



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover Picture: A wayside flower beckons – by Dr T. P. Alagantham

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On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

Let the Wisdom Flow

Theosophy is a matter of life. It refers to God-Wisdom and could be translated as Brahma-vidyā. It is everywhere, in every plane of existence from the highest to the lowest sub-plane, pervading everything. Each person according to his capacity — that is, his capacity to function in terms of the divine wisdom — can embody it to some extent. Nobody can embody it fully, partly because we are called upon to function through the physical brain, and to act within the limitations of the physical body.

We have to understand first and foremost that since divine wisdom pervades all things, it lives and moves in each one according to the room given to it. The human being is compelled by nature, in spite of the grossness of the physical body, to express something of life. Even minerals, the earth, etc., are expressing some of the wisdom which is Theosophy. But they express it in different ways. One tradition says that the diamond, for instance, is superior among minerals because it can express the beauty of wisdom more than many other minerals. In the vegetable world a great banyan tree like the one at Adyar gives shelter to many birds, beauty to all human beings who are capable of appreciating it, shade even to those who do not care about its beauty,

and so on. If we come to the animal stage, an animal like an elephant is far wiser with many remarkable qualities, and other creatures, like dogs and so on, have risen to the top of the animal field.

In the human being the *divine* wisdom is allowed to function and can appear in all its glory in people like the Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Śankarāchārya, who from birth were remarkable. So the mineral becomes the beautiful diamond, the bird may become a peacock, in the vegetable kingdom a plant can become a big banyan tree or other trees which live for many years and flourish, and the animal may become an elephant or a very intelligent dog. And at the human level, if the divine wisdom passing through human beings is extraordinary, all their actions express that divine wisdom. We too can make ourselves channels for it.

We are responsible for making Theosophy flow freely, as in the case of the Buddha. We can be small Buddhas, or we can block it and become stupid human beings. It depends on us to let the Wisdom flow. Some activities carry more of this quality than others, and we can encourage those activities and give attention to them and to the impetus they give to the progress of the world, depending on the activities to which we are dedicated.

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Now the Theosophical Society and all its branches exist because it is hoped that they will become centres from which Theosophy will spread its influence to the maximum extent possible, and make itself helpful to the people in the area. We have all to consider how our Lodge, our Federation, our Section can be a channel for Theosophy, the Supreme Wisdom. It cannot be fully expressed by any activity at the physical level, but can be expressed in a way which will make it stand out, as Śankarāchārya stood out, Jesus stood out, and thousands of people who followed them. Because of Theosophy some become wise and some become partly wise. Theosophical Lodges should embody as much of the wisdom as possible, so that people begin to rise towards these heights.

If a Lodge has an aura, one imagines it has an influence. If you look at the aura of a Lodge, both physical and non-physical, how much of it is being used to spread a wise message, so that each Lodge becomes a representative of the Ancient Wisdom? It depends on you and me who participate in the Lodge. We are human beings. (We are bound to make mistakes, for we are not perfect; so the Lodge cannot be perfect.) But to the maximum extent possible Lodge activities should make people wiser. Can our Lodge be an instrument for wisdom to come through, in whatever measure possible? In order to do that, we who are members of the Theosophical Society should be persons who are interested in knowing the essentials of life.

A Lodge is meant to provide a place for every kind of wisdom coming from any part of the world, calling itself by any name: Vedānta, Islam, Christianity or whatever. It presents the truth found in all religions. All religions have become corrupt, but some parts of them are true and as originally taught. That central part is what Theosophical Lodges should be interested in making known to people.

Somebody may ask: Does the Islamic religion have something to tell people? Yes, it has, but not what some Muslims say; they may be very non-Muslim in their aggressive attitude, while the Prophet Muhammad was very gentle. There are equally foolish people in the Christian, Hindu and other groups. But if you leave that aside, and we speak only of what carries us to depths of wisdom which we have yet to reach, it will be worthwhile. So this is one thing the Lodges in our Society can do: make people aware of the Wisdom Teaching that has been given. Sometimes it is called Sufi, sometimes Christian mysticism, sometimes Advaita, but they all have truth to convey.

We should remain free of prejudice, in order to find what is true, good and right in religion. The essence of religion can be found in many religions, but we must have perceptive and open minds to understand it.

Gentleness Must Become the Norm

One of the things that we have to do is to eradicate from our character and mental condition the desire to bring others under our control by forcing them to behave as

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we would wish. This is a form of cruelty, and exists in many forms. It is completely in contradiction to the Theosophical way of living. We should therefore try to eradicate it from our lower nature; the higher, of course, does not have a predilection for compelling people in any way. We may indulge our own interests in different ways, but must be sure that the tendency to cruelty is completely avoided.

‘Cruelty is the work of the devil; that is how it looks to a Master,’ says C. W. Leadbeater. The inquisition, for example, believed in enforced conversion, an action which gives outward satisfaction to the perpetrators. They used to kill and torture many a person who did not agree with what they said. Numerous people from Africa and other countries, for example South American Indians, were atrociously treated because they were supposed to have no souls. The Islamic teaching given by a person who was a gentle saint was carried to other countries by means of the sword. Today ‘the sword’ is used to subordinate politically and in similar ways people who do not want to submit, and to help to dictate what their ways, beliefs, etc. should be.

The action of vivisection, by those who use animals for their own purposes, irrespective of how the poor victim suffers and perhaps dies, is deliberate cruelty. It is often supposed to ensure the well-being of human lives. But the animal which is vivisected is as important in the evolutionary system as the human being who is totally indifferent to its welfare. There are any number of

people in the present day who justify using animals for purposes but is it not better to seek other remedies for human beings, and avoid all the cruelty even if it is said to be for unselfish reasons? A few steps are being taken in this direction, for example, by the European Union in passing new laws against cruelty to animals, which have to be applauded, but are they enough?

There is worldwide cruelty practised on children, because they happen to be under the control of their parents or other grown-ups like their teachers in school. Very often with the best of intention there is the desire to compel a child to fit into a pattern — the pattern of society. But the child may have talents which are not those that the parent wants or the teacher imposes. It may be that these talents will bring less money later on in life; but the child who is forced to follow what the grown-up thinks best is not benefited.

In writing about this, C. W. Leadbeater said that love and liberty are great factors in the development of the soul. Love is an absolute prerequisite. It does not matter if the body does not have all the comforts and importance that the parents would like, but it is essential that the innate talents of the child should not be inhibited. The child should grow up feeling free and from its early days should be given the opportunity to develop naturally. This is the purpose of education, and surely also is the way they should be treated by parents and other older people.

In exploring this subject, we must keep

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in mind that freedom offers every person a soul (not merely a body) which needs to develop what is rightfully its own particular virtues. These may be cultivated at what the world considers to be a price, but which from the point of view of the real growth of the child may be very important. The teacher's role therefore is a sacred one, and he or she must always act out of love — a great responsibility. But even if the teacher fails to some extent, as long as he tries, it is the best he can do. This is the hallmark of Theosophical education.

The same principles apply to those who are working under someone else; they have to be treated gently, taking into consideration their growth as human beings, and not merely the help they can

give at the moment. All that is part of life, and needs to be thought over carefully by anyone who is interested in his own spiritual growth. One's growth can never be separated from the action that is performed in relation to others — human beings, children, animals, plants and everything else.

This is part of understanding what the One life is. The question of cruelty is important, even from a selfish point of view, for it involves every life, how we feel towards others, what we do to a husband or wife, to children or animals, even to the seemingly unimportant things like the life which is growing under our feet; all these are important in everybody's life. Gentleness must become the norm. ✧

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood-rose, and left it on its stalk?
At rich men's tables eaten bread and pulse?
Unarmed, faced danger, with a heart of trust?
And loved so well a high behaviour
In man or maid, that thou from speech refrained,
Nobility more nobly to repay?
O, be my friend, and teach me to be thine!

