



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: 'He's not heavy, he's my brother.' Sculpture by Mlle Diderichsen; TS Museum, Adyar

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# On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

## **Why Think? Do Ideas Matter?**

Members of the Theosophical Society must consider seriously what should be their behaviour, thoughts and attitudes in different circumstances of life. This is not an easy matter, and it has to be practised and lived throughout each incarnation. There are many circumstances which we face in life. We get used to them and behave like other persons in the world, but this may not be suitable. Our circumstances are not arranged by Karma in a careless fashion, but we are accustomed to thinking that they just happen. So, very little thought is given to what we do. Generally we use only a small part of the brain to act mechanically.

A real Theosophist, not just a member of the Theosophical Society, cannot afford to act thoughtlessly, since he intends to be a server of humanity. The whole of the human community must rise to greater heights, and learn at all times to be brotherly. This means that we cannot think and act like anybody else, but learn to give up the animal instincts and way of responding, and become finer and wiser after each life. Watchfulness and reflection over what we are doing, which of course includes speaking, thinking and responding to the different conditions we have to

face, are therefore essential.

We all meet some new situations which occur from time to time. The new situation can be looked at from an old point of view; or more thoughtfully. Let us take, for example, what people, or some people, say about a particular action or incident, often in dealing with someone else we have to contend with. The tendency is to come to quick conclusions about what the other person should have done. But there are different ways of looking at any situation. The other person might have looked at the situation in a certain way, while we ourselves may be looking at it in another way. Do we think of the possibility that the same situation evokes different attitudes in different people, or do we simply jump to the conclusion that there is only one way — ours — and the other person has failed? This is how misunderstandings occur and gradually develop into factions.

The Theosophist must be someone who belongs to no faction. He may act in a particular way, but at the same time realize that each person looks at life's incidents in his own way. This does not of course imply that one considers all ways to be right, but it means that we have at all times a sympathetic

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understanding of what a person does and why he does it.

In an article of Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor published in *The Guardian Weekly* (30-1-09) they have quoted the Emperor of the Romans, Marcus Aurelius, as declaring that kindness is mankind's greatest delight. This is a beautiful sentence, but apart from giving lip service to it, most people do not pay any attention to the meaning behind the words. It is a very difficult matter to be always kind, especially when another person seems to do wrong or commits deeds in a way which appears not right to our particular way of responding. The above-mentioned authors look on kindness as special to Christianity, being associated with the saying: Love thy neighbour as thyself. But this idea is generally contradicted by attitudes prevalent in the present day, which is characterized by individualism. Kindness may be regarded as a virtue, with *the exception of course* of fighting for one's own right, which makes for self-interest. Kindness is not considered as a virtue to be practised under difficult circumstances. In fact, people who are very kind may be looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion!

We have to ask ourselves whether this attitude is the right one. To learn to work towards a better condition, can autonomy fulfil man's innate needs? There are many who regard selfishness as unpleasant and therefore appear to be nice and good, but within their hearts they are not as kind as they appear to be.

However religions like Buddhism advocate a really kind and good attitude towards others. They do not advocate running down other religions. The Dalai Lama for example never speaks ill of other religions or ways of life. But this is an exception. The general attitude is one of competition between the religions and the fundamental teaching is forgotten. The main question is whether human beings are meant to be kind and good, or are being so when it suits them. Feelings of fear and suspicion are unthinkingly adopted by human beings, not realizing that everything against kindness is an assault on hope.

Similar to kindness are some other feelings like love in the real sense, truth at all times, and goodness which is unalterable. The big difference between people who can rise out of what they consider to be human, and others who naturally tend to do what is above the average, is whether the latter can altogether shed ideas about survival.

Every animal survives in its own way but the human being does not have to continue animalistic reactions in order to survive. He can live a life which is utterly different, as a person who practises spiritual qualities under all circumstances. He can completely free himself of actions which arise out of fear of non-survival.

From this point of view, the teaching of reincarnation is valuable. Most people believe that they have to survive as long as possible in this life because they are not sure of living in any other, but those who accept reincarnation know that they

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outlive the body. So our beliefs or knowledge has something to do with our actions, and thoughts which are based on belief are of some value, because they help us to conquer fear, hate, or suspicion. A different attitude of confidence in growing understanding should characterize the Theosophist.

### Beware of Words

More care is necessary now in using words, and even in listening to them, because words spread all over the world at a rate which could not have been believed some time ago. Some of them are useful, but there is also a great deal of either useless or harmful words, which people want to use for misleading others. It is said, for example, that the bridge in Baghdad which became a disaster a few years ago, was the occasion for a religious procession; there was a rumour to the effect that the procession was being disturbed by a suicide bomber. This resulted in panic; there was a stampede by a large number of people passing over the bridge, and about a thousand pilgrims died, falling into the river when the railing gave way due to the commotion.

This is an example of how irresponsible talk and gossip of a kind, which makes people lose their balance, can affect many innocent people. In a book *On Rumours*, which has been published to show how much harm can be done by such talk, many instances are mentioned. Important people are the subject of conversation, and are used by some persons to downgrade them or do mischief

of some kind or another. Rumours can be very harmful, when people who are unaware and do not control their tongues take to repeating whatever they hear.

In his book on this subject the author Cass Sunstein mentions that one of the parties can go to court. But this is a very cumbersome method, and does not have the capacity to reduce thought towards a cleaner way of spending its energy. All of us must be aware that the internet, and other facilities provided today by increasing technological ability, create problems which are at the base of man's way of life. Irresponsible talk and substitutes for talk, like messages sent by modern means, are almost instantaneous. All kinds of information, false or true, are going round and people tend to believe them without considering what they are, because they have nothing better to do.

In the Theosophical Society the serious members know that idle talk, especially on matters about which we know nothing directly, does not help. In *At The Feet of the Master* it is written:

The Astral Body has *Its* desires — dozens of them; it wants you to be angry, to say sharp words, to feel jealous, to be greedy for money, to envy other people their possessions, to yield yourself to depression. All these things it wants, and many more, not because it wishes to harm you, but because it likes to change them constantly.

We are therefore told that we must think carefully of what is useful and

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distinguish between truth and falsehood. We must learn to be true in thought and word and deed, because it is necessary that we should be true to help others. If a man speaks angrily one does not react in the same way as he does, because one is not so foolish.

As the book says, we must be true and accurate and never attribute motives to others. The reasons that make them act may be such that we never heard of them. 'If you hear a story against anyone, do not repeat it: it may not be true and even if it is, it is kinder to say nothing. Think well before speaking, lest you should fall into inaccuracy. Be true in action'. Other such advice can be very helpful, not only to us but to everybody, and it must be taken seriously.

This matter of not participating in idle words and chatter, which proliferates through the internet, is important. The real members of The Theosophical Society have an important part to play in modern life, in which both good and evil can be passed easily from one end of the world to the other. Perhaps the Powers that Be arrange these matters, so that we can learn quickly.

### Is Suicide a Way Out?

More people are going to Switzerland to die, because assisted suicide has been accepted there. They may have a terminal illness or some other reason for dying,

and this leaves the door open for assisted suicide in many different circumstances. The Swiss government is considering whether to go on with the current system or have an alternative right to suicide as in the Netherlands, Belgium, the US State of Oregon, etc., where euthanasia is permitted but under medical supervision.

From the Theosophical point of view we can say there seems to be something wrong in keeping people alive, whether they want it or not and whether they are in a position to say 'Yes' or 'No'. People are now kept alive, because medical science has 'evolved' to the extent that they are made to live a few days more whether they are able to answer or not. The situation may become worse as time brings improvements in technology.

If it is rather easy to commit suicide as it is in present-day Switzerland, this way out of life may not really help. Karma, for those who know about it, will find a way to deal with problems which may or may not suit those who face them. The manner of death is decided by a person's activity and attitudes in the past; it is futile to imagine that doctors can decide all such matters. They cannot.

It seems best from the Theosophical point of view to let Nature take its course, assisted by human beings only to a normal or reasonable extent, which it is not difficult to arrange either at home or when necessary, in a hospital. ✧

**Remembering thoughts are things — have tenacity, coherence, and life  
— that they are real entities — the rest will become plain.**

*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*

# The Conquest of the Self

BHUPENDRA R. VORA

THE conquest of the self is considered difficult because it requires mastering one's lower nature, which is motivated and guided by desire, greed, illusion, anger and so on. In the Buddhist scriptures, *Tṛṣṇā* (thirst) is considered as the root cause of the process of bondage.

