

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Seasons of the Mind

TIM BOYD

IN H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, before she introduces the actual work itself, she takes some time to point our attention in a specific direction. She states that everything that is to follow must be built upon a basic understanding: the writing of *The Secret Doctrine* was based on the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, and for the reader to have some appreciation of the consideration of the *Stanzas*, there are some basic ideas which she listed as the Three Fundamental Propositions.

The first Fundamental Proposition presents "an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible", described as "unthinkable and unspeakable". The second Proposition speaks about periodicity, and that is the one I wish to discuss. The third Proposition relates to "the obligatory pilgrimage" of every soul. This strikes much closer to our experience and to the level of our present understanding.

In the second Fundamental Proposition HPB states that there is a certain observation that has been made in every department of Nature, a fact that is undeniable and universal, the Law of Periodicity. She gives some of the many examples such as the alternation between day and night, life and death, sleeping

and waking, and so on. These periodic occurrences are so universal that she describes periodicity as "an absolute Law of the Universe".

We also experience periods, larger combinations of day and night, and have the cycle of the year, the annual cycle in which the Earth goes around the Sun. It begins at one point, returns to that same point in relationship to the Sun, and that is a solar year, during which many lesser alternations occur, such as 365 periods of day and night. The same concept of periods applies at all levels from small to large. So there are cosmic days and nights, the day of Brahma, the night of Brahma. We speak of the life of a planet as one of these "days", and its obscuration as one of those "nights". These are vast spans of time of which our understanding is necessarily limited.

This idea is expressed in various ways in all of the world's spiritual traditions. In Christian scripture, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, there is an often quoted expression of this second Fundamental Proposition. It reads in part, "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven". The author then provides a lengthy list of some of these "seasons": "A time to be born and

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a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance . . .” Everything has its season. As long as there is manifestation, there is alternation. Much of what we recognize as cycles in Nature is also reflected in our own psychological cycles. These interior cycles are the subject of deeper explorations into the nature of the human experience expressed in the scriptures and spiritual approaches of the world.

There is a particular cycle on which the Buddha’s life and teachings specifically focused, a continually repeating wheel upon which humanity is trapped, through which we pass without relent — the cycle called Samsāra — the wheel that leads from birth through life, to death, to rebirth. Intimately linked to Samsāra is another distinctly psychological cycle known as the Twelve Nidānas, or interdependent links of origination, that lead us into Samsāra and hold us fast. It has as its beginning ignorance, and as its end death and rebirth, leading to the cycle’s renewal in ignorance. In the absence of any other factor these cycles would doom humanity to an endless repetition of an unsatisfactory state of being.

However, there is another factor which comes into play, the factor of *consciousness*, and particularly that consciousness which has attained a degree of self-awareness. The possibility

to interrupt the cycle and “step off the wheel” presents itself at that point in one’s unfoldment, where the statement that “Each man is his own absolute lawgiver” begins to have meaning. Rather than a continuously repeating circle without break, the application of an unfolded consciousness lifts it out of the plane of this constant repetition of an ignorance-fueled existence. Viewed from above, there is a circle; viewed from another angle with the unfoldment of consciousness, what we see is more of a spiraling nature. The pattern is still circular, but more. It takes place on different levels. Something more profound is added as consciousness is unfolded.

Seasons of inner activity have been enshrined in social, religious, and spiritual practices of the world. In India there is the well-known framework for the stages of life known as the four ashramas — the four seasons of each incarnation. It begins with youth, the *brahmacharya* āshrama, where learning, listening, hearing, is the activity suited to that season of life. It is progressive in the sense that the learning period allows for the expression of that learning within the next season. It does not differ from what we perceive of seasons in Nature. One prepares for the activity of the next.

After the learning phase comes the application of what has been learned in the season of the householder, *grhastha*, where family, career, and community responsibilities are emphasized. Having completed the householder phase, then comes a period of withdrawal, much like

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spring leads to the summer, which leads to the autumn. It is a period in which the strength that has been generated during that life begins to draw down toward the roots in a time of quiet, of contemplation, of withdrawal from the world of activity. In classical India it was seen as the season of the forest dweller or hermit (*vānaprastha*).

The time for withdrawal allows for the experience of moving toward a fundamental center whose fullest expression is stifled during the normal course of life. This forest-dweller period leads to the possibility, not normally engaged in by many now or in the past, of the renunciate, the *sannyāsi*, the one who gives up *all* the connections with the worldly life, to focus solely on unification with the Divine. These are expressions of seasons within an incarnation — a cycle within another cycle — of which we are aware.

The great question that was posed by Ramana Maharshi — “Who am I?” — is our constant question. How we answer determines how we behave in the world. There are many ways in which this is expressed. “Who I am”, from an occult definition, means that every human being is an expression of highest spirit and lowest matter, linked together by mind. That is not merely the individual human being, but the human stage; all of us share this threefold nature, its laws and guiding powers. The connecting link between highest spirit and lowest matter is always the mind. To come to understand the workings of the mind in relation to these other two streams is fundamental, and

seems to be the quest that we are on at any time we are responding in an awakened manner.

In our process of unfoldment of consciousness, always the mind is the *primary* component involved. An understanding and an ability to work with its capacities is a necessity *if* we are going to be effective in this process. The mind has its seasons. What might those seasons look like? How might they be described, and, more importantly, how might we experience those seasons and interact with the seasonal nature of the mind? In many ways, the scriptures of the world come into being to address this fundamental problem. One of the spiritual jewels of humankind is a very small section of the great epic poem, the *Mahabharatha*. Within it we find the *Bhagavadgītā*. This particular text is an inexhaustible source for accurate, powerful, and usable descriptions of some of these seasons of the human mind and its potential for an expanded expression.

The potential for the human mind is described in *The Secret Doctrine* as the “mind to embrace the universe”. In the *Gītā* we have the dialogue that takes place between the warrior prince, Arjuna, and his charioteer, Krishna, the inner Divine, which is an attempt to communicate to us something of this higher potential. Its meaning is diluted if we regard it as a historical conversation, although that might have its value. It is, as *all* deep truths, more in the nature of a myth. A fact is a very small thing. The world is full of meaningless facts. However,

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a myth is the great story that draws on symbolic expressions, those symbols that connect themselves to the deeper aspects of our consciousness, which then admit us to an experience at a much deeper level.

Whenever we have a prince in a story, he is necessarily not yet a king. Although of a kingly nature, the unfoldment required for their true regal stature and rulership of a kingdom has not yet occurred. When we have the prince, we have the immediate idea that there is more still to come. The *Bhagavadgītā* story begins with prince Arjuna at the commencement of a great battle. The first chapter talks about a particular season of the mind that is rich in terms of its potential. It is also rich in terms of the way it influences us to try to avoid its experience. It is not the place we choose to go in daily life, or in our efforts at expansion and understanding.

This is because the first chapter in the *Gītā* talks about the profound and life-altering experience of Arjuna's despondency, his despair and depression. It is only out of this initial season of his mind that the dialogue was even able to occur. In the absence of the shattering experience of despondency no dialogue would take place between the outer self and the Divine. This is something we need to value. No one who describes themselves as having a healthy mind seeks out despair or despondency. The fact is that we also do not seek the spring, the summer, or the winter. They have their time, and they

come upon us regardless of our seeking.

Normal intelligence would require us to prepare for that which we know lies ahead. Just as during life we make preparations for the moment when we no longer will be there: we pass on our belongings, give away our house, sign a will. That is normal behavior and preparation. At a deeper level we also prepare for that moment during the course of a lifetime by experiencing what it means for consciousness to operate apart from the body. We take time for meditation, for a proper perspective on the relationship of consciousness to its vehicle, and, in that process, experiences necessarily ensue, which if rightly understood, tend to ease the process of transition. Anyone who has had the experience of the life that lies beyond the body, at the moment of death, rarely finds themselves craving the limitation, pain, and suffering that come from life within a body. That is part of the practice.

In Arjuna's case, he was ready for something for which his entire lifetime had prepared him. As a member of the warrior caste, it was his makeup, his training, and experience that his life, his dharma, was to do battle. Particularly when such a righteous and noble battle stood before him, the choice in terms of his dharma was obvious. But the choice in terms of this particular season of his mind was in contradiction to his very makeup, his dharma, and so the conversation ensued. Of course, the nature of that conversation went beyond the battle that was ahead of him. After speak-

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ing with Arjuna initially, much as happens with a parent and a child, the child has a moment of fear or uncertainty based on an incorrect view of the world. And what happens? We take the child in our arms and talk to them. Divine parent that he is, Krishna says to his troubled child: “It is all right, don’t worry, there is more to this than you see. There will come a time when you will recognize that none of these people you are going into battle with will die, neither will they come to life. Nothing is born, nothing dies, *all* of it is an expression of the nature of the Divine.” As Arjuna’s mind becomes settled, then a deeper possibility presents itself, and so the teachings of the *Gita* begin to unfold. But for our purposes, this seasonal aspect of the fluctuations in our own consciousness is what we should explore. When we become aware of a thing, then we can do something about it.