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Forbearance

Living in the Present

MARJA ARTAMAA

Living in the Present

This very moment does not take place in the past or in the future. Yet this moment is both past and future, because the cosmic play includes everything. The more conscious we are in the present, the better can we fulfil the meaning of life, since what is basic is to become aware.

Some questioned the Buddha asking, 'Are you a God?' 'No', he replied. 'Are you an angel then?' 'No', he replied again. 'What are you then?' they asked. 'I am awake', he said.

A conscious person helps the world by his presence. That state of mind is our aim — being awake in the present.

Philosophy of the Present

So what is the present? The basic thought is that the present is a continuous moment between the past and the future, and in that moment we need to gain peace of mind.

A common definition is:

The present means for us the time that is perceived directly now. Only the present is realized, whereas the past is a recollection and the future is a speculation. It is often considered as a point in space-time, sometimes called now, but a man

often experiences the 'now' as if it had a (short) duration.¹

In this definition what is important is 'what is perceived directly now'. This requires a state of mind which is alert, awake, conscious each moment. But how long is that moment?

Sometimes we look at the present as a moment of seconds — something which is experienced immediately, like insight or direct understanding. Sometimes we consider the moment on a wider scale — as a phase of our life, for example, when thinking what has brought one to the present career. Sometimes the perspective is even wider — the world's current situation, such as what is happening now to the environment. The 'now' seems to be a flow of time within which something momentous happens. However wide the view, what is important is the moment when we take action, whether it is for the benefit of mankind or for our own growth.

Another point about this definition is the perception of duration. We experience the present as duration and duration is not the same as how we experience it. If we have to stand in a queue to get food and we are hungry, we experience time as three times longer than it actually is. This

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is also a question of awareness in the present, of what thoughts and feelings I allow myself to have when queuing.

A question may arise: is this moment, now, the same for other people? Do you experience the now at the same time as I do? Yes, surely, but differently, due to our past and present condition. But according to Theosophy there is unity, oneness, behind everything. In that oneness there is no time, no separateness — all is present. If we were awake, conscious, the present would not be illusory.

Know Thyself

Let us take a closer look at our daily life. Living in the present means being aware of what is happening to you, what you are doing, and what you are feeling and thinking. Knowing oneself helps to create the right attitude. Let us consider how differently two persons may experience a trip. This example is simple, but familiar to all of us.

There is a story of two friends travelling by train. One was very nervous, restless and full of complaints during the whole trip. He was impatient to reach his destination, and disliked every moment of the trip. He did not pay attention to his surroundings, as his mind was full of impatient, restless and grumpy thoughts.

His friend, on the other hand, enjoyed the scenery, drank a cup of coffee, ate a piece of cake and chatted with the other passengers. He enjoyed every moment of the trip. He lived in the present moment and made the most of it. On

arrival he was fresh and felt good. His friend, as expected, arrived exhausted and unhappy.

It is a matter of the right attitude. Life becomes a happy and enjoyable trip when the attitude towards it and its events is positive, and the present moment is used in the best possible way.²

This example brings us to daily life, in which we meet various situations, easy and challenging. For human growth it is important that we take a look at ourselves, being aware of what is happening to us, what we are doing, what we are feeling and thinking. ‘Know thyself’ is a wise request. Seriously examining life and oneself in life, we can enjoy every moment, act when the time comes to act, and we can experience happiness and peace.

Letting Go

What then is the meaning of the past? Should we deny it? Well, evidently not. We can learn from the past, but not live in it.

J. Krishnamurti constantly emphasized the importance of being conscious, being aware each moment, letting go of the past and not leaning on desires for the future. This is included in many philosophies and religions such as Buddhism. HH the Dalai Lama writes about dropping the past:

If a misfortune has already occurred, it is best not to worry about it, so that we do not add fuel to the problem. Don’t ally yourself with past events by lingering on them and exaggerating them. Let the past take care of itself, and live in the present,

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taking whatever measures are necessary to ensure that such a misfortune never occurs again, now or in the future.³

The message here is clear. Concentrating on the present moment, on what is happening or what you are doing right now, frees you of unnecessary, burdensome and unpleasant thoughts. You gain peace of mind.

Are the Past and the Future Unnecessary?

All this may raise a question: are the past and the future unnecessary? No, they are essential in making us aware and understanding in what respect we must grow as human beings. The future has meaning if we see our journey as being spiritual and not as a world of fears and desires. Past and future are part of the flow of time.

Looking at the example of the two persons in a train is in a way looking at the past. Yes. But if we did not realize later how we acted, we would not learn when there is something to be learned. Living in the present does not mean that we would not appreciate our past. Only the past gives us material for learning. The restless person in the train would in his later understanding find in himself what led him astray from the happy state, what effect that had and how to be alert so that it would not happen again. The past teaches us lessons when we find stumbling blocks on our path.

Usually we learn from bad or difficult experiences. Good experiences lay foundations for our growth. If a success

becomes a source of pride, then it is actually a bad experience. A good experience leads to positive learning; it cultivates us without concentrating on the I (the me). A contented mind does not cling to anything; a peaceful mind sees without obstacles — directly, in the present. In such a state of mind the most important quality for living in the present can arise, namely, right action and an open mind.

When work is needed, you work, when help is needed, you help; there is no speculation, you act in the present moment.

The Eternal Now

There is still one important aspect to cover. Could we think of the present as a bridge to something else, to another dimension, which has no past or future, but which exists forever?

I. K. Taimni writes about the ever-continuing flow of time, in which there is no present, no now, because the future changes constantly into the past. He writes in *Science of Yoga*:

The present is left out of the classification of time into the past and future. The present, as we all know, has no reality. It is a mere concept for the ever-moving dividing line between the past and the future. . . . Actually, the present has become the past before we realize its presence and therefore ever eludes us. But, though it has no reality of its own, it is a thing of tremendous significance because beneath this dividing line between the past and the future is hidden Now, the Reality which is beyond Time.⁴

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Before we can grasp the Reality behind the Eternal Now, we must live what we experience as the present, take full responsibility for becoming awake, and learn to be conscious in the present

moment and in the presence of something greater, unforeseen and everlasting. It is a great human task to be ready now and for tomorrow with the teachings from the past, with compassion in the heart. ✧

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1. Wikipedia.
2. Remez Sasson.
3. *Little Book of Inner Peace*, The Dalai Lama, s. 301.
4. *Science of Yoga*, III, end of Sutra 16.

In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired,
No thanks he breathed, proffered no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him: it was blessedness and love.

William Wordsworth

Be a Lamp unto Yourself

ERICA L. GEORGIADES

THE Greeks are going through a giant struggle. The Greek Christian Orthodox Church forbade cremation until last year, when finally, after twelve years of fighting in parliament, the Hellenic people won the right to be cremated. The Hellenic Church will not allow the followers of the ancient Greek religion to build a temple dedicated to the twelve Gods. This fight has been going on for fifteen years, because Greeks in their own country are not allowed to build a temple dedicated to their ancient Gods. Do what you can with love and not fanaticism, with compassion and not cruelty, to comprehend and preserve the ancient heritage the Wise Ones left.

We may ask ourselves what we are doing. What have we understood about the Divine Heritage the Wise Ones left to us — humanity? History seems to repeat itself over and over again. We see the same behaviour patterns in human nature, depicted in ancient epics, in mythologies of different cultures and throughout the pages of history: the same pattern of behaviour based on egoism. We see so many people in the world doing everything they can to become leaders, politicians, etc. and we see no good being done, but a selfish race for power in any form it may take.