The Buddha is quoted as having said:

If a man were to conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and another conquers one, himself, he indeed is the greatest of conquerors.

(*Dhammapada*, Sahassavaggo, v. 4)

A very similar message is found in the Bible:

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

(Proverbs, 16:32)

The *Dhammapada* further says that the conquest of self is indeed better than the conquest of other persons, by one who has disciplined himself, who always practises self-control. The mastering of one's lower nature requires the constant vigilance of one's inner motivations,

thoughts and actions. An inner discipline and transformation of one's nature bring about a purification of outer actions. This regeneration process begins when the true self or the *Ātmā* starts asserting itself.

The *Bhagavadgītā* states that one who has settled on the path of Yoga remains detached from bodily activity. Elaborating on this teaching, Lord Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna:

Elevate the self by Self; do not weaken the self.

Self is indeed the friend of the self. Self alone is self's foe.

The Self is the friend of that self by which the self has been subdued.

The self alone operates as the foe of one unsubdued by the Self.

(*Bhagavadgītā*, VI.5-6)

These verses from the *Bhagavadgītā* clearly explain the struggle between the lower self and the higher Self. The lower self is constantly under the influence of the material world, which it experiences with its five senses; this results in desire, self-centredness, anger, etc. The *Gītā* states that the influence of the higher Self

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can moderate or negate these lower tendencies if inner sensitivity and alertness are cultivated. This process of inner regeneration is only possible when the 'voice of the Self (Ātmā)' is allowed to manifest itself. One who by thought abandons self-conceit and releases himself from the bondage of illusion attains to the supreme Brahman.

This freedom from the attractions and desires of the outer world are beautifully explained in Buddhist scriptures. The whole process of the bondage of the Ātmā in the world of matter is shown to be sequential. This chain of causation states:

From ignorance spring the *samkhāra-s* of threefold nature — production of body, of speech, of thought. From the *samkhāra-s* springs consciousness, from consciousness spring name and form, from this spring the six senses — sight, smell, taste, sound, touch and mind; from these springs contact; from this sensation springs thirst (or desire, *kāma, tanhā*), from thirst attachment, existence, birth, old age, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection, and despair. The destruction of ignorance results in the ceasing of suffering and ending of the bondage mechanism.

(*Mahānidāna Sutta*)

The Buddha stated that the real nature of things had to be understood to realize the cause of bondage. From ignorance springs all evil. From knowledge comes the cessation of this mass of misery. Knowledge here does not mean mere bookish learning, concepts and ideas, but a process of inner and outer

transformation. The inner transformation must commence with mastery over the mind. *The Voice of the Silence* states:

Strive with thy thoughts unclean before they overpower thee (I.54). Have mastery over thy thoughts, O striver for perfection (III.253). Thou hast to reach that fixity of mind in which no breeze, however strong, can waft an earthly thought within. (III.266)

The stilling of the mind is the aim of Yoga; unless this is achieved there cannot be a union with the higher principle within oneself. Similarly, the stilling of emotions means restraining the feelings of attraction and repulsion, of *rāga* and *dvesha*, desires, greed and selfishness. When an inner state of stillness and harmony are achieved this balance is reflected in outer transformation. This transformation manifests in outer actions.

Patañjali states in his *Yoga-sutra-s* that Yoga means the union of self with the universal Self. He further states that this union is only possible when the agitations and noise of the mind are silenced. When a state of inward calm prevails, intimations from the higher Self come in flashes, and the conquest of the lower self commences.

Patañjali lays down the path for inner and outer transformation in the eight steps of *yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāranā, dhyāna and samādhi*. The first two steps relate to the outer preparation, which a person must make amongst others: the control of the senses, non-acquisitiveness, honesty,

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non-violence, contentment, etc. The primary steps prepare one for the inner disciplines of *prānāyāma* (regulation and control of breath) and *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the mind from the senses). In the final part, the practice of *dhāranā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* lead the aspirant to complete mastery over the lower self and union with the one principle that pervades the entire universe.

The conquest of the tendencies which bind the person to the world of matter is no easy matter. The Buddha very rightly stated that this victory is greater than that of a thousand victories on the battlefield. It calls for a constant state of alertness and vigilance over the motivations and the workings of the mind. Through a moment-to-moment observance of all the agitations

of the mind, which arise from desires, anxieties, anger, etc., the observer is able to understand its working, and proceeds towards removing these undesirable elements. The transformation that is called for is a total transformation. This is a process in which everything in us must transform — our thoughts, feelings and actions. Treading the path of spirituality, we must change our self-centred nature to a world-centred nature. This requires the understanding that humanity is interdependent with other forms of life and the environment as a whole. The conquest of the lower self by the higher Self means removing oneself from the small island of I-ness and merging into the ocean of oneness. This is the union of the self with the universal Self which is the aim of Yoga.

**As these flowing rivers that tend towards the ocean, on reaching the ocean, disappear, their name and form are destroyed, and it is called simply 'the ocean' — even so of this spectator these sixteen parts that tend towards the Person, on reaching the Person, disappear, their name and form are destroyed, and it is called simply 'the Person'. That one continues without parts, immortal!**

*Praśna Upanishad*, VI.5



# Hope Springs Eternal

WAYNE GATFIELD

Hope springs eternal in the human breast;  
Man never Is, but always To be blest:  
The soul, uneasy and confin'd from home,  
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

(Alexander Pope)

IT is a truism that in the midst of adversity hope does indeed spring up within the heart. But the question is: What is hope? We take it for granted but few have tried to discover exactly what 'hope' is. What is this feeling that in the darkest moments of our life shines a light that is often a lifeline and a saviour at the eleventh hour?

First let us look at the ancient Greek myth regarding Pandora. In this, Pandora is the first woman and out of curiosity opens a casket that includes many evils that are then inflicted on humanity. All that is left is Hope. Pandora was crafted out of Earth by Hephaestus, the Greek God of Fire, Volcanoes and Blacksmiths in revenge for Prometheus stealing fire from the gods and endowing man with intelligence, which is a well-known teaching to students of Theosophy. Regarding Prometheus, the Theosophical Glossary states that he is:

The Greek *logos*; he, who by bringing on earth divine fire (intelligence and consciousness) endowed men with reason and mind. Prometheus is the Hellenic type of our Kumāra-s or *Egos*, those who, by incarnating in men, made of them latent gods instead of animals. The gods (or Elohim) were averse to men becoming 'as one of us' (Gen., 3:22), and knowing 'good and evil'. Hence we see these gods in every religious legend punishing man for his desire to know. As the Greek myth has it, for stealing the fire he brought to men from Heaven, Prometheus was chained by the order of Zeus to a crag of the Caucasian Mountains.

So Zeus had 'woman' created to inflict evil upon society. Many may misinterpret this and it could lead to the idea that woman is 'evil' and a mischief. But it seems that woman refers to the 'feminine', what we may refer to as the material aspect of the Universe, and to the *māyā* or

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illusion cast upon us by the ‘great dire heresy of separateness that weans us from the rest’.

This is as much as we need to know regarding this legend for now. It is an interpretation that should not be regarded as definitive and was only put forward in a simplified manner to set the scene for the real substance of the article.

So due to the emergence of the manifested Universe, Māyā and its attendant ‘evils’ were released by the appearance of the ‘feminine’ or material. ‘As above so below’, and this applies on all levels right down to us as seeming separate individuals. Despite the turmoil created by our minds immersed in the murky realms of constricted thought, the crystal clarity of the spiritual part of our nature shines through at times and this may be referred to as ‘hope’ — the one thing that was not released to run riot from her casket; the one thing that is stable despite the instability of life in general.

Often when life seems just too much to bear and we do not know which way to turn, the luminance of our Higher Self shines through and tells us that despite the current gloom, everything will be fine in the end and indeed is fine at the moment for us as we *really* are, no matter how much the transient personality suffers for that tiny period in the immensity of our overall existence. The wider view may place things in perspective and although the present pain will not disappear we will view it in a different light which may make it easier to bear. As HPB tells us, if we were to look inwards instead of

outwards all the time life would become supportable even during its worst phases!