I used to have a teacher whom a group of us young people would gather around and listen to him speak. He would talk about many profound things, much of it linked to his own life experience, being significantly older than we were. Sometimes he would stop talking and would ask us: “Do you understand what I’m saying?” From time to time he would directly ask *me*, and because I always tried to listen intently to what he was saying, my response would be: “Yes, I do, I understand.” He would pause for a moment, look at me, and then he would say: “No, you don’t!” I would argue, “Yes

I do”, and I would repeat exactly the words he had just said. He would still look very kindly at me and shake his head and say: “No, you heard me but you do not yet understand. But, you will. The season will arrive when the understanding that lies behind these words and the unfoldment of your own awareness and capacity to understand will run their course and at some point these two points will meet, and you’ll understand. For now, you have knowledge. In that moment ahead lies the possibility of understanding, something that exceeds knowledge, as space exceeds sky.”

This is the possibility. At this moment, our work, our capacity allows us to attempt to understand, knowing that by effort some things can be accomplished, but understanding is not one of them; wisdom is certainly not one of them. In the moment where we find ourselves now, we give effort. Our responsibility, our dharma, for those to whom a spiritual path has any meaning, is to try. Over and over again in the Mahatma Letters, in the writings of HPB, one thing is constantly emphasized — we must try. Success is not guaranteed, neither is it insisted upon, but trying and effort lies within the capacity of *every* person, without exception. To withhold that effort is to behave in a manner that is not serious. A certain seriousness, which does not equate to humorlessness, is a requirement in every season of the mind. ✧

The Profaning of the Elements

RADHA BURNIER

UNTIL the industrial age, humans remained close to the five elements — earth, water, fire, air and ether (*ākāśa*) — which tradition said were the basic components of the material universe. The universe was a perpetual source of wonder and mystery for the peoples of the earth before the reasoning faculty claimed monopoly over knowledge. Reason has been prolific with explanations which throw a hard and glaring light on natural phenomena. So the mystery of Nature has ceased to transport man to the realm where his mind blends in harmony with Nature. Enamoured with its own ideas and programmes, the human mind has exiled itself from the vastness, poetry and depth of Nature. The elements which appeared to be godlike in earlier times have become plain chemical substances.

The ancient seers of the Veda, who composed a vast number of hymns in praise of the five great elements, regarded them as more than material substances, for they understood their primordial, life-sustaining quality. Occult tradition says that the physical elements have their

counterparts in the subtler worlds right up to the spiritual world. The gods like Varuna, Lord of the Waters, and Agni, Lord of Fire, were personifications of the spiritual essence of the elements and of the power they wielded over life. Recognizing this, on important occasions symbolic offerings were made to them as expressions of man's gratitude and adoration.

Water in any form — rain or snow, river or ocean — has played a tremendous role in the life of man. His body, as well as the bodies of other creatures, is composed mostly of water. Water purifies and cleans; it is needed to cook; it carries away and performs a thousand different functions upon the earth. A distinguished Muslim scholar, commenting upon the classic first *sura* or hymn of the Koran points out that the existence of water upon earth alone is enough to prove that an inexplicable power operates everywhere. For what would we and all other creatures do without water? A famous Vedic mantra says:

O Waters, you are the sources of Bliss . . .
What most blissful essence there is in you,

Mrs Radha Burnier (1923–2013) was the seventh international President of the Theosophical Society for 33 years. Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, September 1987.

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Of that make us sharers, like loving
mothers.

Similarly of the Fire they said:

O fire, lead us to plenty through good paths,
O God, knowing all the paths . . .
To thee the True One this oblation we
make.

For the Zoroastrians, fire was the purest of all elements, the inspirer of good deeds, good thoughts, and good speech.

Similar attitudes to the elements can be found among other people too. In China, rain, thunder, lightning, and so on were named as gods. Numerous legends about them taught the common people a sense of respect. Rain, for example, was not a commonplace event, merely to be explained in scientific terms; it was the expression and action of a great fecundating spirit or dragon. Both in India and China, the mountains were held to be the abodes of the gods. The earth itself is a goddess, whose physical body must not be desecrated and whose products are not to be wasted. The rivers were sacred and their beauty was described with eloquence.

The parallel to all this can be found in the Greek, Nordic and other mythologies. Thor, the king of the gods, with his thunderbolt is the Nordic expression of the Indian king of heaven, Indra, who wields the rainbow and strikes with thunder. These great gods were assisted by numerous demigods and invisible followers, representing perhaps the different functions fulfilled by the elements.

Respect for all that pertained to Nature came spontaneously to people who looked upon it with wonder. The American Indian loved the earth on which he lived and did not think either of possessing it or exploiting it, though he took from it according to his needs in modest measure. Instances have been known of Australian aborigines who, feeling part of the earth and its elements, instinctively knew where water could be found under the sands of the desert.

The modern attitude to the natural elements is, on the contrary, a profane one. The idea of conquest and utility has replaced the profound sense of wonder and worship which existed in relation to the earth, the waters, the mountains and natural phenomena of every kind. The result is that man is doing infinite harm to himself. Instead of worshipping the rivers and using their waters to purify himself, he pollutes them with chemicals, sewage, nuclear waste, and so forth. Words like Chernobyl, Bhopal, and the Rhine have acquired a new connotation, indicating disasters of different kinds. Efforts to divert rivers, mine the earth and make greedy use of the different elements have brought new problems and done serious damage. The indiscriminate destruction of forests is the cause of disastrous famines.

To the modern man, the approach of the ancients and the simple people of the earth may appear superstitious. Ancient texts have advised man never to cut a tree unless absolutely necessary and even then to ask pardon of the *deva*

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which guards the tree. The modern man believes in no such guardians of Nature's children. But it is time to think afresh on these matters. There may be much greater wisdom in looking at Nature with wonder and respect and

worshipping her elements than in looking with profane eyes which see only objects for exploitation everywhere. Can this tendency be reversed by a new education of the senses and a different kind of sensitivity? ◇

As we try to move assiduously from the centre of the "self" to the centre of the "Self", greater calm, peace and bliss will gradually begin to envelop us, greater tenderness and concern for the welfare of all that lives well up within us, as also greater compassionate understanding of the words and actions of others, however unkind they may be; for the Self is one and therefore without selfishness and strife. It has been aptly observed that when a Master smiles at a person's weakness, with his smile goes a blessing to make the person stronger.

To be able to move steadfastly from the "self of matter" to the "Self of Spirit" or from self-centredness to "Self-centredness", it has been said that one has to be on the "watchtower" all the time; or, as Lord Buddha once cautioned his disciple, "Keep wide awake, Ananda, wide awake."

Surendra Narayan
Life Is for Living, "Keep Wide Awake"

On Our Graduation

The Final Goal of Human Life

ANGELS TORRA BURON

THE theme of this Congress makes us reflect on various things. Why was the Theosophical Society (TS) founded? Not to be good, nor to be a movement teaching people how to behave, that is, not to steal, not to kill, not to cheat, and so forth. Neither is it a school of occultism. One of the Masters (Mahachohan) said: “Rather perish the TS with both its hapless founders than that we should permit it to become no better than an academy of magic and a hall of occultism.” It is not a club where one goes to satisfy intellectual curiosity or whenever one gets bored.

The TS was founded to promote the spiritual regeneration of man, and that’s us. The first object, universal brotherhood of humanity, is something the Adepts have insisted upon as the base to promote their high motive, which is mainly the transformation of the human being, of all its nature, its behaviour and its future. We gather here for several days to confirm that Theosophy is a way, or should we say rather that Theosophy points the direction we should take.

H. S. Olcott, in his inaugural speech of the TS in New York, in 1875, said that the Society does not want believers, but investigators, searchers, enquirers.

Theosophy is the Perennial Wisdom: the Truth passed on for ever, since ancient times by different messengers, using different languages, depending on the times they lived in and the people they spoke to. They all adapted to the needs of their time.

However, Truth is always the same; its interpretation is what varies, depending on the ear that is listening. In one of his plays, *The Tempest*, Shakespeare said that life is a dream and nothing is true or false; it all depends on how we look at things in this world of dreams: “We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.” In *As You Like It*, he said: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.”

From the very beginning of humankind, there has always been a message revealing the Eternal Truths. It has been meant to help humans to wake up from

Mrs Angels Torra Buron is General Secretary of the Spanish Section of the Theosophical Society. Talk given at the European Congress, Barcelona, Spain, August 2017.