Recently in Burma Buddhist monks were making a peaceful protest for freedom. Many were murdered and some injured monks in the hospital were removed and incinerated alive. As I am talking to you, every second there is a child dying of starvation, an animal being killed, a woman being raped and so many problems, which are all the result of a brutal society, and such a brutal society was created and is maintained by brutal people. For only brutal creatures, soulless I could say, can think more about their own selves than about the well-being of all.

There is a booklet by the poet Edward Spencer, published in 1591, entitled *Tears of the Muses* containing deeply inspiring poems dedicated to the nine Muses. I have adapted and would like to quote a few stanzas dedicated to the Muse Calliope, the eldest of the nine Muses:

To whom shall I complain my evil case?
Or tell my inner anguish,
Since none is left to heal my pain,
But rather seeks my sorrow to increase
With cruel banishment.

For they to whom I used to offer
The faithful service of my learned skills,
The good offspring of Zeus' progenies

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That the world filled with famous acts
whose living praise in heroic style
it is my chief possession to compile.

But now they all are corrupted through the
dust of time

All fair things on earth fade
Through sloth or sinful crime,
A noble race is degenerated . . .

They don't care for their ancestors
Or for the heroes of the past,
neither do they care if late posterity
Should know their names or speak about
their good deeds.

But they die forgotten from where
they first sprang,
as they themselves shall be forgotten . . .
Who would ever care to do brave deeds?
Or strive to virtues acquire . . .

If evil is praised more than good . . .
Who will care to do good?

The values and principles of so-called 'modern society' are so corrupted that it becomes more and more difficult to discern between the good and the bad, between unselfish and selfish actions. As a natural result, the egoistic self, the ego, continues to spread misery and suffering in every imaginable and unimaginable form leading our human family into an odyssey of suffering. It reminds one of some words of the play *Electra* by Sophocles. When Electra for the first time goes to visit the grave of her father Agamemnon, while she is walking she says: 'What a sad path is this one, every step a tear.' I would say what a sad path is the one that humanity is creating and sustaining out of egoism.

One day future generations may look back and see what is left for them. They may ask: Oh my god, what have they done? Or how did they find strength to go on and rise above all that darkness? In the past humanity did things for posterity, but now we appear to be doing things for ourselves, leaving a trail of devastation for posterity. What we do now, the values and principles we defend now, are going to be the heritage we will leave for future generations. 'What we leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others' (Pericles, Ancient Greek Politician, General and Statesman, of the aristocratic Alcmaeonid family, 495-29 BC). There is an ancient Greek saying: 'The wise men plant trees, whose shade they know they never will enjoy.' In our modern world, with so many injustices and pain, are we planting any 'trees'?

In the Oracle of Delphi there were two important sayings: 'Know thyself' and 'Nothing to excess'. That is our greatest challenge, in fact a battle and the hardest one. To tread the unknown labyrinths of the self may lead one to the most painful experiences, but also to ultimate bliss. It is necessary to remember that in every war only those who are willing to die are those who will win it. Are we willing to 'die'?

We chose to be here today, we chose this path, not because it is an easy path but because it is the hardest one. We must step within ourselves, treading a virgin field, a path we must make on our own, and every step will lead us towards the light that will remove the darkness of

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ignorance and sorrow. Nobody can do it for us.

Every dogmatic religion is a fraud and those who respect themselves must never accept their limitations. We should not allow ourselves to be trapped in dogmas, which are the result of other people's thinking, as inspiringly stated in *Vivekachudāmani*: 'When the supreme reality is not understood, the study of the scriptures is useless, and study of the scriptures is useless when the supreme reality has been understood' (verse 61).

As the Buddha was dying, Ānanda asked who would be their teacher after his death:

Be lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves. Do not rely on external help. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Seek salvation in the truth alone. Look not for salvation in anyone beside yourselves. And those, Ānanda, who either now or after I am dead shall be lamps unto themselves, relying upon themselves only and not relying upon any external help but holding fast to the truth as their lamp, it is they, Ānanda, who shall reach to the topmost height! But they must be anxious to learn.

Ādi Śankara and Gautama Buddha, in their teachings, lead us within, for the real Guru (teacher) is *viveka*, the ability that enables one to discern between the real and the unreal, between the permanent and the impermanent, between the Self and the non-Self.

In *Light on the Path* it is stated: 'Before the soul can stand in the presence of the

Masters its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.' Removing the root of egoism from the heart may cause the heart to bleed and it is in this blood that our feet must be washed. This does not happen through intellectual knowledge, through talking, but through unselfish actions and an ardent will to penetrate the depths of our own self.

Śankara said: 'The tangle of words is a great forest which leads the mind off, wandering about; so wise men should strive to get to know the truth about their own nature' (verse 62). There is an old Chinese proverb that says: 'Talk does not cook the rice.' That is maybe why Lao-Tse said: 'The sage teaches without words.' Probably he liked rice!

Focus on what we can offer through unselfish service, and not on what we expect from others or what we may aspire to achieve. Our lives are too short, and the work to be done is too vast. Give without expecting anything in return, inquire as a child who knows nothing, and sees for the first time the blue sky. Achievement and light will be the result of our actions of unselfish service, of self-knowledge and not of ambitions and expectations of a mind filled with preconceived ideas. Inquire with a pure and clean heart, without expecting any result. While there is expectation, there is a state of mind that inquires expectantly. Such a mind is not humble and it is subject to conditioning and is consequently unable to grasp the truth.

The very process of searching for the truth requires a mind free of conditioning.

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How else can the eternal express itself through the non-eternal? How else can the real express itself through the unreal?

There is an interesting story:

A seeker of truth went to a Zen Master to learn about Zen. The seeker's head was full of ideas about truth, life and spirituality. The Zen Master could see it in his eyes. The Zen Master served him tea and started pouring it into the cup; he continued to pour the tea even after the cup was full and the tea began to spill over. The seeker, seeing this, pointed out to the Zen Master that the cup was full and pouring more tea was pointless. To this the Zen Master replied, 'Like this cup, you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can you reach Zen unless you first empty your cup?'

In the oracle of Trophonius in Greece the aspirant, before entering the sanctuary, was taken by the priests to drink from the waters of two rivers which were considered to contain magical properties. He was taken first to drink the waters of the river Lethe (forgetfulness), so he would forget all earthly thoughts. Then he was taken to drink from the waters of the river Mnemosyne (Reminiscences) so he would be able to remember or to learn.

In both examples we see the need to have an empty or silent mind, free of any earthly thoughts. A mind filled with pre-conceived ideas, with beliefs, cannot investigate, truly learn and be enlightened. Unless one develops a state of mind that is calm and attentive, free of ideas, there will be no awakening and we will remain

imprisoned in the illusion that binds us with chains of sorrow and pain.

Intellect and knowledge are not powerful by themselves; it is necessary to go beyond them, to look at things with an open mind, with a pure heart and not with discrimination, prejudices or fear. Look at things compassionately, as a mother looks on her fragile baby.

Each person's goals are different, and what comes easily to one may be difficult for another. Therefore, do not squash others' dreams; do not judge others; do not teach another to fear or hate his brother because of his colour, his religious beliefs, his country or whatever. For when we are intolerant with those who have a different pursuit, with those who belong to a different religion, we promote violence, we teach violence.

Growing with the fear of losing whatever is related to our own beliefs leaves our mind in a 'Bonsai' state; the mind is not able to expand, nor able to grow and reach the heights of bliss. In the same way, those who cultivate Bonsai plants do not allow the poor plant to grow freely to reach the sky. Dogmas and our beliefs do not allow our mind to grow freely. For if we think we know, we are really immersed in profound ignorance and darkness. Socrates exclaimed: 'The ancient oracle said that I was the wisest of all the Greeks. It is because I alone, of all the Greeks, know that I know nothing.'