To us mortals though, often the hope is just a fleeting shadow that does not solve our problems and so we reason it away and sink back into despondency again. But it is possible to cultivate hope so that it becomes more than just a random feeling in the heart. The truth is that hope is the prompting of the Higher Self within us to abandon our absorption in material thoughts of sadness and despair and live in the light of our true nature which is at one with all other true natures and the Universe itself. We have just changed our Illumined Mind for counterfeit minds of anger, jealousy, greed, lust, depression: which are all just fleeting inventions of our misunderstandings and our blindness to the fact that the ‘race of Man is Divine’ as the ‘Golden Verses of Pythagoras’ tell us.

Zen teaching will say that we do not need to become Buddha (or Enlightened) but that we just need to *remain* Buddha as it is only one amidst a multitude of self-created illusions that cause us to believe that we have left that state in the first place. In reality we have not left that exalted realm at all but only in our tainted imagination! Indeed the ‘Crest Jewel of Wisdom’ describes this whole manifested Universe and each one of us that passes through it as a mere temporary obscuration of Consciousness. Once the mists clear we will see that nothing changes except our perceptions of the One Eternal Truth. As we grow in understanding and experience, veils fall away and what we

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always ARE comes more and more into focus. We begin to see that we have been living a dream and just as when we awaken from our night time reveries everything that happened there and which we considered to be real is revealed as just phantom images, so is the day to day life that we pass through. As is said in *The Voice of the Silence*:

When to himself his form appears unreal,  
as do on waking all the forms he sees in  
dreams;

When he has ceased to hear the many, he  
may discern the ONE — the inner sound  
which kills the outer.

Then only, not till then, shall he forsake  
the region of Asat, the false, to come unto  
the realm of Sat, the true.

It is this realization that brings the fleeting feelings of hope into our day to day consciousness. As Alexander Pope said, in the quotation at the beginning:

The soul, uneasy and confin'd from home,  
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

Expatriate in this sense means to wander freely and it is true that those who set off on the Spiritual Journey do feel uneasy and confined away from their True Home and find rest and freedom once focused in the True Self. In Theosophy

we talk of the reincarnating ego which is the mind illumined by the Spiritual dimension to our Being which extracts from this mind all that is to be a permanent part of our existence and increases our awareness of each one of us as immortal entities. Once we develop a longing to return to this true 'home' we do indeed feel confined by our earthly existence. We can only wander free if we are able to live spontaneously in the light of our Spiritual Nature, the life to come spoken of by Pope in its true sense.

So hope is the never ending attempt of our Higher Self to give us some assistance in the midst of life's difficulties, to tell us that inwardly we are untouched by these seeming insurmountable problems and that like everything else in this manifested universe they are bound to pass in time and will soon be just memories in this life and totally forgotten in the long run. Also there may be many positive lessons to be learned in suffering and also a deeper understanding gained of the pain that others are going through, an insight that could never be gained if we did not experience it ourselves. So all in all our sufferings are sent to help us to develop compassion, to become more in tune with our fellow human beings, and to assist in the development of our spirituality. Taking all of this into account, there is much to make us ever hopeful. ✧

**... In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised  
before the world began.**

Titus, 1:2

# The Dynamics of Brotherhood

N. SRI RAM

IT may be said without exaggeration that if there is one key to the solution of all problems in human relationship, it is the simple yet profound truth of universal brotherhood, flowing from the fact that all human beings spring from the same roots and are essentially of the same nature, however much this fact may be veiled and eclipsed by the modifications which this nature undergoes, thus presenting differences in mental and physical characteristics. Let all the existing social and political systems remain as they are, imperfect and unsatisfactory as they might be, given a genuine sense and realization of this underlying truth, the world will witness a miraculous change; instead of being, as it is, very largely a surging chaos, and for innumerable people whose sorrows are hidden from our sight a near hell, it will become almost a paradise.

Every word which has a beautiful meaning tends in course of usage to become a trite and empty thing, a practically valueless coin. Turned into a conventionalism, a mere sign, an indication of an idea, not the reality, it becomes a handy counter that covers our lack of sensibility

and ignorance. Every concept that holds a value which is spiritual in a fundamental sense, that is, devoid of any element of self-interest and self-satisfaction, is degraded and materialized; it is translated in practice into terms that deny its original significance. Thus religion becomes an empty form, a label of exclusiveness and respectability, besides being a means of deluding oneself and a cause of antagonisms. Charity turns into a means of self-display and of winning regard and support for oneself, also a salve to conscience.

Similarly, Brotherhood, even when it is considered as a practical doctrine, and not merely suffered as an innocuous idea, is translated into terms of coexistence which only ask for the sufferance and toleration of those with whom one disagrees and whom one dislikes. Merely to exist simultaneously on this planet with another, without either attacking the other, may be an improvement on the law of the jungle, but it is the poorest of poor aims for a human being, constituted as he is as a fountain of energies that can flower into manifold forms of beauty, acting upon others and producing manifold blessings

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and happiness for himself and them. He has also in him energies, perhaps the same fundamental energy led into self-distorting patterns, that explode in violence and catastrophe. Nature does not permit a vacuum in space without its being hemmed in with pressures. Walls of isolation do not exist for long, without generating or provoking forces outside those walls to marshal themselves and attack them. History affords numerous examples of this law. Where there are legally or customarily protected privileges, based on no just principle, there are also forces of envy and discontent; and when these privileges either deny legitimate opportunities, or cause hardship to those excluded from them, they create also resentment and violence. Thus are revolutions born and bred, the law of action and reaction working blindly and catastrophically in human relations and psychology as much as in the field of natural phenomena.

Men are intended to meet their fellowmen in mutual interest and understanding and learn to cooperate in different ways for their mutual enrichment and good. This interest arises by itself when circumstances are not unfavourable, like the natural curiosity of a young animal or its attachment to its mother. Unfortunately modern conditions seem to be unpropitious for those true and deep-rooted instincts in man, which can guide him along a pathway of happiness to himself and others, flowering into those graces and virtues without which life tends to become vulgar, overheated and devoid

of any deep meaning. The aggressive competition, the struggle to succeed and build up what is called self-identity, as if it did not exist already, the ceaseless pursuit of sensation in one form or another, all these not only destroy peace of mind and heart but also the capacity and the disposition to realize any of those values which are not on the plane of one's superficial responses.

It is an unfortunate fact that as opportunities have expanded with all the means of movement and communication with which Science has provided us, and as new fields of activity have been opened by the increase of scientific knowledge, people have moved away from one another, not only physically and in their interests, but also on the plane of affections and understanding and those deeper feelings that in the normal course are generated by intimate contact. As the stars and galaxies are said to be moving away from one another in an expanding universe, so in the modern world each man intensely and feverishly pursuing his particular end, moves away from his fellows who are moving each in his own direction. To the extent he covers a larger ground — this is not the case with the increasing number of specialists and technicians who do not go far outside their narrow grooves — he loses depth of understanding and depth in relationships. With all the variety of contacts and interests which excite him but only superficially, life is an unsatisfactory affair.

We are living in a period of the world's history in which the human mind is

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searching, active, tossed about and restless. This activity guided and controlled results in the constructive achievements of Science and technology, which give their peculiar stamp to this period, marking it off from others, but it also creates a difficult condition in the mind of every common man, who is pushed, pulled and excited by a variety of forces and events. There is a mixed tide of ideas, created not only by the outstanding contributions to knowledge, but also by the daily events, chronicles, commentators, and books dealing with a thousand and one different matters. These ideas, pouring into the average mind, do not by any means add to its enlightenment. Even the best of minds tend these days to live at second hand, satisfied with ideas which are, after all, representations even when true, rather than with the actuality. The images we form become walls or screens, preventing life being lived in direct contact with people and things as they are. What we might regard at first as a source of enrichment becomes a handicap. An American does not meet a man in Viet Nam as the human being he is, but as the image of that man already in his mind. The image sorts out the human beings there into pro-American and pro-Viet Cong. Similarly the people in other countries have their particular images. Because we are not in touch with the actuality that is life, we lose the capacity for the understanding of life in whatever form, and are able to do the most atrocious things, all in the name of the image, the idea we pursue. Our preoccupation with the furniture

of our own minds, as well as with the ideas which are their progeny, makes our lives unreal, commonplace, stale and unsatisfactory.