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indolence, lethargy, and attachment to instinctive life. This instinct responds to *kāma-manas* impulse and has a huge potentiality, which needs to be developed.

Inside the pine cone there is already the tree it will turn into once germination and growth have taken place. It only takes the appropriate conditions to let it become a full tree. When we work with school and education systems, according to the results we are looking for and what we want the students to become, we set progressive steps they have to take to reach graduation.

In the Letter No 12 of the Mahatma Letters, it is said that the aim of this human life wave is to reach the unitarian consciousness called buddhahood. The destiny of humankind therefore is to reach the ideal of human progression and perfection, which the Secret Science depicts. This is the duty of everyone, our final goal. Once we get there, we will be able to graduate.

Sooner or later, we will all reach that state of Unitarian consciousness called Buddhahood. It is up to us and to no other to advance with the avant-garde of humankind, helping explore the field and what is there awaiting, or just be a part of the squad keeping pace and waiting for the day when there is no other option but to reach the goal because it has already been set like this.

We are encouraged to read theosophical literature. They are like maps to show us the road we are engaged into. But we are also told that these will be of little use for the student if he knows the

laws explained in the books and does not apply them to help both himself and those around him.

From H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) onwards, the majority of thinkers, speakers and writers within the theosophical field have inspired us by saying more or less the same: they all have talked about a necessary change of consciousness in the human being. Radha S. Burnier promoted human regeneration; J. Krishnamurti talked incessantly about the “here and now”; and G. S. Arundale spoke about nirvana, and the necessary change of consciousness for it.

C. Jinarājadāsa encouraged the new humanity of intuition, the cooperation in view of a union of the people, which would lead us to a real world consciousness. To him, all the nations of the world constitute ONE humanity, ONE community. According to him, the United Nations is the manifestation on this physical plane of the first object of the TS, creating therefore the concept of universal brotherhood. N. Sri Ram’s words always pointed to the awakening of a deeper consciousness that would lead the student to an individual and personal investigation in search of Wisdom.

John B. S. Coats urged those who were young to work together. His efforts must have somehow been fruitful because most of us who were young back then are still here, and we are fully conscious that individual effort added to others’ efforts will eventually give its fruit and will undoubtedly have good results. Joy Mills encouraged us to work from

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inner to outer transformation.

We should not forget all those who, besides their words, have proved with their acts that it is possible to live otherwise, applying theosophical teachings to daily life, not only in spiritual matters but to practical aspects as well. These are after all two sides of the same coin.

So, universal or Unitarian consciousness is the final goal for (us), searchers of Truth. Getting there requires an inner development that nobody can give us and it can only be acquired through personal and individual effort: the highest concept that a human being can have of the divine Essence can only be attained by oneself.

We are told by Annie Besant that the student of Theosophy can develop his own inner spiritual powers and that he has the ability to find the truth shining under many veils of ignorance and confusion; to do that, he must purify his life so that his inner Spirit attains the understanding of the higher truths. That Spirit dwells in every human being and as his Light shines, the divine awakens for he who has a pure heart.

Sri Ram said that with very little knowledge of the Science of the Self, which we call Theosophy, a process of change starts. Through that change one starts looking at things differently. Once we start studying Theosophy, it does not stop, not only during one life, but in all the future lives as well.

Everything is interconnected

Nowadays scientific research is advancing fast in many fields. The

Institute of Noetic Sciences has been promoting for a long time research at the frontiers of consciousness, including brain-mind connection. We also see that research is being done in the fields of neurosciences and neurotechnology, including the emerging field of neuroethics. Some authors say “for every change in consciousness, there is a corresponding change taking place in some area of the brain”.

Last year we had a very interesting seminar by Dr José Foglia on the effect that meditation has on the human brain as well as on the entire body. He also mentioned the infinite possibilities humans would have if only they were capable of using meditation applied to the regeneration of their way of living, thinking and acting.

In Mahatma Letter No. 90 (ML–22), Mahatma KH invokes the Hermetic axiom: “As it is above, so it is below; as it is below, so it is above”, implying the correlation of the universal with the human mind, or should we say universal consciousness and human consciousness, based on the law of analogy.

KH writes about the “infinite mind”, which he indicates should really be called “the infinite Force”. Joy Mills points out we might assume that while no physical brain, such as we have in our own heads, exists at higher levels or frequencies, something corresponding to the functions of the cerebrum and cerebellum evidently exists there. In his explanations, KH suggests that there is a correspondence between the various levels “throughout

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the myriads of worlds”.

On the other hand, some theosophical authors say that we are but spiritual and intellectual monads, atoms of the supreme consciousness of our universe. According to that, we take our origin from that consciousness and we shall return to it, but later we will begin a larger pathway of evolution in the next cosmic manifestation. G. D. Purucker says that even the atoms that form our human body are an expression of this cosmic entity, since they are psychomagnetically drawn to this body, which in its turn is also an expression of this cosmic entity. Everything in the universe is interlinked and interblended with everything else. This celestial consciousness is our fountain of inspiration, the everlasting guiding light, which permeates every atom of our being. It is the all-pervading cosmic life-intelligence, connecting intimately everything in the universe.

This takes us to a metaphor used in Buddhist philosophy: the interconnectedness of the universe, described in the Puranas more than three thousand years ago. It is the image of “Indra's net”, also called “Indra's jewel” or “Indra's pearls”. This is the net of the Vedic god Indra, whose net hangs over his palace on Mount Meru, the centre of the world (*axis mundi*) of Hindu cosmology and Hindu mythology. Indra's net has a multifaceted pearl at each vertex, and each pearl is reflected in all of the other pearls of the net, like mirrors towards the infinite. The Buddhist concept therefore teaches us that everything is intimately

connected everywhere.

There is no real difference between this metaphor and the string theory in physics, which tells us there is a vibratory connection between all that exists within the universe.

About our Search for Truth

The TS consists of students, who may or may not belong to one of the world religions and who, united by the aspiration to eliminate religious conflicts and gather people of good will, wish to study the truths behind every religion and share the result of their studies with others. They are not united by the same belief, but by the aspiration to find the Truth. They think this can be attained through study, meditation, purity of life and devoted dedication to high ideals, and they think that truth is the result of effort rather than a dogma dictated by some authority. The nature of this search should influence their lifestyle. It should alter the character of relationships with others; and affect actions about the important things in life.

Theosophy students think that beliefs must be the result of individual study or intuition and they must be based on intuition. They understand, in their tolerance, everybody, even intolerant people, not as a privilege they give, but as a duty they fulfil, trying to remove ignorance without attacking those who suffer from it. They see in each religion a partial expression of the Divine Wisdom and they prefer their study to their condemnation, and their practice to proselytism.

On Our Graduation

Their motto is Peace; their aspiration, Truth; their objective, ultimately, is the Unitarian consciousness, Buddhahood.

In Letter No. 28, the Mahatma gives the assurance that to spread the knowledge transmitted from olden times, and which has come to us through HPB and her guiding masters, there have always been in the past, and there will always be in the future, volunteers to serve the dictates of Truth and to spread the knowledge acquired through their own experience and to apply it in their own life.

Joy Mills asked a question that we might as well ask ourselves today

here: “Which is the role we have, both collectively and individually, as heirs of that very rich wisdom tradition? Which role do we have in this great work, this noble cause of the Universal Brotherhood?”

And we could add another question, about our commitment as theosophists: How far, to what extent, are we committed to Life with a unique aspiration and one-pointedness towards achieving our goal, which is to graduate as complete human beings, regenerated, transformed, intuitive, wise, after attaining the Unitarian and universal consciousness of Buddhahood? ✧

OFFICIAL NOTICE

According to Rule 13 of the TS international Regulations, Ms Nancy Secrest has been elected by the General Council as international Treasurer effective 1 November 2017.

In addition to accounting and banking experience in the USA, she was named Assistant National Treasurer of the TS in America in 1994, becoming National Treasurer six years later until July 2012, and she served on the TS in America Board of Directors.

Tim Boyd
President

The Divine Wisdom of the *Ísa Upanishad*

BHUPENDRA R. VORA

THE Upanishads are the creations of the highest minds of the Vedic sages. They are revelatory and intuitive words of the great sages (rishis) that have arisen from their illuminating experiences of the nature of Reality. The Upanishads give expression to many schools of thought, but the general thrust of their teachings is towards non-dualism or *advaita*. This philosophical approach is based on the fundamental assumption that, ultimately all things are One, that the innermost essence of the human being is the very same essence that underlies the Universe at large. In *The Secret Doctrine (SD)* this non-dualism is referred to in the “one fundamental law” that states:

The radical unity of the ultimate essence of each constituent part of compounds in Nature — from star to mineral atom, from the highest Dhyāni-Chohan to the smallest infusoria, in the fullest acceptance of the term, and whether applied to the spiritual, intellectual, or physical worlds — this is the one fundamental law in Occult Science.