Try to do the best you can, to help create a better world, for while there are suffering, injustices and cruelty, our family, humanity, will never know happiness

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and peace. Cultivate the purity of a child's mind, in which every moment sees a new thing, without being bound to any previous experiences or ideas. See the world with your eyes, through the light of your soul, and you will be an inspiring flame.

The Hellenic sage Thales remarked: 'The most difficult thing in life is to

know yourself.' So do not surrender for, as was said before, we are here not because it is an easy path but because it is the hardest one. Do not surrender, and you may become a source of inspiration and light to the world, and this is the most precious treasure one can leave for future generations. ✧

'Is there any light, other than the sun, that shines over all the people? Are human beings capable of understanding the Truth?'

'The true light is that which emanates from within man, and reveals the secrets of the heart to the soul, making it happy and contented with life. Truth is like the stars; it does not appear except from behind obscurity of the night. Truth is like all beautiful things in the world; it does not disclose its desirability except to those who first feel the influence of falsehood. Truth is a deep kindness that teaches us to be content in our everyday life and share with the people the same happiness.'

Kahlil Gibran

Blavatsky and Krishnamurti: A Timeless Dialogue

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

ALL true spiritual teachers are unique. They have all shared with each other, throughout the ages of human evolution on this globe, a capacity to provoke thinking and to unsettle conditioned minds from their spiritual slumber. This may explain why many of them were profoundly misunderstood by their contemporaries. The orthodox religious mindset prevailing both in India and in Judea, for example, rejected the message of both the Buddha and Jesus Christ. Their teaching was simply too radical and too disturbing for the psychological comfort of most people in their times.

Genuine spirituality is not concerned with acceptance of beliefs, explanations, descriptions of the world or presumed spiritual authority. Its core concern is true spiritual transformation through contact with that which is uncreated, timeless and eternal. Such a transformation, when it is real and not imaginary, brings about a complete openness of mind and heart that endows every relationship with a quality of love and understanding that never fades away.

The personalities of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Jiddu Krishnamurti were

quite different. She was born in 1831 to a Russian aristocratic family, had a fiery temperament and loved adventure and travels. He was a shy, vacant-looking Telugu-speaking boy born in 1895 to a Brahmin family in South India. While she went on to found the Theosophical Society in 1875 and left behind a body of teachings which became the historical and metaphysical foundation of modern Theosophical literature, he shook the Theosophical Society to its very core in 1929 when he dissolved the Order of the Star in the East and ceased his association with the TS and with a role he had not chosen.

In spite of the above-mentioned differences, there are profound similarities between some aspects of HPB's and Krishnaji's teachings on self-knowledge, the nature of the mind, newness, the self, understanding, true seeing and the timeless experience, among other things. This article, however, is not an attempt to reconcile the views of such profoundly different individuals or to justify why they differed. It is based on the premise that those who have found wisdom share a perception of life which is fundamentally

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similar in its essential aspects for, as was said of wisdom, 'being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new'.¹

Perhaps students of both HPB's and Krishnaji's teachings may find this present attempt pointless. Some students of HPB's works seem to see Krishnamurti as a messianic invention by both Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater. On the other hand, some Krishnamurti students tend to look at the Theosophical Society as if it was 'frozen' in the 1920s, apparently ignoring the fact that it emerged from that turbulent period reinvigorated by its refusal to ascribe authority to any person or any teaching, and insisting that its members are free to explore the significance of life through their own enquiry. It is possible that wisdom-teachings from different epochs and cultures are indeed in dialogue with each other for they embody aspects of a perennial insight into life's unfathomable depths. The words of the wise may differ but their language is one.

Self-knowledge

The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fibre of the heart that one is *ceaselessly* self-deceived.²

To know oneself as one is, requires an extraordinary alertness of mind, because what *is* is constantly undergoing transformation, change, and to follow it swiftly the mind must not be tethered to any particular dogma or belief, to any particular pattern of action.³

The present age has been hailed as the 'information age' and never before have human beings had such a colossal amount of information and knowledge at their fingertips. Yet, and not surprisingly, self-knowledge remains elusive and very rare. Both HPB and K suggested that without alertness and awareness one cannot see through the deceptions that mental activity creates. Several traditions have insisted that in order to know oneself there must be impersonal attention to what happens both within and without. Such attention not only sees through the machinations and illusions which we have become accustomed to call 'me' but also brings them to an end. Self-knowledge is the beginning of transformation.

The Learning Mind

He must endeavour as much as possible to free his mind, while studying or trying to carry out that which is given him, from all the ideas which he may have derived by heredity, from education, from surroundings, or from other teachers. His mind should be made perfectly free from all other thoughts, so that the inner meaning of the instructions may be impressed upon him apart from the words in which they are clothed.⁴

Reality is not a thing which is knowable by the mind, because the mind is the result of the known, of the past; therefore the mind must understand itself and its functioning, its truth, and only then is it possible for the unknown to *be*.⁵

In order to learn the mind needs to

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educate itself. The word education comes from the Latin *educere*, 'lead out'. Fresh understanding and insight are not possible if the mind is constantly 'crowded' with opinions, second-hand knowledge and reactions. They have to emerge from a deeper source within. The mind that truly learns is the one that pays attention to what is before it — the 'book of life' — and has an understanding which is both sensitive and compassionate — qualities that can only unfold in the present moment.

Newness

Every such attempt as the Theosophical Society has hitherto ended in failure, because, sooner or later, it has degenerated into a sect, set up hard-and-fast dogmas of its own, and so lost by imperceptible degrees that vitality which living truth alone can impart. You must remember that all our members have been bred and born in some creed or religion, that all are more or less of their generation both physically and mentally, and consequently that their judgement is but too likely to be warped and unconsciously biased by some or all of these influences. If, then, they cannot be freed from such inherent bias, or at least taught to recognize it instantly and so avoid being led away by it, the result can only be that the Society will drift off on to some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die.⁶

Only when there is no residue of memory can there be newness and there is residue when experience is not finished,

concluded, ended; that is, when the understanding of experience is incomplete. When experience is complete, there is no residue — that is, the beauty of life. Love is not residue, love is not experience, it is a state of being. Love is eternally new.⁷

The world bears ample testimony to the fact that mindless identification with an ideology — religious, political, intellectual, institutional — begets separateness, aggressiveness, violence and bitter division. It has been said that the reason why people so identify themselves is because it gives them a sense of security. But this, alas, is only one aspect of the problem. The unconscious desire for power and authority is a very deep undercurrent in the human mind and it has the capacity to warp and twist our understanding and judgement, thus preventing us from knowing what newness truly is. Only contact with what is eternal, beyond time, what HPB referred to as 'living truth', can make newness possible. Such a contact takes place only when there is the ending of all 'residue' — the debris of unfinished experience which generates conditioning in its many forms.

No Self-seeking

The Book of the Golden Precepts — some of which are pre-Buddhistic while others belong to a later date — contains about ninety distinct little treatises. Of these I learnt thirty-nine by heart, years ago. To translate the rest, I should have to resort to notes scattered among too large a number of papers and memoranda

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collected for the last twenty years and never put in order, to make of it by any means an easy task. Nor could they be all translated and given to a world too selfish and too much attached to objects of sense to be in any way prepared to receive such exalted ethics in the right spirit. For, unless a man perseveres seriously in the pursuit of self-knowledge, he will never lend a willing ear to advice of this nature.⁸

Therefore there is no method for self-knowledge. Seeking a method invariably implies the desire to attain some result — and that is what we all want. We follow authority — if not that of a person, then of a system, of an ideology — because we want a result which will be satisfactory, which will give us security. We really do not want to understand ourselves, our impulses and reactions, the whole process of our thinking, the conscious as well as the unconscious; we would rather pursue a system which assures us of a result. But the pursuit of a system is invariably the outcome of our desire for security, for certainty, and the result is obviously not the understanding of oneself.⁹

One of the interesting phenomena in the world today is the 'self-help' industry. It is a big business worldwide, commanding millions of dollars and involving the production of many books, DVDs, seminars, workshops, etc. A pattern that pervades this industry is that it offers people *what they want* — fulfilment, wealth,

pleasure, recognition, personal power, psychic abilities, kundalini awakening, among many other things. Invariably, in such an industry questioning the patterns of self-seeking is not encouraged as the aim is to enhance the capacities and powers of the personal self. And yet the advice of the wise ones throughout the ages has always been the same: be aware of your motives, learn to look at yourself impersonally, be alert to the trappings created by self-interest. Self-seeking goes in the opposite direction to self-knowledge. The former imprisons us more and more in illusion and frustration; the latter opens the gateway to true spiritual freedom.