Sympathy for a person is generated by an understanding of his feelings, his needs and experiences, and normally affection is generated by sympathy. But the hectic pace at which life is lived because of the attractions that exist in the world of today, which is so different from previous times, allows no time for such knowledge. When we make some superficial or conventional remark on some phenomenon of significance or event of importance affecting human lives or some object of beauty, and quickly pass on to other things, obviously we have not been touched by it. We are preoccupied with our own ideas, ends and objectives. The mind is rarely clear of them, and therefore not open except to a slight extent. Our ideas of ourselves and all things generally are partly shaped by reactions which we do not pause to examine, and partly derived from readings and the various media of propaganda. It is only rarely that we come into direct touch with another human being without this barrier.

Brotherhood has a meaning in the reality of things which we miss when it becomes an academic doctrine. It means, on the psychological plane, a positive interest in and feeling for others, also an understanding of them. From that base, rising to deeper and subtler realizations, it can become an expression of all that beauty of feeling which St Paul conveys in his letters to the Romans and the

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Corinthians. St Paul speaks of charity of heart or, as translated by some, of love, which is always beautiful. Love as well as affection is real when it exists, because it is definite and clear. It is as real as the various rays that penetrate a solid substance or as a current of electricity which rearranges a magnetic field and sparks various physical reactions.

Because Brotherhood applies to a plurality of beings, it becomes either an abstraction or a sentiment weakened by its diffuseness, an amorphous vagueness lacking sharpness of focus and outline. It is ineffective because it is a concept placed on some shelf in our thinking, and not a force which changes our thinking and behaviour in definite positive ways. If there is the same essence, with the same energies, metaphorically the same blood, in different individuals in some layer of their being, it can develop a capacity in them to know each other as kin and respond to each other with affection and beauty. It is in this knowledge and such responses that the true meaning of Brotherhood is to be discovered. Brotherhood, being an abstract term, sounds like a static condition merely to be taken note of, but in reality it consists in a natural interchange between one human being and another, each a specialized form of Life or Spirit, the word Spirit referring to a depth and range of meaning that has to be discovered by each within himself. When Brotherhood is imbued with this meaning, it becomes a relationship in which the unfoldment of each is enriched by the responses of the other.

Life, starting as a unity, lends itself to differentiations that make a tree with numerous branches and branchlets, each with its special characteristics. Each man is different from another in his inner being, though this being belongs to the same tree of Life. This difference, when rightly understood, becomes a means of interchange and enrichment for both. The teacher benefits as much as the pupil, a man as much as a woman, in the relationship into which they enter. Even a stupid man can help an intelligent friend by giving him an opportunity to penetrate the mask of his stupidity and find ways to resolve it. Wherever there is interdependence, in whatever form, the kind of interaction that will conduce not only to the service of the immediate needs of either party but also their ultimate and common good must be regarded as the action of Brotherhood.

The possibilities of mutual enrichment — without detriment to the character of the specialized types — have been enormously multiplied by the developments that have taken place in this century. It is out of the truth that is in the unity that true progress ensues, but the nature of that unity must be understood in a way that comprehends the fact of Life's diversifying and specializing process. It is only out of different notes in their purity, differently spaced, that harmony can be produced. If each of those notes were a conscious entity, it would not only be aware of the value of the other notes, but also share in the harmony which is produced in cooperation with them. None

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of them would want to be more prominent than it is. One particular note may be sounded merely to bring out or enhance the significance of another. It would be content with its proper place and contribute to the beauty and effectiveness of the whole, and not wish that the whole should revolve round itself, giving it the key or dominant role therein.

It is in such ways, at every step, in association with members of every natural group that may include us, that we begin to realize how life is to be lived, what cooperation with others really means, what one's own *dharma* is in relation to them, what Brotherhood means in action and practice. All the help and service that we may give to another to supply a need or promote a beneficial enterprise is part of that *dharma*, which is the way of one's onward progress out of the land of

limitations and shadows into the realm of unity and light; it is also an expression of that Brotherhood which is one's true relation to another, whether recognized or not. It is said that when one finally enters that realm of light and his inmost being is merged in the essence that constitutes it, all Nature sings a paean of joy, because Nature, or rather, the deeper layers of it are a sounding board for every thrill, whether of joy or pain, felt by any of her children. It is the unity underlying all diversity that makes us sharers of one another's portion and destiny. Each acts upon others inevitably in ways that increase or diminish his own joys and sorrows, depending on whether his action follows the laws of unity which constitute the good and the beautiful, or the ways of separateness which ever cause distortion and conflict. ✧

O world, I am in tune with every note of thy great harmony. For me nothing is early, nothing late, if it be timely for thee. O Nature, all that thy seasons yield is fruit for me. From thee, and in thee, and to thee are all things. 'Dear city of God!' may we not cry . . .

Marcus Aurelius  
*Meditations*



# Studies in *The Voice of the Silence*, 19

JOHN ALGEO

THE final verses of the book present a summary of what *The Voice of the Silence* has been saying about the Two Paths and the Seven Portals — and the choice, the inescapable choice, that is each of ours to make. That choice is a question of what we value in life and of what we will dedicate our lives to. The last six verses evoke a sense of admiration at the achievement of a return from ‘the other shore’ by one of us, of joy at the benefits that achievement will bring to all of us, and of wonder at the magnificent mystery of a new birth. The very last verse is a conventional ending for works of this sort. But is it just conventional? In fact, the four words of the last verse are the theme of the whole book.

## VERSES [303–316]:

[303] Withal what mean the sacred scrolls which make thee say:

[304] ‘OM! I believe it is not all the Arhats that get of the Nirvānic Path the sweet fruition.’

[305] ‘OM! I believe that the Nirvāna-Dharma is entered not by all the Buddhas.’\*<sup>32</sup>

[306] ‘Yea, on the Ārya Path thou art no more Srotāpatti, thou art a Bodhisattva.<sup>33</sup> The stream is crossed. ’Tis true thou hast a right to Dharmakāya vesture; but Sambhogakāya is greater than a Nirvāni, and greater still is a Nirmānakāya — the Buddha of Compassion.’<sup>34</sup>

[307] Now bend thy head and listen well, O Bodhisattva — Compassion speaks and saith: ‘Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?’

[308] Now thou hast heard that which was said.

[309] Thou shalt attain the seventh step and cross the gate of final knowledge but only to wed woe — if thou wouldst be Tathāgata, follow upon thy predecessor’s steps, remain unselfish till the endless end.

[310] Thou art enlightened — choose thy way.

. . . . .

[311] Behold, the mellow light that floods the eastern sky. In signs of praise both heaven and earth unite. And from the fourfold manifested Powers a chant of love

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arisseth, both from the flaming fire and flowing water, and from sweet-smelling earth and rushing wind.

[312] Hark! . . . from the deep unfathomable vortex of that golden light in which the Victor bathes, all Nature's wordless voice in thousand tones arisseth to proclaim:

[313] JOY UNTO YE, O MEN OF MYALBA.<sup>35</sup>

[314] A PILGRIM HATH RETURNED BACK 'FROM THE OTHER SHORE'.

[315] A NEW ARHAN<sup>36</sup> IS BORN. . . .

[316] *Peace to all beings.*<sup>37</sup>

COMMENT. Verses 303–305 quote and question the meaning of a passage from one of the Northern Buddhist scriptures, which HPB identifies as

HPB note: *\*Thegpa Chenpoido*, Mahāyāna Sutra, 'Invocations to the Buddhas of Confessions', Part 1, iv.

This quoted passage comments on the future of arhats and buddhas. Concerning the latter, HPB explains that in Northern Buddhism, the term *buddha* is used broadly to denote anyone who has achieved the purpose of human life on earth:

Gloss 32. In the Northern Buddhist phraseology all the great Arhats, Adepts and Saints are called Buddhas.

The quoted passage says that not all

of those who have achieved the purpose of earthly life for our species pass out of it into the nirvāna that is the next field of experience. Some remain in the world as bodhisattvas. The term bodhisattva has several meanings. In Southern Buddhism, it may refer to someone who is on the way to becoming a buddha, but has not yet achieved that status — a buddha in training. In Northern Buddhism, it refers to someone who has completed the path to buddhahood, but who has chosen to remain active in the world helping others on that same path. And for that reason, a bodhisattva may be held in higher regard than a buddha; they are often called 'Buddhas of Compassion', as in verse 306. HPB comments on this distinction:

Gloss 33. A Bodhisattva is, in the hierarchy, less than a 'perfect Buddha'. In the exoteric parlance these two are very much confused. Yet the innate and right popular perception, owing to their self-sacrifice, has placed a Bodhisattva higher in its reverence than a Buddha.