SD, Vol. I, p.120 (7th Adyar Ed.)

Without this fundamental unity, spiritual liberation would be impossible. For such liberation is the realization of that unity, beyond the constantly changing human world and beyond even the other planes of existence. The Vedas have declared that this manifested world with its multiplicity of names and forms is ephemeral and is in a constant state of flux. But behind this world of names and forms is an unchanging and abiding principle that is its source and support. This spirit of the Upanishads is reflected in the one fundamental law and the “three fundamental propositions” of *SD*. The Universe produced from the one undivided *ātman (Paramātmā)* by the on-rolling process of manifestation (*vivarta*) is thus a unified system, a mighty organism in which the inmost nucleus and pervading Spirit and Self is the one abiding Being, the one supreme Person (*purusha*) in his aspect as Brahman, the word or as *Ísa*, the Lord. The nature of this “*ísa*”, as well as the purpose of life are discussed in the *Ísa Upanishad*.

The *Ísa Upanishad* is one of the

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smallest Upanishads, with merely eighteen verses that are packed with meaning. In these 18 verses the Upanishad sums up the significance and purpose of human life and the attitude with which one should live upon the Earth and depart from it at the time of death. It speaks about the performance of duties, using the knowledge of Brahman; and by righteous means living and achieving liberation. The knowledge of Brahman, or Self, and the selfless performance of obligatory duties are both considered important for liberation. This is the central theme of the *Upanishad*. All Upanishads begin with what are called Shanti Mantras that set the tone for commencing the study. In the *Ísa Upanishad* there is a mantra that conveys its spirit:

Om! That (supreme Brahman) is infinite, and this (conditioned Brahman) is infinite. The infinite (conditioned Brahman) proceeds from the infinite (supreme Brahman). Then through knowledge, realizing the infinitude of the infinite (conditioned Brahman), it remains as the infinite (unconditioned Brahman) alone.

Om! Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

In its unique way this Shanti Mantra expresses the non-dual (*advaita*) philosophy of the Upanishads. It also expresses the infiniteness of the Universe in its manifestation and also the infiniteness of the unmanifest Brahman. In describing this Reality, Madame Blavatsky wrote: "Centre everywhere and circumference nowhere."

The first verse of the *Ísa Upanishad* gives the essence of the wisdom teaching

contained therein. Such is the tremendous meaning packed in this verse that Mahatma Gandhi once declared that this verse was adequate to convey the entire Vedic philosophy, should the rest of the literature be otherwise lost. The manifested world with its multiplicity of life in varying forms and names, is pervaded by the "one universal divine principle" that is its source and the supporting life.

*isā-vāsyam idam sarvam
yat-kīñcha jagatyām jagat
tena tyaktena bhuñjithā
mā ḡrdhah kasya sviddhanam*

(v. 1, *Ísa Upanishad*)

The verse advises the aspirant to recognize that the entire Universe is pervaded by the Divine Spirit, which is its source and support. Therefore he should enjoy the things of the world without a sense of ownership and not covet what belongs to others. In this manifested life no human being can claim ownership of things of this world as his own physical life is limited and he will leave behind on his death all that he claims to be his. Nature has bestowed its many resources on human beings to enjoy with a sense of trusteeship. But men create desire and attachment that eventually lead to anger, ambition, and so forth. The ultimate result is suffering.

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi again, "renounce and enjoy" is the answer he gave to a reporter who wanted his life's message in three words. This message covers the spirit of the *Ísa Upanishad*. Renunciation is not a negation of life but an attitude of non-attachment to things

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or conditions of comfort or security to which humans get attached. It means an inner state of equanimity in the ever-changing circumstances of life. Referring to what attachment does to human beings, Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* states:

Ye suffer from yourselves. None else
compels,
None other holds you that ye live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss
Its spokes of agony.

In the following verse the composer of this *Upanishad* exhorts men to aspire for a full life of a hundred years performing actions in this spirit of non-attachment so that they do not become binding and eventually be the cause of suffering. Explaining the Law of Cause and Effect it says that actions that are not in harmony with the universal laws will cause suffering for the human being. Conveying this spirit of non-attachment the sutra of the *Light on the Path* says: "Kill out desire of life. Respect life as those do who desire it."

When all desire for a self-centred life has been transcended and all personal preferences are gone, the needs of the world guide the choice of the spiritual man. In the sutra of the *Upanishad* the sage advises the seeker after truth to see the Universe as an expression of the one divine life and work as its instrument in the plan of evolution. Such a person desires to live for the full length of his life actively working for the good of all life in accordance with Nature's laws.

Those who pursue self-centred inter-

ests work against their inner selves. The *Upanishad* is most explicit that man must never neglect his duties that should be performed diligently without expectation of the results of that action. It is interesting to note that the writer of the *Upanishad*, who remains nameless, does not take credit for the knowledge he conveys. He reminds the student that this is what he has heard from "those who know". This is a lesson in non-egoism and humility from this great sage. In the *Bhagavadgītā* (ch. 6, vv. 5–6), Lord Krishna advises the disciple Arjuna to listen to the voice of the higher Self, be guided by it, and not be pulled down by the lower self's desires and ambitions.

The *Upanishad* then describes the nature of the transcendental Reality in the following words:

Unmoving, yet swifter than the mind,
beyond the reach of the senses and always
ahead of them, standing, it outruns those
who run. In it the all-pervading air (one of
the five elemental states of matter) supports
the activity of the beings. (v. 4)

Elaborating further on the nature of this Reality or Brahman the *Upanishad* says: "It moves and it moves not. It is far and it is near. It is inside all this and also outside all this." (v. 5)

The sage of the *Upanishad* endeavours to explain the all-pervasiveness and unitarity of Brahman in this interesting manner where all paradoxical positions can be accommodated and be a part of that One Principle.

The echoes of this verse of the

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Upanishad can be seen in the findings of the physicist Robert Oppenheimer who said in relation to an atomic particle:

If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say “no”; if we ask whether the electron’s position changes with time, we must say “no”; if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say “no”; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say “no”.

In this manner he confirms the statement of the *Upanishad*. Brahman is the one stable and eternal Reality. It is one because there is nothing else, since existence and non-existence are that Brahman. The scientific view is now in convergence with the metaphysical view of Reality. The whole Universe is pervaded, by the single consciousness that the *Upanishad* calls *Īśa*. There is no “I” and “you” that arise as a result of the illusion of *māyā*. When an aspirant went to the great sage Sri Ramana Maharshi and expressed the desire to serve others, the sage responded with the question: “Where is the other?” The sage with his illumined vision of the world saw only Brahman in manifestation.

In his book *Wisdom of the Vedas*, Professor J. C. Chatterjee writes:

There is nothing absolutely stable, nothing permanently abiding, in the whole of the objective Universe, which is a system of ceaseless “goings-on” (collective movement) with everything in it continually moving and changing.

The existence of the manifested world

is not denied but its ephemeral nature is stated here. It explains that behind the multiplicity and complexity of this world is the one supreme Self. The realization of the innate oneness of all that exists, removes the conflicts arising from duality; in such a state there is no hatred or ill will for others. The enlightened sages were able to perceive this unity and were therefore free from inner conflicts. Likes and dislikes arise because of the attachment of the mind with the objects of the world and because of the feelings of separation and multiplicity.

In this connection Sri Aurobindo the great sage of the last century writes in his commentary on this *Upanishad*: “Unity is the eternal truth of things, diversity a play of the Unity. The sense of unity has therefore been termed knowledge or *vidya*, the sense of diversity is ignorance or *avidya*. But diversity is not false except when it is divorced from the sense of its true and eternal unity. The “Universal Prayer” that is recited at Theosophical Society gatherings reflects this philosophy of the *Upanishad*. It is a profound and powerful prayer:

O hidden Life vibrant in every atom,
O hidden Light shining in every creature,
O hidden Love embracing all in
Oneness,
May each who feels himself as one with
Thee
Know he is also one with every other.

The prayer reaffirms the innate oneness of all that exists whilst recognizing the multiplicity of existence in manifestation.