Activity of the Mind

The mind is the great slayer of the Real. Let the disciple slay the slayer.¹⁰

Now what is mind as it is functioning? It is actually a process of isolation, is it not? Fundamentally that is what the process of thought is. It is thinking in an isolated form, yet remaining collective. When you observe your own thinking, you will see it as an isolated, fragmentary process. You are thinking according to your reactions, the reactions of your memory, of your experience, of your knowledge, of your belief.¹¹

In the above passages, both HPB and Krishnaji point out one of the essential features of the activity of the mind: its self-created separation from Reality. Our minds, under the sway of self-centred activity, prevent us from having a true and

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complete relationship with life in all its splendour. Unless we actually see for ourselves the continuous process of isolation created by the personal mind, it is of no use for anybody to tell us about it. In the strongly metaphorical language of *The Voice of the Silence*, one has to 'slay the Slayer', which may mean looking at all mental activity — thoughts, memories, emotions, reactions — without automatically identifying with it.

What is the Self?

The self of matter and the Self of Spirit can never meet. One of the twain must disappear; there is no place for both.¹²

Where *you* are, the *other* is not.¹³

Evolution is a vast process, stretching over almost unimaginable periods of time. Throughout this process consciousness unfolds many capacities and at the human stage it is centred in the mind and its activities. Even emotional responses are dependent upon and conditioned by mental activity. Thus the mind becomes the centre of our individuality, which has at its core a strong, resistant and resilient sense of self. It is like a fortress in which self-image and self-importance are the protecting walls.

Close consideration and study reveal that such sense of individuality and self are not natural developments of the evolutionary movement. They are *acquired* and are the mind's response to the process of experience. When the experience is pleasant there is identification and attachment. When it is unpleasant there is

repulsion and avoidance. But the wise ones have taught that we need not remain in such a state of bondage, that freedom is possible and that that freedom is within, for it is what we really are: the Other, the One without a second, the Self of all things, the uncreated Order.

Dying to the Past

Long and weary is the way before thee,
O disciple. One single thought about the
past that thou hast left behind will drag
thee down and thou wilt have to start the
climb anew.¹⁴

Kill in thyself all memory of past experi-
ences. Look not behind or thou art lost.¹⁵

When the mind is agitated, questioning,
worrying, dissecting, analysing, there is
no understanding. When there is the
intensity to understand, the mind is
obviously tranquil.¹⁶

Past impressions exert a strong pull on the mind and condition its activity. Perhaps one of the reasons why we dwell so much on the memory of past experiences is our profound attachment to and identification with our self-image. This intense process causes a serious drain on energy and in order to know ourselves we need the energy of attention and wakefulness. Life only happens in the present and continuous attention to the present is necessary for the mind to gain that capacity to see things clearly. There is no light in past experiences.

Learning to Listen and to See

Unless thou hearest, thou canst not see.

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Unless thou seest, thou canst not hear.¹⁷

To understand a problem obviously requires a certain intelligence, and that intelligence cannot be derived from or cultivated through specialization. It comes into being only when we are passively aware of the whole process of our consciousness, which is to be aware of ourselves without choice, without choosing what is right and what is wrong.¹⁸

Most people seem to have no difficulty in hearing and seeing what is happening around them. In scientific work, the capacity for hearing and seeing has been developed to a great degree and we now have, for example, potent telescopes that send images from the farthest reaches of the universe that one can see in one's home computer! But it is quite another matter to hear and see what is actually happening within oneself. In the US recently an astronaut, highly trained scientifically and intellectually, was charged with attempting to assault a fellow astronaut who apparently got in the way of her romantic interest. To truly learn how to see and listen to what happens within one's consciousness requires quiet objectivity and dispassion, an awareness that comes into being when one realizes that honest confrontation of oneself is the only sane alternative.

Looking without Images

For mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects. It needs the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away

the dust of our illusions. Seek O Beginner, to blend thy mind and Soul.¹⁹

To look is important. We look to immediate things and out of immediate necessities to the future, coloured by the past. Our seeing is very limited and our eyes are accustomed to near things. Our look is as bound by time-space as our brain. We never look, we never see beyond this limitation; we do not know how to look through and beyond these fragmentary frontiers. But the eyes have to see beyond them, penetrating deeply and widely, without choosing, without shelter; they have to wander beyond man-made frontiers of ideas and values and to feel beyond love.²⁰

In both above-mentioned statements one aspect of the mind's conditioning is highlighted. As St Paul wrote, 'now we see through a glass, darkly' (1Cor.13:12). Whatever we see — Nature, other people, ourselves — we see it through the dark glass of our conditioning, our psychological memory, the accumulated impressions of many experiences, reactions, predilections as well as inherited responses. These become inbuilt in the very process of perception. On the other hand, when there is the glimmering of wisdom within there is a new perception that reveals the intrinsic nature of everything. As C. Jinarājadāsa wrote, 'even a wayside flower throbs with the message of the cosmos'. For the unaware a wayside flower is just another little flower like all the others; for someone who is learning to look without images, it is an embodiment

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of timeless beauty, order and grace.

Love is the Only Real Relationship

To reach Nirvāna one must reach Self-knowledge, and Self-knowledge is of loving deeds the child.²¹

There can be true relationship only when there is love but love is not the search for gratification. Love exists only when there is self-forgetfulness, when there is complete communion, not between one or two, but communion with the highest; and that can only take place when the self is forgotten.²²

HPB's statement quoted above is nothing short of revolutionary. There will be some for whom self-knowledge is a private, individual affair, and who tend to shun relationships as 'obstacles' on their way to knowing themselves. But her words clearly indicate that it is only through love that Self-knowledge comes, almost as if suggesting that loving deeds help us to gain access to a much deeper dimension within ourselves. Krishnaji's statement that love exists only when there is self-forgetfulness equally implies that genuine love is free from the entanglements that arise from self-centred activity. In a fundamental sense, there is no difference between self-knowledge and love in their true meaning.

Freedom from Oneself

The way to final freedom is within thy SELF.

That way begins and ends outside of Self.²³

The fundamental understanding of oneself does not come through knowledge or through the accumulation of experiences, which is merely the cultivation of memory. The understanding of oneself is from moment to moment; if we merely accumulate knowledge of the self, that very knowledge prevents further understanding, because accumulated knowledge and experience becomes the centre through which thought focuses and has its being.²⁴

The word 'paradox' has a very interesting etymology. It is a Greek composite word: *para*, 'beyond', and *doxa*, 'opinion'. A paradox, therefore, is an expression or a teaching that challenges, perturbs and unsettles accepted opinions on a given subject. The passage from *The Voice of the Silence* quoted above is a paradox: freedom is within us but the way to it begins and ends outside of self. The ample canvas of human experience throughout the ages attests to the fact that any self-based endeavour sooner or later ends in frustration. As the well-known saying affirms, 'the path of Occultism [or Self-Knowledge] is strewn with wrecks'. Illustrating the insidious ways of the personal self, the Buddha, in one of his sermons, compared the self to a stranger that comes in the dead of night to a household, asks for food and shelter, gets liked by all the family in the household, and eventually kills the householder and takes over his entire property and family. Unless one is self-aware, from moment to moment, as suggested by

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Krishnaji, inner freedom remains elusive. Another paradox: in order to know oneself one has to be free from oneself as a product of past experiences.