Verse 306 includes a reference to the three 'vestures' (*kāya* means 'sheath or body'), which have been treated earlier in *The Voice of the Silence*, but are discussed in the longest and most detailed of the glosses HPB wrote for the book:

Gloss 34. This same popular reverence calls 'Buddhas of Compassion' those Bodhisattvas who, having reached the rank of an Arhat (i.e., have completed the fourth or seventh Path [fourth in the Yogic

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tradition or seventh in *The Voice*]), refuse to pass into the Nirvānic state or 'don the Dharmakāya robe and cross to the other shore', as it would then become beyond their power to assist men even so little as Karma permits. They prefer to remain invisibly (in spirit, so to speak) in the world, and contribute toward man's salvation by influencing them to follow the Good Law, i.e., lead them on the Path of Righteousness. It is part of the exoteric Northern Buddhism to honour all such great characters as saints, and to offer even prayers to them, as the Greeks and Catholics do to their saints and patrons; on the other hand, the esoteric teachings countenance no such thing. There is a great difference between the two teachings. The exoteric layman hardly knows the real meaning of the word *Nirmānakāya* — hence the confusion and inadequate explanations of the Orientalists. For example, Schlagintweit believes that *Nirmānakāya* means the physical form assumed by the Buddhas when they incarnate on earth — 'the least sublime of their earthly encumbrances' (vide *Buddhism in Tibet*) — and he proceeds to give an entirely false view on the subject. The real teaching is, however, this:

The three Buddhist bodies or forms are styled:

1. *Nirmānakāya*.
2. *Sambhogakāya*.
3. *Dharmakāya*.

The first is that ethereal form which one would assume when, leaving his physical, he would appear in his astral body —

having in addition all the knowledge of an Adept. The *Bodhisattva* develops it in himself as he proceeds on the Path. Having reached the goal and refused its fruition, he remains on earth, as an Adept; and when he dies, instead of going into Nirvāna, he remains in that glorious body he has woven for himself, invisible to uninitiated mankind, to watch over and protect it.

*Sambhogakāya* is the same, but with the additional lustre of 'three perfections', one of which is entire obliteration of all earthly concerns.

The *Dharmakāya* body is that of a complete Buddha, i.e., no body at all, but an ideal breath: consciousness merged in the Universal Consciousness, or Soul devoid of every attribute. Once a *Dharmakāya*, an Adept or Buddha leaves behind every possible relation with, or thought for, this earth. Thus, to be enabled to help humanity, an Adept who has won the right to Nirvāna, 'renounces the *Dharmakāya* body' in mystic parlance; keeps, of the *Sambhogakāya*, only the great and complete knowledge, and remains in his *Nirmānakāya* body. The esoteric school teaches that Gautama Buddha with several of his Arhats is such a *Nirmānakāya*, higher than whom, on account of the great renunciation and sacrifice to mankind, there is none known.

The traditional explanation of these terms for the *trikāya* (three sheaths), as given by scholars of Buddhism, such as John Grimes, in his *Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy*, is as follows:

1. *Dharmakāya* — the sheath of the Law.

This is the Reality, the Void, the Absolute. It is the universal and transcendent Buddha.

2. *Sambhogakāya* — the sheath of enjoyment. This is the sheath in which a Buddha or Bodhisattva dwells on the earth or beyond.

3. *Nirmānakāya* — the sheath of transformation. This is the sheath of the historical Buddha.

The first sheath is unmanifest; the second is manifest to the eye of faith — i.e., bodhisattvas; and the third sheath is empirically manifest.

Those explanations can be related to the interpretation that HPB gives. The *nirmānakāya* is indeed the physical body of historical Buddhas, but not the dense physical. It is rather composed of a subtler form of physical matter, an ethereal form, sometimes called the ‘etheric body’, in which the bodhisattva continues to live after passing beyond the necessity of having a dense form. The *sambhogakāya* is a body of more rarefied matter with ‘entire obliteration of all earthly concerns’, that is, not physical matter at all. This body is formed for certain specific purposes. The *dharmakāya* is ‘no body at all’, for it is a state of existence unhampered by bodily form. One who dons the *dharmakāya* vesture is (in the term of verse 306) a ‘*nirvāni*’ or dweller in *nirvāna*.

Verses 307–310 review the process of choice by which the aspirant decides not to give up bodily form and enter *nirvāna*, but instead to stay within the

world as a *nirmānakāya*, helping in the evolution of others.

The final verses of the book, 311–316, celebrate the decision of an aspirant who has passed the seventh gate to become a *nirmānakāya* and join the ranks of the servers of humanity and the world. It is an ode of joy to all human beings — the denizens of ‘Myalba’, which HPB explains:

Gloss 35. *Myalba* is our earth — pertinently called ‘Hell’, and the greatest of all hells, by the esoteric school. The esoteric doctrine knows of no hell or place of punishment other than on a man-bearing planet or earth. *Avitchi* is a state and not a locality.

She might perhaps just as well have said that Myalba or earth could also be called ‘Heaven’, since both heaven and hell are states of mind, and not localities.

The joy in these final verses is at the return of a pilgrim from ‘the other shore’, from *Nirvāna* to the world of Myalba, in which we dwell, and at the birth of a new arhan:

Gloss 36. Meaning that a new and additional saviour of mankind is born, who will lead men to final *Nirvāna*, i.e., after the end of the life-cycle.

According to an old Chinese proverb, which the American statesman Adlai Stevenson used to praise the life and works of Eleanor Roosevelt, it is better to light a candle than to curse the

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darkness. We are in a land of darkness, but there are a few who light their candles so that the rest of us can find our way. When a new candle-lighter comes into the world, it is a cause for rejoicing. And so *The Voice of the Silence* ends: *Peace to all beings*.

Gloss 120. This is one of the variations of the formula that invariably follows every treatise, invocation or Instruction — ‘Peace to all beings’, ‘Blessings on all that Lives’, etc.

After that, there can only be the silence that passes understanding.

MEDITATION. Read verses 311 to 316, and meditate on them.

### An Overview Review

In his spiritual autobiography, St Augustine, the greatest of the Latin Church Fathers set forth a universal principle in Christian terms: ‘Our hearts are ever restless until they find their rest in thee.’

Spiritual traditions all over the world have recognized that we human beings have restless hearts. We are not content just to be content. Dogs and whales do not — so far as we know — pine to be something other than what they are. They accept their dogginess or whaleship.

The human animal, on the other hand, is by nature discontent. We want to be somewhere we are not or to become something we are not. In our breasts is a divine discontent that motivates us. We are on a quest. We are pining for salvation,

liberation, enlightenment, transformation, regeneration, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Pure Land, *Übermenschheit* — we call it many things. But under whatever name, it is something other and greater than the ordinary everyday round of existence.

Francis Thompson wrote about the restless human heart in his poem ‘The Hound of Heaven’:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears  
I hid from Him, and under running  
laughter.

The Buddha also spoke of our restless heart in his four Noble Truths. In the first Truth, he called the experience of a restless heart *dukkha* — sorrow, grief, or frustration. In the second, he identified the cause of that experience — the craving for what we do not have or are not. In the third, he pointed to the rest we seek as *nirvāna* — the blowing out of all restlessness. And in the fourth, he affirmed the existence of a Path to that rest.

Spiritual traditions all over the world have offered roadmaps for the restless heart to find its rest in God, *nirvāna*, or whatever we may call the end of our seeking. Among the roadmaps for this quest are the Sermon on the Mount, the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Dhammapada*, the *Tao Te Ching*, the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, and notably *The Voice of the Silence*.

*The Voice of the Silence* was published by H. P. Blavatsky in 1889, the last of the books she was to complete at the end of her life, her gift dedicated 'to the Few'. It consists of 316 verses, ranging in length from several words to a few sentences. The verses are in three fragmentary extracts from a longer work called *The Book of the Golden Precepts*, a spiritual guidebook for 'mystic students in the East. The knowledge of them is obligatory in that school, the teachings of which are accepted by many Theosophists' (preface).

We now conclude our study of *The Voice of the Silence*. That statement, like much else about this little book, is a paradox. For there is, in reality, no conclusion to such study. As T. S. Eliot wrote in 'Little Gidding':

... to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where you start from.