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For the man of realization all beings become the very Self, and therefore he is not deluded as he sees oneness everywhere. In such a state there is no sorrow. Sri Ramana Maharshi experienced this Oneness when he responded to the enquirer with the counter-question: "Where is the other?" He only saw the underlying abiding unity behind this changing world of names and forms. The *Upanishad* describes this "Reality" as "That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The Seer, the Thinker, the One, who becomes everywhere the self-existent." (v. 8)

The *Upanishad* teaches that ignorance is within the field of materiality (*prakṛti*) or transiency (illusion) and knowledge that which is within the field of divine consciousness (Eternity). Ignorance is attachment to the material world, pursuit of transient things and identification of oneself with the ego-sense. Knowledge or *vidya* means detachment from the material world and identification of oneself with one's inner Self.

The sutra of the *Upanishad* declares that the pursuit of knowledge results in the vision of oneness of life and the unity in diversity of all existence, whereas the result of ignorance is greater suffering and bondage. The two states of *vidya* or *avidya* eventually lead either to immortality or mortality. However the mere intellectual understanding of this knowledge cannot grant the perception of the Oneness. This can only be achieved through deep reflection and meditation that the sages engaged in.

Mortality means being subject to the process of constant birth and death as a limited ego bound to the dualities of joy and sorrow, good and evil, truth and error, love and hatred, pleasure and suffering and so on.

Immortality on the other hand leads to a state of consciousness that rises beyond the process of birth and death, beyond the chain of cause and effect, beyond all bondage and limitation. It is the realization of the Oneness of existence that is the manifestation of the supreme *purusha* or *sachhidānanda*.

In his commentary, *The Upanishads*, Sri Aurobindo states about the *Iśa Upanishad* (3rd movt, p. 70):

The Self outside Nature does not become and is immutable as well as eternal. The Self in Nature becomes, it changes its states and forms. This entry into various states and forms in the succession of Time is birth in Nature. . . .

Man starts from the troubled state of birth, he arrives at that tranquil poise of conscious existence, liberated from the movement which is the non-birth. The knot of the birth is the ego-sense; the dissolution of the ego-sense brings us to the non-birth.

Birth and non-birth are not physical conditions but soul states. One can be in a state of non-birth by breaking the knot of ego-sense and yet be in the physical state or body. If the concentration is solely in the state of dissolution of the ego, there is no birth again in the physical body.

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Being in physical manifestation or birth is however the means of progress and self-enlargement of the soul. It leads to a greater and fuller life that results in the final achievement of liberation or non-birth. The *Upanishad* enjoins upon the seeker to perform his duties to the best of his abilities and in a spirit of non-attachment to the results of the action.

In the ending verses of the *Upanishad* the sage refers to the Sun representing the divine illumination that is beyond the mind and the forms of the manifest world. It is the pure Self-luminous truth of things. The sage prays to that divine spirit to remove the illusions of the material world from his sight so that he may perceive the Truth in its pristine purity:

The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do Thou remove,
O Fosterer for the Law of Truth, for sight. (v. 15)

O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordainer,
O Illuminating Sun, O Power of the Father
of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together
thy light; the lustre which is the most
blessed form of all, that in Thee
I behold the *purusha*, there and there.
He am I. (v. 16)

The declaration “He am I” is made by an aspirant who has perceived the light beyond the illusions of the material world, and realized that the light within is the same as the light outside. He is then able to declare confidently *aham brahmāsmi*, or “I am that Brahman”.

In the Vedic sense, Surya the Sun-God represents the divine illumination

that is beyond the mind and the forms of the manifest world. It is the pure self-luminous truth of things. His realm is described as the Truth, the Law, the Vast. He is the fosterer or increaser, for he enlarges and opens man’s dark and limited being into a luminous and infinite consciousness. He is the sole Seer, Seer of Oneness, and Knower of the Self, and leads him to the highest sight.

His rays are the thoughts that proceed luminously from the Truth, the vast, but become deflected and distorted, broken up and disordered in the reflecting and dividing principle, that is the Mind. They form there the golden lid, which covers the face of the Truth. The seer prays to Surya to cast them into right order and relation and then draw them together into the unity of revealed truth. The result of this inner process is the perception of the oneness of all beings in the divine soul of the Universe.

Right action is therefore the increasing and finally the complete submission of the individual to the Divine Will which the illumination of Surya reveals in him. The knowledge of the One Divine Life in the fully self-conscious being, submission to that Brahman in the fully self-conscious action is the way to immortality. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, which has been considered the *Upanishad* of the *Upanishads*, Krishna gives to the disciple Arjuna the final message at the end of his long discourse that seems to echo the spirit of the final verses of the *Īśa Upanishad*. Krishna says to Arjuna:

*sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam
śaranam vraja*

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aham tvām sarvapāpebhyo mokshayishyāmi mā śuchah

This means: “Forsaking all other dharmas, surrender to Me alone; I will free thee from all sins. Do not grieve.”

In the opening verse the *Upanishad* says, *īśā vāsyam idam sarvam*, “the spirit of the one divine life pervades all man-

ifested existence”. Recognizing this, we should endeavour to live in harmony with all life, enjoying what Nature provides with a sense of non-ownership or attachment.

The uniqueness of this *Upanishad* is that it reconciles human life and activity with that of the pursuit of ultimate realization of Brahman. ✧

Man must understand his true relationship with the universe, which springs from the unity of the indwelling Spirit. When his relationship with it becomes a relationship of harmony it will display the values of that unity; he will then become a cooperater with Nature, and his free will becomes a force that helps her on that onward course we call Evolution.

Thoughts for Aspirants
N. Sri Ram

Theosophy: The Challenges of our Time

PATRIZIA MOSCHIN CALVI

I often think of our most prominent theosophical pioneers' huge efforts to elevate the consciousness of humanity over the past two centuries. With remarkable insight and discernment, they anticipated and espoused the great ethical and social issues that subsequently became a key battleground for all people who are committed to good causes. They made their voices heard about matters such as ecology, vegetarianism, vaccination, women's rights, capital punishment, prisoner abuse, hunger and famine worldwide, and educational and social reforms. But, if they were living now what topical issues relevant for contemporary human needs would they raise?

There have been big social and cultural changes in recent decades and the focus of public debate has shifted towards new areas such as bioethics, which deals with moral considerations relating to biological research and medicine. Bioethics is a crucial discipline because it can help us establish clear ideas about our values, which are really put to the test by scientific progress and sociocultural changes.

Another topic of this kind is the sexual revolution and the increasingly widespread use of contraception as well as abortion, and the development of artificial reproduction techniques.

I would also take into consideration everything related to the end of human life. New technologies are now available to save people from certain death and artificially extend their existence. The process of dying has ended up in doctors' hands and it has led to talk of medical imperialism. It has highlighted the need not only to give patients back their decision-making power and their dignity, but also to draw up living wills, which raise the age-old question of euthanasia.

Other noteworthy matters include the developments associated with research into molecular biology. For example, studies of this kind led to the mapping of the human genome, which is having an increasingly profound effect on our lives and our very concept of humanity.

Another area that should not be overlooked is the fascinating research being done by physicists on consciousness:

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a huge enigma into which scientists are yet to shed full light. Contributions have been made by researchers such as the distinguished mathematician Sir Roger Penrose, whose theory has much in common with Eastern religious concepts that see the soul as an integral part of the Universe, existing outside time and space. According to Penrose, bodily experience is simply a stage in the spiritual evolution of the human consciousness. It is a theory that opens up the possibility of positive confrontations between reason and faith, science and religion.

Biocentrism is another intriguing idea. The basic concept of biocentrism is that life and consciousness play a crucial part in the universe and that it is essentially consciousness itself that creates the physical universe in which we live rather than the other way around. For example, according to Dr Robert Lanza, an American medical doctor, the laws of the universe, its strengths and its constants are clearly made to support life. This implies that before life and matter, a form of intelligence already existed: primary intelligence that generated matter (or from which matter was generated), including living beings. In addition, Lanza believes that time and space are merely elements that enable us to understand things, but they do not actually exist. Similarly, it makes no sense, for him, to talk of death or of the death of consciousness, which he believes exists beyond the bounds of space and time, and is capable of being everywhere: both inside and outside the human body.

Lanza backs the theory of parallel universes that exist simultaneously, which is one of the cornerstones of biocentrism. It is an idea that comes from quantum mechanics and the basic concept is that a particle can be present everywhere and things can happen in many — sometimes infinite — ways. Therefore, if a body dies in one universe, its consciousness can migrate to a parallel universe, then endlessly continue entering and leaving bodies. It is a form of reincarnation of consciousness, or rather of recycling the energy of consciousness, which can obviously exist both inside and outside a physical body.

All of this led the physicist Paul Davies to say: “It may seem bizarre, but in my opinion science offers a surer path to God than religion. . . . The scientist and the theologian approach the deep questions of existence from utterly different starting points. . . . Many professional scientists are also deeply religious and apparently have little intellectual difficulty in allowing the two sides of their philosophy to peacefully coexist.” (*God and the New Physics*).