Undying Life

He standeth now like a white pillar to the west, upon whose face the rising sun of thought eternal poureth forth its first most glorious waves. His mind, like a becalmed and boundless ocean, spreadeth out in shoreless space. He holdeth life and death in his strong hand.²⁵

Life is always the active present; time always belongs to the past and so to the future. And death to time is life in the present. It is this life that is immortal, not life in consciousness. Time is thought in consciousness and consciousness is held within its frame. There is always fear and sorrow within the network of thought and feeling. The ending of sorrow is the ending of time.²⁶

The word *samsāra* means, among other things, going or wandering through the circuit of mundane existence, the world, worldly illusion. It is described in ancient scriptures as a wheel that imprisons the soul or mind in birth, death and rebirth. One of the strongest currents in the mighty stream of *samsāra* is *avidyā*, the primordial or beginningless ignorance or unawareness. Great seers have maintained that it is ignorance that attaches us to life

and makes us afraid of death; such a pattern has dominated human life on earth for millennia.

But in every age there have been those few who have walked into the wilderness, through uncharted territory, and discovered the truth about the human condition. One of their fundamental discoveries is that life and death are not opposites that we should fear or become attached to. They are simply two aspects of the same existence. It is our *perception* of them that makes them appear separate and distinct, but they are one.

There is life in death, and death in life. To die to all experiences, all attachments, all projected images of oneself and of others is to discover uncreated, immortal life. And to live without accumulating experiences but understanding them as they arise and to be completely free from the tyranny of time which breaks the unbreakable Whole into past, present and future, is to welcome renewal. In such a consciousness suffering comes to an end, naturally, effortlessly.

HPB and Krishnaji never met each other but the essence of what they taught was perhaps part of a timeless dialogue. For as she co-founded the Theosophical Society and left a legacy of profound wisdom and insight, he helped us to realize that the word — the *teaching* — is not the thing and that the fragrance of sacredness is to be found in a life untouched by the self and its petty concerns. ✧

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19. Blavatsky, op.cit., II.115.
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23. Blavatsky, op.cit., II.169-70.
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The most eloquent word is silence.

Achyut Patwardhan

Advaita Vedānta: A Religion for Contemporary Philosophers and Scientists (Part I)

KLAUS K. KLOSTERMAIER

In traditional India, philosophy and religion were not really separate pursuits, and the question whether Vedānta should be termed ‘philosophy’ or ‘religion’ — a question ardently discussed by Western scholars since the nineteenth century — did not arise.¹ In nineteenth century Europe and America, religion was largely identified with Christianity in one form or another and the representatives of Christianity showed, as a rule, little interest in Vedānta. Those Westerners who did, like Arthur Schopenhauer, Paul Deussen, Waldo Emerson and a few others, were associated with academic philosophy and not with ecclesiastical establishments. There were of course the Indologists, who wrote treatises on Vedānta, translated texts and did historical research. They rarely went beyond mere description and would not make comparisons or evaluations of the questions raised. Meanwhile Indian academia has accepted the same departmentalizations, which are commonplace in the West, a separation between philosophy and religion, the distance between which seems to be growing in both East

and West. Vedānta continues to be claimed as ‘theirs’ by both philosophers and religionists and so we find an increasing number of studies by philosophers who leave out essential ingredients of Advaita Vedānta as a religious tradition, and a great many representations of Advaita Vedānta by students of religion who leave out the substance of *jñāna* as being too technical and too ‘philosophical’.

Contemporary studies of Vedānta often adopt presuppositions and biases of the modern Western intellectual tradition, which not only insists on a separation of Church and State, but also on a separation of philosophy and religion. The disconnection of (intellectual) ‘fact’ and (spiritual) ‘value’ which was canonized by Immanuel Kant in the early nineteenth century led to the principle of *Wertfreiheit* (value-freedom) of academic research and teaching, which was supposed to liberate the university from prejudice and subservience to particular ideologies.

Another one of the assumptions of the modern intellectual world was that linear

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formal rationality is the one and only criterion of truth. With it goes a rejection of the right of a tradition to interpret itself authoritatively, and the claim of the 'critical scholar' to possess all the tools of textual interpretation. The total disjunction between text and tradition, between the author's intention and the meaning of a work, becomes canonical in deconstructionism.

The typical Western intellectual also disregards the interdependence — stressed by Indian traditional scholarship — between moral/ethical/personal qualifications and intellectual insights. Whereas it was a commonplace in traditional India to consider 'truth' as the result and fruit of right living, the modern Western intellectual rejects any suggestion that the way one lives one's life should have anything to do with one's intellectual work.

I. The Advaita Vedānta of Śankara: a religious philosophy or a philosophical religion?

Advaita Vedānta as founded by Ādi (original) Śankara was a religion — the continuation and reform of an ancient tradition of salvation-seeking through renunciation and meditation. This is true regardless of whether one assumes Śankarāchārya to have lived in the sixth century BCE or the eighth century CE and irrespective of the controversies going on as to whether Śankara is 'orthodox' or whether he was a *pracchanna bauddha*. Tradition connects the birth of Śankara with divine intervention. His followers considered

him an avatāra of Śiva, sent by God for the restoration of dharma. He fulfilled his duties as a brāhmin and duly underwent initiation into *samnyāsa*. His teaching was, in his mind, nothing but the correct exposition of *śruti* or scripture. His concern with the right understanding of the nature of Brahman was soteriological: a person would incur loss of felicity here and beyond if he misunderstood the meaning of Brahman. His life as an *āchārya* (religious teacher) was spent preaching and teaching dharma, restoring and reconsecrating old and dilapidated temples, installing sacred images and exhorting people to follow the dharma, to perform their obligatory rituals and to worship their gods. The five *matha-s* (monasteries) which he founded were to continue the practice of life which he had established. In post-Śankaritic times they became centres of pilgrimage and temple-worship.

Śankara's major effort was towards the restoration and continuation of *sanātana dharma* (ancient religion). Vedānta as *śāstra* (authoritative exposition) was designed only to remove the objections of the opponents of *sanātana dharma*² which existed before and which is brought to light by Advaita Vedānta. Philosophy in the sense of critical and systematic thinking was used as an instrument for the preservation of dharma. The saving element in Advaita Vedānta is not its argumentation but the *sanātana dharma*!

In his commentary on *Brahma-sutra* II.1.11 Śankara warns, 'not to challenge

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on the strength of mere logic something that is to be known from the Veda. For reasoning that has no Vedic foundation and springs from the mere imagination of persons, lacks conclusiveness. . . . nobody can rely on any (logical) argument as conclusive, for human intellects differ.’

Brahmasutra-bhāshya III.4.17 ff. insists on the necessity of *samnyāsa* as a basis for the existential (the only true!) understanding of Advaita Vedānta. Advaita is not so much a system of logically interconnected propositions as a way of life based on a perception of ultimate reality. The statement that *māyā* as well as Brahman are *anirvacanīya* (ineffable) is not an evasion of an answer to a question, or a ‘mystical’ escape, but an indication that the ultimate concern is not language but reality itself, before and above all verbalization. A Vedāntin must not only talk and think Advaita, but must also live it according to the rules of tradition, the *sanātana dharma*, of which Advaita is part, and which it does not supersede.