When we reach what looks like an end, however, we have the opportunity to take an overview of where we have been before continuing our journey. And so here is an overview review of what the three fragments of *The Voice of the Silence* look like to one traveller at the end point of our study — which is at the same time where we start from. Of course, other travellers will have other overviews. That is the nature of travelling and viewing.

All three fragments are about the journey a pilgrim makes on the Path of spiritual development. Each of the fragments treats that journey in a somewhat different way, but all three lead up

to what lies at the end of the Path — the purpose for treading it.

The first fragment, 'The Voice of the Silence', from which the whole book takes its title, speaks of the Path metaphorically as a passage through three halls: the Hall of Ignorance, the Hall of Learning, and the Hall of Wisdom into the Vale of Bliss beyond them all. It also speaks of hearing the Voice of the Silence in seven manners: as a nightingale, a silver cymbal, an ocean shell, a stringed instrument, a bamboo flute, a trumpet, and a thundercloud. The last is succeeded by silence — the Voice of the Silence. Those seven manners are symbolic of seven aspects of our own nature and thus of seven initiations on the Path or seven stages that lead to the eighth — the end of the journey, the Vale of Bliss that lies beyond the Hall of Wisdom.

The keynote of the first fragment is ANSWERING. When the Voice of the Silence speaks, those who hear it have no alternative but to answer. The answer each gives, to be sure, is up to that person. But the Voice cannot be ignored. Having heard it, we must respond. The theme of the first fragment is integrating the personality and the individuality — becoming whole within ourselves. The Voice does not come from outside us, but from the inmost core of our being. It is our higher self speaking to our personality and calling upon us to recognize our true nature. The first fragment raises the question, 'Who am I?' and thus focuses upon what in grammar is called the 'first person', the speaker.

The second fragment, 'The Two

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Paths', talks about a fork in the road, at which we must decide which of two directions we will travel. One direction leads to benefit for ourselves; the other leads to personal self-sacrifice for the welfare of all humanity. The second direction is that of the bodhisattvas, those saintly figures whose essence is wisdom and who have dedicated themselves to the service of all life.

The keynote of the second fragment is CHOOSING. The Path does not end with answering the Voice. That, in one sense, is only the beginning of the real Path. When I have recognized who I am, I have an important decision to make, namely how I relate to you, and what I should do about our relationship. I have to choose between alternatives. What obligation do I have to you as a fellow pilgrim on our mutual quest? Shall I hurry ahead to reach the goal myself? Or shall I tarry to assist you and others on the same journey so that we will all progress towards the goal together? Is travelling the Path a race or a shared pilgrimage? The answer to those questions will involve my concept of your nature, as well as my own, and will require me to make a choice about how I relate to you. And so the second fragment raises the question, 'Who are you?' and thereby focuses on grammar's 'second person' — the addressee, the one the speaker is talking to. The theme of the second fragment is integrating our separate identity with other individuals.

The third fragment, 'The Seven Portals', continues the theme of the second fragment in celebrating dedication to the

good of all humanity as the highest ideal of life. Its central metaphor is the passage of seven gates or portals, each being opened by a key that is one of the transcendental virtues: charity, harmony, patience, clear-sightedness, courage, contemplation, and wisdom.

The keynote of the third fragment is OPENING. When we have chosen to become a fellow worker with others in furthering our common journey, we need to prepare ourselves to achieve that end. That preparation requires us to open all the portals of our nature. We do not need to withdraw from life, but rather to become fully, totally involved with it — in the right way and for the right purpose. The third fragment depicts that involvement as a passage through seven doorways, to open each of which we need a key. The theme of the third fragment is integrating the human and the whole, and thereby transforming human nature into something beyond the limitations in which we live our ordinary personal lives. By calling our attention beyond the personal and individual to a total involvement with life, the third fragment raises the question, 'What is all that?' It focuses on the grammatical third person, which is neither you nor I, but everything else — the totality around us, the whole in which we live and move and have our being.

The book ends with an ecstatic celebration of what it means — not just to arrive at the end of the Path, where the restless heart finds peace — but, more important, to return from that peace to help others along the way. Or in a different

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metaphor, to cross to the other shore of life and then come back to this shore. The final words allude to the theme of *The Voice of the Silence*, for a 'wordless voice' speaks. What it says can be lightly paraphrased: 'Nature's Voice of the Silence, in a thousand tones, arises to proclaim: Joy unto you, O people of Earth. A pilgrim has returned back from the other shore. A new saint is born. Peace to all beings.'

The call of this little book is that we should answer the Voice from within, choose the Path we will follow, and open the Portals of our being, so that we can enter through them into the fullness of Life. It needs now only for us to make a beginning, to start out together on this journey, which leads from life to beyond life, and then back again to the life of this world and service by each of us to each other and to all beings. ✧

As you start to walk out on the way,  
the way appears.

As you cease to be,  
true life begins.

As you grow smaller,  
this world cannot contain you.

You will be shown a being  
that has no *you* in it.

Jalaluddin Rumi  
*Your True Life*



# I Am Not My Brother's Keeper

K. DINAKARAN

THE above startling statement was not made by the biblical character Cain to his Creator but by Mr J. Krishnamurti. He was going to the very root of violence and examining how to be free from it. Individuals who shirk their responsibilities always say that violence can never be stopped. The world often approves this attitude of human beings. JK was telling us that whether the other people in the world are callous about this question of violence or not he is not bothered about it. Krishnamurti was serious about this question of violence, afflicted by human beings on other human beings, animals, nature, etc. Our usual attitude is pitiable — we want the whole world to change, forgetting our own responsibility, our own contribution to the total violence in the world. Every form of division in the name of religion, caste, creed or sex will inevitably breed violence. We are becoming one small drop in the mighty ocean of violence. When we are aware of this fact we will certainly change our attitude without waiting for a change in our brothers' attitudes. Instead of this, we always try to change others and pretend to be the protectors of moral values, religious tradition and so on. Without a

radical change in ourselves how can we change others? How can we be our 'brother's keeper'?

Our attitude is to blame others. Krishnaji says that we and nobody else are responsible for the world and for ourselves, for what we think, what we feel, how we act, and pity ourselves. Normally we thrive on blaming others, which is a form of self-pity.

Krishnaji mentions that war is a fragment of violence. When it is expressed on a huge scale we condemn it and call for peace. According to him violence is not merely killing another person. Every form of intolerance, ambition, comparison, using a sharp word to intentionally wound another can be called violence. All forms of identification in the name of religion, ideology and nationality are breeding grounds for violence.

The mere expectation of an orderly world will not bring it about. For centuries human beings prayed for a saviour, a prophet, to come and save them from this unfortunate condition. Some 'thoughtful people' say 'I will try, I will try to be free.' JK says this is one of the most dreadful statements one can make. We always postpone our action. We

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avoid the present to flourish in the future, like a miserly man starving everyday to save his money to have a sumptuous meal in the future!

Just as we are not our 'brother's keeper' we should not depend upon another, whether it is the authority of a church, a book or a master. According to Krishnaji, 'All stimulation, whether of the church or of alcohol or of drugs or of the written or spoken word will inevitably bring about dependence'. Asking, seeking and all other forms of searching are nothing but greed, ultimately to satisfy the 'me and mine'. This 'me and mine' are the cause of all self-centred activity. Self-centred activity with its own limited circumference narrows down one's vision and leads to separateness which brings violence in all forms.

Man assiduously cultivated faith in a saviour to find God, Truth or ultimate reality. But faith only strengthens division: my faith, your faith, their faith, and so on. Division leads to violence, as we see in the present world — the quarrels in the name of religious faith, ideological faith, etc. Humanity has progressed marvelously with more and more scientific achievements in the field of genetic engineering, IT, armaments which can destroy the whole world, etc. But inwardly we are second-hand beings, always wanting somebody to guide us, instruct us. Inwardly we accept authority and allow another to twist our minds and our way of life.

The traditional approach to the question of violence is to seek the opposite

of what we are, e.g. 'I am violent so tomorrow onwards I will be non-violent.' But Krishnaji, refuting this approach, reveals to us that 'seeking the opposite of what we are is not the way either, nor is the artificial discipline imposed by a system, a teacher a philosopher or priest; all that is so very childish.' For us ideas have become far more important than action. So we formulate theories of non-violence, create various organizations, institutions to bring peace or order in society. We do not realize that organizations or institutions cannot bring peace or order in the world. The violence or disorder we face in the outer world is only a reflection of what we are. So without keeping our house in order we go on correcting the world.