We could say we are living in the age of the “biological revolution”, which has opened up new horizons in the fight against disease and suffering but at the same time has introduced new risks and dangers. The changes that are taking place call into question ancient philosophical concepts and present unprecedented moral dilemmas, which are as hard to process for religions as they are for everyone else.

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Therefore, we are faced with the need to redraw our values system and we require new propositions that can provide humanity with support in the decisions that it has to make.

Let us take a look at some concrete examples. In 1980 the US Supreme Court ruled that new life forms could be patented. Shortly afterwards, representatives of the most widespread religions in the United States sent a letter to Jimmy Carter, who was the President at the time. While they acknowledged that creating new forms of life had dramatic potential for improving human life, they expressed great concern (and asked for strict regulations) regarding the huge power that it would give to scientists.

Meanwhile, when the big scheme to map and sequence the human genome (known as the Human Genome Project) was launched, it was immediately recognized that there was a need to accompany the scientific work with constant discussion of its ethical, social and legal consequences: a significant proportion (approximately 3%) of the funding for the project was set aside for studies of this kind.

If we look around us, on a social level, we will see numerous people suffering from what has been described as “the disease of the 21st century”: the inherent loneliness of the digital revolution, smart-phones, social networks, chat, and messaging services, Instagram and multiplayer online games. Essentially, everything that makes us feel like we are in contact with other people actually makes us

more isolated and shut off in our homes and our lives. Paradoxically, the social network craze means that we no longer have friends.

In addition, very recent studies have shown that 8 out of 10 women (a number which is a third higher than that for men) live in a constant state of anxiety. When they get up in the morning, their only goal is to squeeze all sorts of work, family, social and other commitments into the day. Anxiety is a natural mechanism that helps people to fight or flee from danger and increase their watchfulness, their heart rate, the blood flow from their internal organs to their muscles and the sugar levels in their blood. But while it was useful back when we were living in caves, it becomes a disorder when it occurs very frequently and it can cause problems such as panic attacks, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

This has led to the emergence of the remarkable business that revolves around products such as tranquilizers, medicines for relaxing, pills to fight stress and depression, and so on.

So how can we respond to all of this? What can we offer to people who are looking for new paradigms to help them to understand the world? In my opinion we no longer need dogmatic faith that guarantees the salvation of our souls. Instead, we need to be liberated from the passive way in which we contemplate and experience our inner selves.

Enlightened people from every era have tried to offer solutions to the problems of their time, going beyond the

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process of logical thinking. With our new values system, in a world that is experiencing profound and continual change, and in which people wander confused and incapable of offering answers and behaviour of any depth, the role of Theosophy is extremely important. It can give meaning to questions, and fill things that people consider empty with significance. This comes at a time when religions no longer have the same impact and the same ability to cater to today's needs.

Theosophy offers a vision of a number of dimensions of a world that otherwise makes no sense and in which existence has no meaning or prospects if it is only viewed on a horizontal, material plane.

Let us consider a few examples and proposals for work:

◆ The theosophical concept of Unity of All Life, the “essential unity of all life and being . . .” is reflected in our first object regarding universal brotherhood without distinctions. This concept is invaluable and it has all sorts of implications in not only ethical, but also political, social and scientific terms. For example, I am thinking of racism, of course, and in particular of religious discrimination, but also of the phenomenon of migration from Africa to Europe, that so deeply touches countries such as Italy, Greece, and Spain.

◆ Alternatively, there are issues such as karma and reincarnation that can be a big help for people who have been “dealt a bad hand” in life, and others, such as doctors and researchers who manipulate

our DNA, or judges who hold the life and death of other human beings in their hands. Adopting a different outlook on existence will not change problems, but it can help us to see them more as opportunities than as things that really harm us and that we must simply endure with resignation or anger.

If we consider the scientific theory regarding the “primary intelligence that generated matter . . .” that I mentioned earlier, it can be given much broader scope by the references to “an Absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned being” described by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*. Further, simple examples of this kind are provided by the ideas expressed in *SD* with regard to time, space and consciousness:

Time is only an illusion produced by the succession of our states of consciousness as we travel through eternal duration, and it does not exist where no consciousness exists in which the illusion can be produced, but “lies asleep”.

(*SD* 1, Cosmogogenesis)

Our ideas, in short, on duration and time are all derived from our sensations according to the laws of association. Inextricably bound up with the relativity of human knowledge, they nevertheless can have no existence except in the experience of the individual ego, and perish when its evolutionary march dispels the Māyā of phenomenal existence. What is Time, for instance, but the panoramic succession of our states of consciousness?

(*SD* 1, Cosmogogenesis)

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Esoteric philosophy teaches that everything lives and is conscious . . .

(*SD 1, Cosmogensis*)

The topic of consciousness also ties into the exceptional opportunities that we have, to evolve on this material plane. For example, HPB states that “There can be no manifestation of Consciousness . . . except through the vehicle of Matter; that is to say, on this our plane . . .” (*SD 1, Cosmogensis*).

The sacredness of life is also a pervasive topic that can be found in all theosophical literature, along with discussions on how to approach big correlated issues such as conception and euthanasia. It helps us to understand the Grand Design behind everything that exists and it gives us a part — and a conscious role — to play in the Divine Plan.

For example, the third fundamental proposition (*SD 1, Cosmogensis*) tells us of the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul — a spark of the Universal Over-Soul — through the Cycle of Incarnation (or Necessity) in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term. In other words, no purely spiritual Buddhi (divine Soul) can have an independent (conscious) existence before the spark which issued from the pure Essence of the Universal Sixth principle — or the OVER-SOUL — has:

(a) passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world of that Manvantara, and (b) acquired individuality, first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts (checked

by its Karma), thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest Manas, from mineral and plant, up to the holiest Archangel (Dhyāni-Buddha).

The following quote sums up the idea that death is a normal part of the change process: “An alternation such as that of Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and Waking, is a fact so common, so perfectly universal and without exception, that it is easy to comprehend that in it we see one of the absolutely fundamental laws of the universe . . .” (*SD 1, Cosmogensis*).

Even this small selection of brief mentions of the topic, suffices to show that Theosophy offers an exceptionally suitable way of approaching the problems presented by our time. Therefore, as theosophists we should help to make proposals and form working groups in order to contribute to the development of a new vision of the world and what happens in it, for the good of humanity as a whole.

As Sri Ram said, “The sole goal behind everything that we do should be to convey the Truth, which everybody needs in order to be happy . . .” and, as our President Tim Boyd affirmed on the occasion of the 100th Congress of the Italian Section: “Where there is a concentration of people there is a concentration of resources.”

Finally, I would like to leave you with a question: what would Blavatsky, Besant, Olcott, and others do if they were in our shoes, here and now? ✧

A Nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity — Utopia or Hope?

OLGA S. OMLIN

LET us for a moment step away from the identification of belonging to a particular organization or group, and perceive ourselves simply as seekers of Truth united by our common aspiration for the Universal Brotherhood.

As we proceed with our quest let us ponder on the following question: “What has changed in me as I am learning what Theosophy is?”

While contemplating on the theosophical view of the Universal Brotherhood and arranging my thoughts for writing them down I decided to dare myself not to use any quotes. There is nothing wrong in quoting wise and inspiring words of others. Indeed, it might be very helpful sometimes to use the expressions and explanations of the ideas and thoughts that resonate with us, as long as it does not become a habit of lazy thinking.

In order to explain what I mean we can take an example: as children we learn to ride a bicycle using detachable wheels for extra balance. With practice we become more confident in our riding and eventually have no need for such support.

We let go off them to discover the freedom and joy of riding a bicycle on our own.

In a university we are taught to include quotes and a variety of references in order to give additional credit to our dissertation. And we turn to apply the same principle of sound academic approach to Theosophy. Thus we base our own conclusions on somebody else’s insights and reflections. We quote the Dalai Lama, the Buddha, the letters of the Mahatmas and so forth — anyone whom we see as an authority. Sometimes we even try to make such authority out of H. P. Blavatsky acknowledging her words as a common ground for theosophists around the world that we can all settle on without any argument.

Respect someone for their altruistic work, feel reverence, love and gratitude, and yet see them as the expression of the same divinity and humanity as we all embody without making an idol or authority out of them — is the path of a true seeker of Truth.

Isn’t it that *Theosophia* requires from

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us one thing and one thing only — an open mind — to challenge the solid ground of our conditioning?

Each one of us has a unique spiritual path . . . some of us came to this incarnation remembering the principles of Divine Wisdom, some were reawakened by stumbling across the theosophical teachings via theosophical literature or being introduced to them through other people. Either way, the study of Theosophy challenges our world perception, inspires us to explore ourselves and to question everything which inevitably ignites our intuition.