The *Vivekachudāmani* (an early Advaitic work, regardless of whether composed by Śankara or not) clearly spells out the ‘religious’ presuppositions of Advaita Vedānta. Verse 3 says that human birth, the longing for liberation and finding the guidance of a *mahāpurusha* or great being are due to *devānugraha*, divine grace. The four qualifications, as detailed in verses 18 ff., again are clearly ‘religious’: *viveka*, the first, consists in the realization of what is Real and what is unreal (*brahma satyam, jagad mithyā*). This clearly is not a logical conclusion from facts observed but a spiritual

intuition. The *Vivekachudāmani* lists also *śraddhā* (faith) as essential, explained as ‘acceptance as true of what scriptures and guru-s teach’. So are *bhakti* (devotion) and guru-worship. The guru is appealed to as an ‘ocean of mercy’. The ideal of the ‘wise’, as described from verse 33 on, lists rigorous and logical thinking as only a small fraction of the qualifications of a recognized teacher of wisdom. The guru is expected to ‘save from death’, not just to point out logical fallacies in the student’s sentences. The *ajñāna* (ignorance) described in V.47 is not a lack of training in logic, but a deeper human malaise: the misunderstanding concerning one’s true identity.

Śankara’s teaching was never considered by his followers to be just the fruit of his own intellectual endeavour, but it was deemed a revelation provided through him for the sake of the salvation of humankind.

II. Further ‘Religification’ of Advaita by Śankara’s Successors

Y. Sawai has pointed out that the religious element found even stronger expression in post-Śankaritic and in contemporary Advaitic literature and practice than in Śankara’s own writings.³ Both the terminology and the ritual of *bhakti*-religion were used to provide access to Advaita for the laity, which by far outnumbers the *samnyāsīn-s*. In our own time some Śankarāchārya-s have adopted an explanation of *śraddhā* and *bhakti* which reflects not only Vaishnava traditions but Christian usage as well. In their English language pronouncements

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(or in English language translations of their statements) the Śankarāchārya-s sound hardly different from Christian church leaders when exhorting their followers to fulfil their religious duties, to renovate or build temples, to assemble for worship and to lead a holy life.⁴

Sarvajñātman begins his *Samkshepa-sāriraka* with an invocation to Vishnu, the

first link in the geneology of guru-s of Advaita which is as follows: Viu (Brahman) - Brahman (*ātman*) - speech (Veda) - Ganeśa - Vyāsa - Śankara - Sureśvara - guru, the living presence of Advaitic tradition. The purpose of Advaita is not to provide information or analysis but a means — *sāadhanā* — to reach *moksha*.⁵
(*To be continued*)

Endnotes

1. There is the possible exception of the Gaudiya Vaishnava's expressed disdain for the Navya-Naiyāyikas' 'logic-chopping' as not conducive to generating *premān*. However, the logicians themselves would insist that their activity was leading to emancipation.
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Comprehend one philosophical view through comprehensive study of another one.

Ācārāngasutra 5.113

Journeying towards the Sacred

MERCEDES VILA ROBUSTE

BEFORE we can journey towards the sacred, we have to realize the necessity for a greater understanding of our own consciousness, and of matter, which is the envelope of consciousness. We have learned that in every universe the Logos imposes upon matter certain definite rhythms, and every vibration corresponds to a change in consciousness.

Everyone who is interested in the spiritual life should find out if the word 'sacred' corresponds to something which exists within himself, or whether it is only a word used by others, a mere concept. To lead an inner life, it is necessary to test oneself, examine one's motives, and see whether one really wishes to follow the spiritual or future security at a superficial level.

The search for the sacred must be wholehearted, without any personal interest. The inner life must start with a deep concern for others and desire for the good of all. Spiritual enquiry must begin in the heart, not with mere ideas. Only enquiry which brings one closer to truth provides the wisdom to live the right kind of life.

The change towards the spiritual life must penetrate at all levels. Sometimes it comes quickly, sometimes more slowly.

The turnover, so to speak, may vary, but as life is change, this is a fact which cannot be ignored. Since everything seems to be transitory — and perhaps momentary — much thought has been given in different ages and cultures to whether there is something eternal or sacred.

The mind of man has to become increasingly capable of reflecting the truth. Those who are ready for divine wisdom are those who have found out for themselves what is unreal, and have set it aside as a result of their own perception. So there will be more growing awareness of reality, better actions, and relations will emanate spontaneously from a state of consciousness which has become more receptive, making it possible for one to be more capable to be nearer the sacred.

Clarity, which is the light of discrimination, arises when one takes the trouble to study life deeply in oneself. Clarity of perception is necessary in order to distinguish the essentials. Clarity makes it possible to see that the root cause of our troubles is selfishness. One must move from the unimportant to the basic, from the superficial to the fundamental.

Only when there are clarity and a deep concern for the good of all, the search can

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begin. The great truths of life are not external facts but dimensions of consciousness.

To know what is sacred, one has to discover that one is spiritual within, and this spirituality will guide our lives at a certain moment. Such condition therefore does not consist in doing many things, but in bringing about an inner transformation, a certain interior state, which marks the beginning of the sacred path.

One comes to know what that state is by understanding oneself, which means observing what is happening within. By observation, one can purify one's nature of everything that belongs to the material or external life, to see what it stands for, and to reject it when necessary.

Worldly life consists not only of physical or mental contact with material things. Matter is everywhere, and it is not possible to escape from it. Therefore, living a material life means not only being in contact with matter, but having an attitude of possessiveness. There is a great difference between our relationship with objects, persons, and ideas when there is the urge for possession, and when there is not. The mind must learn not to attach itself, whether it be to concrete, mental or spiritual objects. Non-possessiveness has to be a complete fact — inwardly and outwardly.

To transcend earthly life is to be completely free from demand, to be content with that which comes unasked, joy or sorrow. When the mind and heart have renounced falsehood, violence, and the demand for objects, the worldly attitude disappears. A

state of purity and simplicity comes about and the non-material can be known.

The renunciation of unimportant things wipes away impure and ignoble thoughts, motives and memories. To renounce is to be free from the self. When the mind is cleared of its psychological content, there is no longer any feeling of separateness or of self.

Therefore, to find the sacred, one has to accept people as they are, from other countries, having other beliefs, other ways of thinking, other colours, creeds, and so on. One then acts naturally, and that action is not identified with the 'I', so that the mind becomes free from what brings separation. The renunciation of self-identifying experiences is the beginning of a new life — the sacred life.

The man who is free from doubt does what he knows to be right, and not what others say. One should, however, be considerate of others. One who comes to that stage always chooses that which leads to the eternal, and not that of the passing moment.

When one is properly prepared, the teachings at our disposal become essential, and there can be an inner transformation. Consciousness undergoes a dimensional change, having thrown away some of the attachments of the personality and become more aware of the sacred.

In *Light on the Path* it is said:

The peace you shall desire is that sacred peace which nothing can disturb, and in which the soul grows, as does the holy flower upon the still lagoons. ✧

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

There's a moon in my body, but I can't see it! A moon and a sun.
A drum never touched by hands, beating, and I can't hear it!

As long as a human being worries about when he will die,
and what he has that is his,
all of his works are zero.
When affection for the I-creature and what it owns is dead,
then the work of the Teacher is over.

The purpose of labour is to learn;
when you know it, the labour is over.
The apple blossom exists to create fruit; when that
comes, the petal falls.

The musk is inside the deer, but the deer does not look for it:
it wanders around looking for grass.

Kabir

Path to Self-realization

SUNDARI SIDDHARTHA

Two Paths

To everyone who sets himself to seek for truth, two paths will appear. The first lies outside himself, stretching towards the centre of the boundless universe, on the edge of which we appear to stand as an insignificant atom. The second, also beginning where the first begins, runs inward to the unknown centre of man's own being. Ignorant man, who bases all his judgement on appearances, invariably turns towards the first. The outer path does not lead to the Divine. It does not indeed lead anywhere. Turn now inwards and look at the Inner Way, the way that leads from man's outer worldly self, back into the depths of his being.