How to bring about a radical change in ourselves? JK says, when we ask this question, we are only seeking a ready-made solution, a method or a system to solve a problem. This is only an escape from the present situation. We fail to realize that if we are attentive to the teacher of a system, we are attentive to that system and not to the problem itself.

Unlike traditional religious teachers JK never says the world is an illusion (*māyā*). He says: 'Life is very real, life is not an abstraction . . . and when you meet it with images there are problems. And there is no teacher, there is no leader to tell you what to do. You are alone in this mad, brutal world.'

Krishnaji states: 'Ask why it is that man who has lived for millions and millions of years has not got this thing,

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this extraordinary unfaded flower.’ Only in a truly religious mind may you come upon this thing called Truth or Reality or Bliss or God or Beauty or Love. ‘The religious mind is something entirely different from the mind that believes in religion. You cannot be religious and yet be a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian or a Buddhist. A religious mind does not seek at all, it cannot experiment with truth. The religious mind is a state of mind in which there is no fear and therefore no

belief whatsoever but only “what is”, what actually is.’

Krishnaji says: Just as we cannot invite a cool breeze into our room but can only keep our windows open, we cannot invite Love, Peace or Beauty into our home, because our minds are too silly, too small; our emotions are too shoddy, our way of life is too confused. We can keep our house clean and keep the windows open so that the cool breeze of Love, Beauty and Goodness may come unnoticed. ✧

The spark of the soul, which is sent there by God . . . is his light striking down from above, the reflection (or image) of his divine nature and ever opposed to anything ungodly: not a power of the soul, as some theologians make it, but a permanent tendency to good; aye, even in hell it is inclined to good. According to the masters, this light is of the nature of unceasing effort; it is called *syndersis*, that is to say, a joining to and turning from. It has two works. One is remorse for imperfection. The other work consists in ever more invoking good and bringing it direct into the soul, even though she be in hell.

Meister Eckhart

# Devotion and Attachment

SVITLANA GAVRYLENKO

**A** DEEP analysis shows that there is a substantial distinction between these two qualities. On the way of discipleship the first quality is welcomed and considered to be an essential feature, while the second is thought of as an obstacle, a hindrance which must be overcome.

Let us firstly make an attempt to understand what attachment means at the psychological level in everyday life.

In the teaching of the Buddha, attachment is mentioned as the quality that limits us, and it is necessary to be free, so that the bonds of matter have no power over us. Attachment means a certain dependence on desires, flashbacks, and conditions. Our senses remember previous impressions, both positive and negative, and tend again and again to reproduce the positive impressions as completely as possible while avoiding the negative impressions. Such emotional attachment constrains man and compels him to direct his thought in a way that is specified by this attachment. Thus perception of reality somewhat narrows and loses its panoramic feature. For example, the wish to reach more comfort and convenience encourages man to demonstrate wonders of ingenuity by inventing various

mechanisms, devices and contrivances to satisfy his most intricate desires. Simultaneously it has resulted in the global ecological catastrophe and led man to a life in artificial surroundings remote from nature and towards technological dependence.

Fear lies at the bottom of many attachments: fear of loss, deprivation; fear of experiencing again something unpleasant and painful.

Attachment is also the source of different sorts of disagreements, conflicts, constraints, wars.

Attachment is linked with our ability to react to different impressions of the outer world and to analyse and estimate them from the point of view of our personality; to hold these impressions in our mind and reproduce them in a similar situation; to manage ourselves and our surrounding circumstances so much, that it becomes possible to achieve the desired result, namely, the object of attachment.

A man who follows the spiritual path tries to become free from the coarser attachments of the sensual nature that are instinctive and unconscious in character, and to transform them consciously as far

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**Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko** is the President of Ankh Lodge, Kiev, Ukraine.

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as possible into a so-called 'higher register', to make them more socially oriented, for example, reverence, respect, care and other good qualities which we bestow upon the selected objects. However, while showing an attachment to the selected objects, our awareness should never allow us to display injustice, hostility or aggression in relation to the other objects.

We must admit that attachment plays a significant role in forming our own life and environment. Many people are very similar in their attachments; however, not all to an equal extent realize how strong their dependence is. Our sensitive nature is at the bottom of attachment, and forms the appropriate motives, the impulse to action in the human being involving thought, reasoning, comprehension, and finally drafting the plan of realization, while at the animal stage the transition from the motive to the action takes place instinctively.

During development the focus of man's consciousness moves to the area of the mind, to cogitative activity; therefore the mind acquires control over many emotional manifestations. Any emotional impulse is analysed and estimated by the mind, and only after that is the method of reaction chosen, that is an action. In other words, during evolution man gains power over his emotions, so that their influence becomes weaker. This is the beginning of the process of liberation. Gradually emotional manifestations lose their power, transforming into more elevated and noble feelings. This process lasts for

millions of years when final liberation of a human being occurs.

Master KH writes about it in his letters:

Until final emancipation re-absorbs the *Ego*, it *must* be conscious of the purest sympathies called out by the esthetic effects of high art; its tenderest cords respond to the call of the holier and nobler *human* attachments. Of course, the greater the progress towards deliverance, the less this will be the case, until, to crown all, human and purely individual personal feelings — blood-ties and friendship, patriotism and race predilection — all will give way, to become blended into one universal feeling, the only true and holy, the only unselfish and Eternal one — Love, an Immense Love for humanity, as a *Whole!* (*ML*, letter 8)

Even great Mahatmas are not fully free while they are with us on the earth plane of being. This is the way Master KH characterizes himself:

Yes, I confess that I, individually, am not yet exempt from some terrestrial attachments. I am still attracted towards *some* men more than towards others, and philanthropy as preached by our great Patron 'the Saviour of the World — the Teacher of Nirvana and the Law', has never killed in me either individual preferences of friendship, love for my next of kin, or the ardent feeling of patriotism for the country in which I was last materially individualized. (the same letter)

## Devotion and Attachment

The etymology of the word 'attachment' contains a kind of hint suggesting that somebody or a certain force has tied a person. There is the idea of being tied, bound, a dependence, with a taint of violence and artificiality. Even if it were you who had tied yourself and are trying to remain in this state, sooner or later you will understand this limiting influence, and you will want to be free from these bonds.

The etymology of the word 'devotion' suggests to us that there is the conscious act of devotion to somebody or something; and it is of paramount importance to move all other things aside. Devotion per se expresses not only a certain kind of person's relation to an object, but also certain actions that express this attitude.

Devotion is one of the most valuable human qualities. It has always been valued in human relations; each of us dreams about a true friend, a loving spouse, children who love their parents and take care of them. Many people try to realize this dream, although they choose the devotion of a pet. In every business group there are employees who are the mainstay of the organization, they worry about the prestige of their company, about the quality of products, about labour conditions and many other things. They show concern, personal interest and responsibility, and consider their enterprise to be their second home (sometimes the first).

Many of us know of the devotion of animals to their owners. Many cases are known when an animal has experienced

the pain of the owner and has tried to cure him, to save, even to sacrifice its life for the sake of the owner. One may notice that not all animals show such a quality. Needless to say, this quality is not shown to every owner. This fact may serve as evidence that devotion is also observed among animals, and we can conclude that this quality is inherent in the divine core of a living being and during evolution it is manifested in ever more accomplished and elevated forms.

Devotion is the basis of heroism and many a heroic deed. For many people devotion to their Motherland, duty, ideals, and convictions has been the source of vital deeds. And for the sake of devotion they put their life, freedom, and prosperity on the altar of life.