I perceive Theosophy as life itself and to be a theosophist is the most natural way of living. I believe the understanding of Theosophy does not come from repeating what Blavatsky, Judge, Olcott, Purucker or Krishnamurti or any other theosophist said, or presenting theosophical ideas in lectures, talks or books. We can accumulate knowledge of the cycles of cosmic evolution, of the human septenary nature, of reincarnation and karma but it will not necessarily contribute to our wisdom. Only through inward contemplation, and being open to everything about us and our fellowmen, can we act wisely in relationships with other people and in harmony with life.

The present situation in the world is far from being harmonious. Humanity lives in fear, and it is a fact. The racism, violence, jealousy, competition we see around us are all a result of our fear. Humankind as a whole strives to overcome hostility and foster friendship.

However, hatred and anger still exist among people separating us from each other. Nowadays, nationalistic attitude prevails over global cosmopolitan outlook, and thus the vision of humanity as a universal family is considered by the majority to be a utopia. Yet it is in our ability to come together as Humanity where lies our hope for a peaceful future.

In order to bring change in the outer world we need to change our own way of thinking, our own perception. We need to learn to cultivate thoughts of love, goodwill and kindness, just as we so habitually generate thoughts of discontent, sadness and intolerance. To be the healing force for the world we need to think as being such already rather than focusing on what needs to be healed.

All the time we try to find some sort of external action to be performed in the future. By doing so we are stealing our attention from the only true reality we have, the here and now. We must make it a daily effort to use our imagination, our mental capacity, our intuition to realize, live, and see the Brotherhood of Humanity we speak about, as a reality. To use this positive impulse as a foundation for our actions, we have to start with ourselves!

Does Brotherhood imply one's participation in political, social or any other external reform? — not necessarily.

There are numerous organizations that promote brotherhood as a noble idea of human equality and unity without distinction of race, colour, creed, sex and so forth. Their work is certainly

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very helpful and important. And we as individuals often support such organizations donating our time and financial contributions. However, all these activities deal primarily with the consequences and not with the cause of the suffering we see and experience.

Theosophy however, speaks of the Universal Brotherhood as a definite fact in Nature, as essential unity of all life. It exists here and now. Nowadays, slowly modern science is rediscovering the idea that *life emerges from within*. This gives us a broader outlook on the world.

Perhaps we can come closer to the realization of the unity of life if we look at humanity as a state of consciousness. This is just like our physical body being influenced by the physical bodies of other people improving or worsening a common level of health, as evident in the case of contagious diseases. In a similar way our virtues and wisdom elevate universal morality and human consciousness. We have all experienced the influence of our thoughts and emotions on other forms of life, not just fellow humans. Our thoughts can either heal or injure, they can agitate or pacify, and their effect has no obstacle.

Each one of us is responsible for the well-being of this world. Thus when we recognize that Universal Brotherhood is not a mere cherished hope but a reality, our attitude towards life and our role in it changes. We naturally aspire to be more altruistic and tolerant. We recognize the opportunities to be of unconditional help to others, because it is a kind and right thing to do. And we include into the af-

finity of our goodwill other forms of life such as animal and plant kingdoms. Moreover, we realize that our progress in spiritual development is not something limited only for ourselves but it fosters the evolution of others as well.

Gradually we begin to understand that not only should our actions be ethical, but also the quality of our thoughts and motives. Our emotional nature needs to be harmonized and transformed in order that our capacity to love can be increased. For it is in love and compassion, that lies our power of helping and healing.

Are we looking for a solution, some sort of steps to be taken that will lead us to our aspired goal of the Universal Brotherhood? Sometimes, I feel that those of us who aspire to be theosophists, are trying to give a structure to the ideas, that can only be truly realized by living them. We have to learn to trust our inner nature.

Spiritual evolution is an inner quest. As soon as we create before us a concrete system of beliefs, we reach a dead end called dogmatism. Theosophy requires flexibility and openness of mind in order to be able to see things as they are, including ourselves. Life can never be reconciled with preconceived ideas; it can only be understood through experience in the present.

Living theosophical ideals through our heart awakens us from within because these virtues are our true nature. Our conscience is a proof of our innate goodness. It is the link between our higher and lower *manas*, and our discernment comes from our common sense.

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What is “a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood”? For me it is not a bunch of people who think alike, for such a brotherhood would become another sect separate from the rest of mankind. I see a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood as life itself. All life is a nucleus because brotherhood is what unites us all, and it is here and now. It is not something outside of us that we need to create or form. We are growing spiritually through relationships with others. This is where we have an opportunity to realize what the Universal Brotherhood is. What are the obstacles that we need to address if we want to cultivate brotherly relationships and live in harmony with other people and nations?

One such hindrance lies within ourselves — we want to be brothers and sisters only on our own terms and if others follow our vision. In my opinion, a sincere theosophist welcomes friendly and constructive criticism as an opportunity to awaken oneself from a trap of intellectual comfort.

In the Western world we share a passion to argue. The majority of us are obsessed with the desire to impose our opinion on others, trying to persuade them that our point of view is the most accurate. If we are wise we realize that Truth has so many sides that these different sides can be revealed in every point of view. The more we understand this simple fact the less we want to argue because Truth lies in the unity within diversity. In our ability to think freely is the key to our intuition. It does not really

matter what one believes, but whether one is noble, kind, sincere and true in the way one acts.

Another obstacle is that we do not want to associate ourselves with those people who in our view are sinful and immoral. Sometimes our righteousness isolates us from others because we might think that we are better than “them”. And this is a perfect test to see whether *our goodness* is genuine or it is a role that we are playing. It is not in our power to change others. Nevertheless, when we acknowledge something positive in others we are helping them to see it in themselves.

How often do we ask ourselves: “Am I a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood in my lodge, in my family, at work, and in any form of relationships I am part of?” What does it take? Perhaps alertness and awareness? We make a choice at every moment and we can make it consciously — no one can make it for us. We cannot put this responsibility on someone else. Theosophy is not a refuge from our fear of life.

How often do we pay attention to the choices we make whether it is a reaction, a thought or an action? For example, while I was walking in a shopping mall a mentally disadvantaged man was passing me by. At that moment I registered that I felt concerned, insecure, and shifted my body away from him automatically. Simply by paying attention to my reaction, by being honest with myself and asking myself why I chose to react that way, I made a choice to react with compassion rather than fear and to see

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him in a different light.

There are many paths to Truth. For another person it might be a different one than for me. As long as our common sense tells us that we act as a source of harmony rather than of discord we can follow that path.

When we are at peace with ourselves we are tolerant and compassionate towards others. It does not mean that we will feel kinship with everyone, but we will inwardly recognize humanity in everyone we meet. It will not save us from the situations when we are hurt by others or when we choose to hurt others. But with practice we will learn to make choices in harmony with our divinity and laws of Nature. Life is the greatest teacher and each incarnation is a precious opportunity to learn to live wisely.

The Theosophical Society was formed by and for people who do not simply believe in the Universal Brotherhood but who aspire with all their hearts and souls towards the realization of this great Truth. There is a much closer connection between theosophists than we see. Our inner intention to serve humanity unites us all and by working together in harmony we inspire each other. But can we work in harmony exploring new ideas and challenging the established doctrines? A theosophist is an explorer who is aware of and curious to learn about the new discoveries in all spheres of life.

We aspire to be a healing force for the world but can we welcome as brother and sister theosophists those who interpret theosophical doctrines differently from us? My opinion and understanding of the theosophical doctrines can change tomorrow because there is nothing permanent in the manifested world. I will not be the same person tomorrow as I am today. Why waste our energy and time on arguments and intolerance?

Can we respect the right of others to exercise the freedom of thought? Critical thinking is essential on the spiritual path. Not only does it help us to recognize truth wherever it may be, it also gives us courage in the moments of doubt and despair that we experience at different moments in our lives.

Theosophy teaches us self-reliance. Self-reliance cultivates inner strength within each seeker of truth, and brings the understanding that without these earnest seekers there would be no theosophical movement. It is also the foundation of the individual and it is the common responsibility of each theosophist to carry on the work for humanity and to be an active helper to spread theosophical ideas which will help people to open their hearts and minds to the spirit of Truth.

