
1907	Hungary †	... Mr Thomas Martinovich	... Hunyadi Janos ut 17. II. 8, H-1011 Budapest	... <i>Teozófia</i>	tshutau7@hu.inter.net
1921	Iceland	... Mr Halldor Haraldsson	... PO Box 1257 Ingolfsstraeti 22, 121 Reykjavik	... <i>Gangleri</i>	iceland.ts@gmail.com
1891	India	... Mr S. Sundaram	... The Theosophical Society, Varanasi 221 010	... <i>The Indian Theosophist</i>	theosophyvns@gmail.com
1912	Indonesia	... Mr Widyatmoko	... Dsn. Parelegi no. 21, RT 02/ RW 09, Desa Purwodadi, Kecamatan Purwodadi, 67163 Pasuruan, Jawa Timur	... <i>Theosofi</i>	indotheosofi@gmail.com

1919	Ireland *	...	Mrs Marie Harkness	...	97 Mountsandel Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, UK BT52 ITA	...	marieharkness@yahoo.co.uk
1954	Israel ▲	...	Mr Abraham Oron	...	PO Box 9114, Ramat-Gan, Israel 5219002	...	ornet@theosophia.co.il
1902	Italy	...	Mr Antonio Girardi	...	Viale Quintino Sella, 83/E, 36100 Vicenza	...	sti@teosofica.org <i>Rivista Italiana di Teosofia</i>
1997	Ivory Coast *	...	Mr Pierre-Magloire Kouahoh	...	Yopougon, 23 Rue Princesse B. P. 3924, Abidjan 23	...	pm_kouahoh@hotmail.com <i>Sophia</i>
1919	Mexico	...	Mr Enrique Sanchez	...	Ignacio Mariscal 126, Col. Tabacalera Mexicana, Mexico, D.F. 06030	...	sede@sociedadteosofica.mx info@sociedadteosofica.mx info@theosofie.nl
1897	Netherlands, The	...	Mr Wim Leys	...	Tolsraat 154, 1074 VM Amsterdam	...	np@theosophy.org.nz <i>Theosophia</i>
1896	New Zealand	...	Mr John Vorstermans	...	18, Belvedere Street, Epsom, Auckland 1022	...	saleh.noshie@bedriftshelse1.no <i>TheoSophia</i>
1913	Norway *	...	Dr Saleh Noshie	...	N-6873-Marifjora	...	Theosophical SocietyCF@gmail.com
1935	Orlando ▲	...	Mr Carl Metzger	...	1606 New York Ave. Orlando, Florida, 32803-1838, USA	...	
1948	Pakistan †	Jamshed Memorial Hall, M. A. Jinnah Road, opp. Radio Pakistan, Karachi	...	bhagwanbharvani@hotmail.com <i>The Karachi Theosophist</i>
1924	Peru †	...	Mr Julio Pomar Calderón	...	Av Republica de Portugal 152, Breña, Lima 5	...	sede-central@sociedadteosoficaenperu.pe <i>Búsqueda</i>
1933	Philippines, The	...	Mr Rosel Doval-Santos	...	Corner P. Florentino and Iba Streets, Quezon City, Manila	...	philtheos@gmail.com <i>The Philippine Theosophist</i>
1921	Portugal	...	Mr Carlos Guerra	...	Sociedade Teosófica de Portugal, Rua José Estevão, 10 B, 1150-202 Lisboa	...	carlos.a.g.guerra@gmail.com <i>Osiris</i>
1925	Puerto Rico †	...	Mrs Magaly Polanco	...	Apartado 36-1766 Correo General. San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936-1766.	...	polancomagaly@yahoo.com <i>Heraldo Teosófico</i>
2012	Qatar ▲	...	Mr Dom Escobido	...	Teyseer security services Doha	...	qatarblavatskylodge@yahoo.com
2013	Russia †	...	Mr Pavel Malakhov	...	Molodyozhny pr., 10-221, 650070, Kemerovo	...	pr@ts-russia.org
1910	Scotland *	...	Mr Stuart Trotter	...	28 Great King Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6QH	...	albion.trotter@gmail.com <i>Circles</i>
1992	Slovenia *	...	Mrs Breda Zagar	...	Kunaverjeva 1 SLO-1000 Ljubljana	...	zagarbreda@gmail.com <i>Teozofska Misel</i>
1921	Spain	...	Mrs Angels Torra Buron	...	Av. Vall d'or, 85-87 08197 - Valldoreix(Spain)	...	presidencia@sociedadteosofica.es <i>Sophia</i>
1926	Sri Lanka †	...	Mr M. B. Dassanayake	...	2-C/60, Maththegoda Housing Scheme, Maththegoda	...	mbdassa@gmail.com <i>The Sri Lanka Theosophist</i>
1895	Sweden	...	Mrs Ing-Britt Wiklund	...	Kalle Posts väg 48, S-702 29 Örebro	...	ing-britt@wiklund-orebro.se <i>Tidlös Visdom</i>
1910	Switzerland †	...	Mrs Eliane Gaillard	...	17 Chemin de la Côte, CH -1282 Dardagny, Genève	...	egaillard@bluewin.ch <i>The Lotus</i>
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2013	Ukraine *	...	Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko	...	Office 3, 7-A Zhylianska St., Kiev 01033	...	org@theosophy.in.ua <i>Svitoch</i>
1886	USA	...	Mr Tim Boyd	...	PO Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60187-0270	...	admin@theosophical.org <i>The Quest</i>
1925	Uruguay *	...	Mr Ramon Garcia	...	Javier Barrios Amorin 1085, Casilla de Correos 1553, Montevideo	...	st.uruguay@gmail.com
1922	Wales *	...	Mrs Julie Cunningham	...	Bryn Adda, Brynisiencyn, Llanfairpwll, Anglesey, LL61 6NX UK	...	theosophywales@yahoo.co.uk

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