Very Few Go beyond the First

However, few ever get beyond the crossways in the life in which they get their first glimpse of a distant ray of Truth. They have grown so used to dependence upon external aid that they fear to risk a step upon the Inner Path because it is a way which the pilgrim must walk alone. Those who do have the courage to take a few hesitant steps along it, almost turn back because of the fear of standing alone. They rush back to the crossway, where

there stand many guides, making crutches for the weak and selling to the ignorant maps and plans of the way. Unfortunately, those guides are not helpers but hinderers. Their charts are false, for they themselves have never trodden the inner way; their supports are useless to the pilgrim, because there is no room on the Inner Path for anything except his own feet. There is a Chinese proverb, which translated runs thus: 'The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.' This means that we have to start treading the inner path right now. We must begin our journey inward from this very moment.

But what or where is the need to undertake such a journey? The answer lies concealed in the words Self-realization. Self indicates the lower and higher nature of man; the lower is *aham* and the higher nature is the *ātman*.

Second Path for Self-realization

Self-realization means a radical change, a complete change of the lower to the higher self. The lower self is basically impure and has limitations, and after realization it is pure, limitless — the Supreme Self. The lower self expresses itself in daily life, in our behaviour, our

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reactions, our relationships. So we know it. But the Higher Self is subtle. It is not known. One has read about it, heard people speak of it, and consequently the mind has formed an image or a concept of this Higher Self.

But because of the barrier caused by self-centredness, the soul has great difficulty in contacting the bound self. The latter is not ready, as yet, to hear the Voice, as it were. It is only when the personality or lower self starts to be concerned, not with its own need and wants, but with those of other humans, other life forms, that the will of the higher self starts to function and the process of Self-realization begins. So it is an individual, internal process. The Real Self in fact is the one which asserts itself inside our body.

The Authentic Path through Theosophy

In the light of this explanation of 'Self-realization', it is easy to perceive the reasons for Theosophy being the authentic path to that goal. J. Krishnamurti calls it the pathless path.

The path of Theosophy, when followed, helps us to realize the real nature of Self — our real Aspect, that which has now been enveloped and sullied by the cobwebs of the body, the world and other temporary coverings.

Theosophy leaves each of its adherents 'to go it alone'. It grants complete autonomy to its members. H. P. Blavatsky emphasized so often in her writings that dogmatism was anathema to the work of

the Society. Therefore within the Theosophical movement, no teaching should be expounded as a 'system of belief'. HPB and those who followed in her wake presented teachings which were the result of their own endeavours in research and personal experience. They presented these teachings not as the whole truth. They described it as only the 'lifting of a corner of the veil'. It was for us to consider and evaluate, in accordance with our own studies and experiences.

From the scientific point of view also, Theosophy frightens us by the freedom it allows. It offers to members a platform for personal research, free of limitations of religious or philosophical authority.

The New Age

It is not an exaggeration to say that it was the formation of the Theosophical Society that heralded the change in human consciousness which has taken place during the last century. We generally talk about the world 'getting worse' but compared to the overall life of humanity a century ago, the human consciousness has indeed taken a big step forward. In the process of taking that step, there have been, and still are, many turbulent changes taking place, but some of the results are already clear to see. There is now a growing global consciousness, an awareness, of our responsibility to the environment, more concern for the welfare of animals, and through the tremendous proliferation of charitable and educational organizations and the media, an incredible amount of work is being done for those

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who are in need. It may well be said that 'we are entering a new age'.

Instant Nirvāna

But 'the New Age' has also brought in its wake problems — numerous paths — short cuts and instant paths. The concept of *instant* has become a fad of this New Age. We want everything in a 'jiffy'.

We are all aware of the many shrewd and unscrupulous people who have turned the marketing of spiritual teachings into a business, using techniques which appeal to the lower personality — promising power, glory and riches to those who are willing to part with large sums of money for courses which 'guarantee enlightenment' and instant Nirvāna.

It is an occult law that spiritual teachings cannot be sold or acquired through the payment of money. These so-called teachings undoubtedly provide the seeker with various diversions and psychological tricks and games for the lower self to play with, but that is all there is to it. It has no relationship to true Spiritual Growth. The spiritual growth of the self is not an external process, but is the gradual realization of the inner man, the arousal of the Will of the Spirit, which brings Divine or God Wisdom into activity.

Therefore Theosophy is chosen as the path by only those who 'truly seek'. These seekers are marked by the virtue of humility, the desire for Truth, the desire for service to humanity, and that too not as a mere duty, but as joy.

Effort is Ours, Theosophy Only Guides

Through its lectures, study classes, sale of books and publishing of magazines, the Society promulgates these concepts. But these are offered for scrutiny and acceptance and not as dogmatic statements of 'facts'. All other thoughts and beliefs are also given a place here. But, at the same time, we do have a duty to see that quality, not quantity, governs our presentations. Many a time, we hear TS members say that we should invite everyone to our 'lecture platform' so that we hear different ideas and opinions. They justify it by saying that ultimately, in the long run, all these 'isms' bring people only to Theosophy. But this means that we are leaving it to the seekers to make the wrong choice (under the guise of freedom of will). Actually it is our duty to steer people in the direction which is generally accepted as leading to the Path. We should help our brothers and sisters and not knowingly hinder or delay their progress. It may be argued that the person has to experience the karma of the choices made. But it is also true that the karma of misguiding people comes back to us. That is why true teachers and gurus are very selective about which pupils they take under their wing. They know that they become karmically responsible for the direction of that pupil's life. Similarly, we are bound by the quality of the information and literature that comes from our Theosophical centres.

Therefore, having been convinced of

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the efficacy of Theosophy, we should direct everything towards the focal point. Our Lodge programmes, our libraries and bookshops should emphasize and project that which has quality; that which points and guides people in the direction of the authentic Path.

To an extent, this means displacing the people from their own path. But the latter is the worldly path, which the lower self is used to following habitually. This lower self already has the deep-rooted concept of the gratification of its own needs and desires. It tends to be drawn towards those ideas and experiences which will pander to its personal existence. It has, perforce, to go through these experiences in order to 'know'. So it chooses what turns out to be a chaotic lifestyle.

Discrimination — the Initial and Ultimate Means

But the process of Self-realization is that which takes the emphasis away from the lower and directs it towards the higher. It is this Higher Self which takes the decision to proceed on the authentic path. This leads the Self through the process of realization. Thus it reaches back to the

'Source of its Being'. This becomes possible because the act of discrimination is used by the higher Self. While the lower chooses that which is glamorous and sensational, the higher discriminates between *śreyas* and *preyas* and chooses *śreyas*: the Real and the True, the Eternal.

At the Feet of the Master, while giving the four qualifications for those who walk the Spiritual Path, places 'discrimination' as the first and foremost quality, followed by desirelessness, good conduct and love. The last three have no meaning until the first is acted upon. The book says:

The first of these qualifications is discrimination, and this is usually taken as the discrimination between the real and the unreal, which leads men to enter the Path. It is this, but it is also much more, and it is to be practised, not only at the beginning of the path, but at every step of it, every day, until the end.

It is said Man himself is the Path, the Truth, the Life. And as Theosophy makes our thinking attuned to that idea by giving us the responsibility in a personal capacity, we call it the authentic Path, the Path which tells us that we ourselves are the Path. ✧

When a glimpse of Our image is caught in man, when heaven and earth are sought in man, then what is there in the world that is not in man? If one only explores him, there is a lot in man.

Hazrat Inayat Khan