Each one of us has to realize life as a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood within our own consciousness and heart to be able to manifest it in the world. ✧

**ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SECOND INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

Adyar

Theme: “From Teachings to Insight: The Altruistic Heart”

31 December 2017 to 5 January 2018

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Saturday, 30 December

8.00 am General Council Meeting
2.00 pm General Council Meeting

Sunday, 31 December

8.00 am Prayers of the Religions
OPENING OF THE CONVENTION
Mr Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*

3.30 pm Reception

5.00 pm THEOSOPHY-SCIENCE LECTURE
“Yoga and Social Cognition: Clinical Applications”
Prof. B. N. Gangadhar, *Vice Chancellor and Director,
National Inst. of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore*

7.30 pm Ritual of the Mystic Star

Monday, 1 January

8.00 am Universal Prayer and Meditation
SHORT LECTURES
“Looking Within to Reach Out”
Dr Deepa Padhi, *International Vice-President, TS Adyar*
“Meditation, Self-Study, and Healing Speech”
Mr Jonathan Colbert, *ULT, California, USA*

9.30 am ADDRESS
Thiru Banwarilal Purohit, *Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu*

10.00 am INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — I

5.00 pm BESANT LECTURE
“Tamil: The Glory of India”
Prof. Lokesh Chandra, *President, ICCR
(Indian Council for Cultural Relations), Delhi*

7.30 pm Cultural Programme

Convention Programme

Tuesday, 2 January

- 8.00 am Devotional Meeting
Ms Chandrika Mehta, *India*
- 10.00 am SYMPOSIUM
“Altruistic Work of Today — in the Footsteps of Annie Besant”
Mrs Padma Venkataraman, (*WIA*) *India*; Mrs Angels Torra, *Spain*;
Mr Vinay Patri, *India*
- 3.00 pm PANEL
“Mission, Purpose, and Scope of the TS”
Mr Tim Boyd, *President*; Mr Vic Hao Chin Jr, *Philippines*;
Mr Pradeep Gohil, *India*; Mrs Patrizia Calvi, *Italy*;
Mr John Vorstermans, *New Zealand*;
Mr Jan Nicolaas Kind, *Brazil*, moderator
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
“The Great Awakening: Is It All in the Mind?”
Ms Dorothy Bell, *Australia*
- 7.30 pm RENOVATION UPDATE
Blavatsky Bungalow, Mr Nilesh Thakkar, *India*
Archives and other projects, Mr Michiel Haas, *the Netherlands*
Hosted by Mr Tim Boyd, *TS Adyar*

Wednesday, 3 January

- 8.00 am Universal Prayer and Meditation
SYMPOSIUM
“What Leads to Insight”
Prof. C. A. Shinde, *India*; Mrs Isis de Resende, *Brazil*;
Mr Gerard Brennan, *Australia*
- 9.30 am INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — II
“Pure Heart and Eager Intellect”
- 3.00 pm THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE
“A Life of Active Altruism”
Ms Nancy Secrest, *International Secretary, TOS*;
Mr Luke Ironside, *UK*; Dr Revathy, *India*;
Mr Birendra Bhattacharyya, *TOS India*, chair
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
“The Heart’s Wisdom”
Mr Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*
- 7.30 pm Music Programme
The Bangalore Cousins

Convention Programme

Thursday, 4 January

- 8.00 am Universal Prayer and Meditation
SHORT LECTURES
“The Heart of Theosophy”
Dr Barbara Hebert, *USA*
“There Is No Other”
Mr Pedro Oliveira, *Australia*
- 9.30 am QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
Mr Tim Boyd, Mrs Linda Oliveira,
Mr Pradeep Gohil, Mrs Dorothy Bell
- 3.00 pm LECTURE
“The Digital Revolution, a Challenge to
the Theosophical Society”
Mr José Foglia, *Uruguay*
- 5.30 pm “The Story of the Buddha”
A Play by KFI School Students

Friday, 5 January

- 8.00 am Prayers of the Religions
CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION
Mr Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*
- 9.30 am Admission of New Members
- 10.30 am &
3.00 pm Youth Forum

Other Activities

EXHIBITION: ADYAR MUSEUM — “One Hundred Years of Annie Besant”

STALLS, NEAR THE ENQUIRY OFFICE: Olcott Education Society and
Social Welfare Centre

Theosophical Work around the World

Tour of Latin America

International lecturers Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig, a psychologist and psychiatrist respectively, and members of the Spanish Section, originally from Mexico, were invited by the Mexican, Bolivian, and Argentinian Sections to visit them from 14 October to 4 November.

They started with Atlixco, **Mexico**, where the conference “Healing My Emotional Wounds” was held with 68 people in attendance. The second conference, “Loneliness and Inner Development”, was held in the city of Puebla, with 90 persons attending.

They reached **Bolivia** on 19 October to hold daily workshops in the City of La Paz, including “Yoga and the *Kathopanishad*” over five days, with audiences ranging from 35 to 40 members and sympathizers. In Cochabamba they also gave daily public conferences for five days, including “A General Vision of the TS” and “The Karmic Vision of Human Life”, with 46 to 56 persons present; and gave Lodge workshops on “Healing Emotions and the Mind” and “The Alchemy of Egyptian Wisdom”, among others, with 36 to 56 attending.

Drs Jauli and Reig visited the headquarters of the TS in Buenos Aires, **Argentina**, on 3 November, where the General Secretary, Mr Esteban Langlois, and other members supported the speakers in presenting a public conference

with 68 attending, and on the next day a workshop was organized for 30 members and sympathizers.

Adyar — Foundation Day

On 17 November the international headquarters of the TS in Adyar celebrated the day of its foundation, which took place 142 years ago in New York City. A function was held in the international Headquarters of the TS, Adyar. The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, introduced chief guest Mr Helmut Schippert, Director, Goethe Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan, Chennai, who spoke on “The Imperative of Change in the Relationship between Humans and Nature”. After a beautiful chant by Ms Jaishree Kannan, the President closed the meeting with another short talk, which was followed by offering of flowers in honour of co-Founders Madame H. P. Blavatsky and Col Henry S. Olcott.

India — Passing of Surendra Narayan

In the afternoon of 22 November, Mr Surendra Narayan, former international Vice-President for fifteen years during Mrs Radha Burnier’s presidency, passed away peacefully at his home, surrounded by his near relatives. He was still alert at the age of 98 years.

Those wishing to send condolences to his family, may use the following email: <anarayan99@gmail.com>. ✧

Theosophical Work around the World



Members and sympathizers at a conference on “Theseus and the Minotaur” given by visiting international speakers, Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig, for the Bolivian Section of the TS in their capital, La Paz



Dr Jauli during the break at a workshop on “Letting Go of Your Demons”, in La Paz

Theosophical Work around the World



L. to r.: Mr Tim Boyd, international President of the TS Adyar, Chennai, who gave the welcome and closing addresses at the Foundation Day function in the Headquarters Hall on 17 November 2017; Mr Robert Burgess, U.S. Consul General, Chennai; chief guest and speaker, Mr Helmut Schippert, Director, Goethe Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan, Chennai; and Mr Harihara Raghavan, Adviser to the President



Mrs and Mr Tim Boyd with students from the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School.
The students chanted a Jain prayer at the opening of the Foundation Day function

Tribute to Surendra Narayan

MR Surendra Narayan was the international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, from 1980 to 1995, during the tenure of Mrs Radha Burnier as international President.

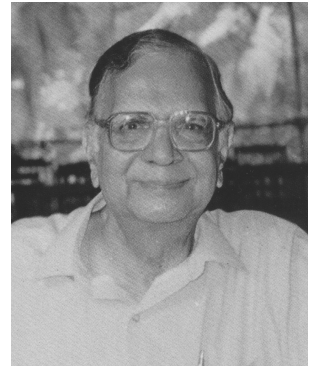
He belonged to a family of Theosophists who always trod the path of righteous living and divine wisdom. Ever since his childhood, he was greatly attracted and influenced by the teachings of Kabir, the 15th century saint-poet of India.

Being an officer of the Indian Revenue Service, Narayan rose to the highest position in the service as the Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes. He lived in richness, not only in the physical form, but richness of the heart, leading a life of purity, simplicity, service, sharing with others.

A great scholar enriched with the knowledge of philosophy, literature, religion, and science, he had written numerous articles on Theosophy. As a lover of life, he believed in the perception of the divine principle permeating all forms of life.

A popular Theosophical lecturer throughout the world, Narayan is also the author of various writings, including

his book, *Life is for Living*, which reflects his philosophy of life. He was one of those few theosophists who lived what he preached. Mrs



Mrs Burnier wrote in the foreword of this book: “Words have a different flavor and energy when their source is a life well lived, with integrity, concern for others, and serious devotion to the pursuit of wisdom.” What could be a better testimony than this to the author?

Surendra Narayan left his mortal coil on 22 November 2017. The void created by his demise in the physical plane will be deeply felt by the Theosophical Society. The best tribute Theosophists can pay him, is by following his footprints on the path of right living and greater insight.

Life never dies. “It is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.”

DEEPA PADHI

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