On the way of the disciple the quality of devotion is especially needed, as it helps him to move forward, when the tests and obstacles try to draw him aside. Devotion to the Teacher has always been considered one of the higher virtues in the East, the exclusive privilege of a student who has found the way. However, the Teachers distinguish very clearly between the honouring of the personality of the Teacher, and adherence to the cause which together the Teacher and the student serve. Master KH in one of his letters wrote to Sinnett:

If you would go on with your occult studies and literary work — then learn to be loyal to the Idea, rather than to my poor self. (*ML*, letter 55)

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Today many aspirants in the West are liable to dream about the Teacher, about the object of boundless trust and devotion. Reverse aspiration is also obvious — Great Teachers of humanity search and wait until aspirants are ready for collaboration and partnership. Master KH in one of his letters speaks about it:

The conventionalities of the weary world, outside our secluded 'Ashrams', trouble us but little at any time; least of all now, when it is men not ceremony-masters, we seek, devotion, not mere observances. (*ML*, letter 4)

Master KH describes the quality of devotion of a student, characterizing H. S. Olcott:

Him we can trust under *all* circumstances, and his faithful service is pledged to us come well, come ill. My dear Brother, my voice is the echo of impartial justice. Where

can we find an equal devotion? He is one who never questions, but obeys; who may make innumerable mistakes out of excessive zeal but never is unwilling to repair his fault even at the cost of the greatest self-humiliation; who esteems the sacrifice of comfort and even life something to be cheerfully risked whenever necessary; who will eat any food, or even go without; sleep on any bed, work in any place, fraternize with any outcast, endure any privation for the cause. (*ML*, letter 4).

Devotion is the quality which shows the degree of readiness of a student. Love, understanding and selflessness are the basis of devotion and help man to form an ideal and to find an adequate form of service to this ideal.

Let us try to tune our minds with our hearts to enable us to recognize the quality of our every action, both internal and external. ✧

**Those who remember the Lord with every breath, each morsel,  
and in whose mind ever abides the spell of the Lord's name —  
Says Nanak — are blessed, perfect devotees.**

*Ādi Granth*

# Books of Interest

THE RELIGION OF MAN by Rabindranath Tagore, Monkfish, 2004.

In 1913, when Tagore became the first non-Westerner to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature for his small book of poems entitled *Gitānjali*, the distinguished Indian mystic cracked the cultural barriers separating Eastern spirituality and Western thought. Tagore's classic speech, presented as the Hibbert Lectures, Oxford University, in 1930 and published the next year as *The Religion of Man*, describes religion as a universal humanistic experience characterized by personal mystical consciousness. The poet emphasized that this distinctive experience transcends racial divisions, and gathers humanity into a unity.

Religion assumes varied expressions, Tagore explained, and each manifestation emerges as a protest against earlier creeds and ritualistic observance that have become antiquated and obsolete. Each age produces these creative expressions to guide humanity's progress towards a plateau culminating in a persisting human tradition. These expressions, Tagore realized, represent an unceasing endeavour to reach the perfect in thought and aspiration; they are religious because they provide answers to questions about human identity. They are not possessed exclusively among a particular people but provide a common edification enriching all humanity. Religion emanates not from

people's gods but from within persons who contemplate their divinity, which is realized in neither stars nor rocks but within individuals. These expressions belong to Man's religion as the consequences emanating from the consciousness of the greater Man in the individual men among all races; these formulations should become coordinated within one great religion of Man.

Persistently, the passionate poet emphasizes that reality is not theoretical speculation interpreting the sacred scriptures, nor the orthodox instructions imparted by an ordained priesthood. Spiritual truth comes not from following faithfully a prescribed traditional pathway. Instead an illumination enlightens a person's entire life, almost approximating a communication of the universal self through the personal self. Rarely has universal religion secured such eloquent expression as Tagore provides in this splendid piece.

THE MYSTICAL THEOLOGY AND THE DIVINE NAMES by Dionysius the Areopagite, Dover, 2004.

Known through Western history by his pseudonym, Dionysius the Areopagite was probably a Syrian monk whose writings, composed in Greek, combined Neoplatonic thought, Christian theology, and mysticism. In the works contained in



## The Theosophist

this book, he explores the nature and consequences of contemplative prayer. The author describes experience, emanating from the disciplined abandonment of sensory perception and intelligible forms, as preparation for an immediate apprehension described as 'light from the divine darkness'. Throughout Western history, he exerted a powerful Neoplatonic tendency that influenced medieval Christian doctrine and spirituality. Persistently his writings guided religious

and devotional practices throughout the Western Latin Church. The philosophical depth and enduring influence of these treatises, especially upon scholasticism, and particularly upon St Thomas Aquinas, make these compositions classics in the Western intellectual tradition. The appearance of Dionysius' writings during this particular period addresses the spiritual starvation and ecclesiastical stagnation that arrests the human spirit. ✧

DANIEL ROSS CHANDLER

There is, monks, a condition where there is neither the element of extension, the element of cohesion, the element of heat, nor the element of motion, nor the sphere of the infinity of space, nor the sphere of the infinity of consciousness, nor the sphere of nothingness, nor the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; neither this world, nor a world beyond, nor sun and moon.

There, monks, I say, there is neither coming nor going nor staying nor passing away nor arising. Without support or mobility or basis is it. This is indeed the end of suffering.

That which is Selfless, hard it is to see;  
Not easy is it to perceive the Truth.  
But who has ended the craving utterly  
Has naught to cling to, he alone can see.

There is, monks, an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded. If, monks, there were not this unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded, there would not here be an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded. But because there is an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded, therefore there is an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded.

*Udāna-varga* 80

**ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOURTH INTERNATIONAL  
CONVENTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

**Adyar**

*Theme: 'Science and Spirituality in the Light of Theosophy'*

26 to 31 December 2009

**TENTATIVE PROGRAMME**

**Friday, 25 December**

8.00 am General Council Meeting  
2.00 pm General Council Meeting

**Saturday, 26 December**

8.00 am Prayers of the Religions  
OPENING OF THE CONVENTION  
3.30 pm Reception  
5.00 pm BESANT LECTURE  
'Gandhi's Faith — and Ours'  
Prof. Ramachandra Guha,  
*Managing Trustee, New India Foundation*  
7.30 pm Ritual of the Mystic Star

**Sunday, 27 December**

8.00 am SHORT LECTURES  
'Changing Perspectives and Converging Values'  
Prof. R. C. Tampi,  
*National Lecturer, Indian Section, TS*  
'Perceiving the Truth'  
Hrishikesh Sharan,  
*Chief Commissioner of Customs, Kolkata*  
9.30 am INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — I  
5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE  
Dr Satish Inamdar,  
*Krishnamurti Foundation India*  
7.30 pm Programme by children of Adruta Home, Orissa

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### Monday, 28 December

8.00 am	Devotional Meeting
9.30 am	SHORT LECTURES 'The Consciousness of Light and the Light of Consciousness' Dr Dara Tatray, <i>General Secretary, Australian Section, TS</i> 'Coordination of Science and Human Values' Prof. C. A. Shinde, <i>National Lecturer, Indian Section, TS</i>
3.00 pm	THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE
5.00 pm	THEOSOPHY-SCIENCE LECTURE
7.30 pm	Variety Art Programme by Mrs Ambika Buch and her Group

### Tuesday, 29 December

8.00 am	SHORT LECTURES 'Wisdom and Technology — Inner Transformation and Outer Change' Mr Marcos de Resende, <i>General Secretary, Brazilian Section, TS</i> 'All is Brahman' Mr Bhupendra Vora, <i>English Section, TS</i>
9.30 am	INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — II
5.00 pm	PUBLIC LECTURE 'The Mystery of Human Consciousness' Mr Colin Price, <i>former General Secretary, English Section, TS</i>
7.30 pm	Entertainment

### Wednesday, 30 December

8.00 am	LECTURE
9.30 am	QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
5.00 pm	PUBLIC LECTURE 'Human Society, Spirituality and Renewal' Mrs Linda Oliveira, <i>International Vice-President, TS</i>
7.30 pm	Krishnamurti Video

### Thursday, 31 December

8.00 am	Prayers of the Religions CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION
9.30 am	Admission of New Members

# Theosophical Work around the World

## **Adyar**

Foundation Day at the International Headquarters this year was particularly special after the renovation of the Headquarters Hall, which will be known to many members worldwide. The Hall was decorated with plants for the occasion, particularly near the statues of the principal co-Founders of the TS, Mme Blavatsky and Col. Olcott.

After a song, followed by opening remarks introducing the Guest Speaker by Mr Sriram Panchu, the international President, Mrs Radha Burnier, welcomed those present including the Guest of Honour, the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, Honourable Justice H. L. Gokhale. Justice Gokhale spoke about the fundamental principle of Brotherhood embodied by the Theosophical Society, mentioning that it cannot be sustained unless liberty and equality exist between all. Equality, he noted, was preached by Lord Buddha and also by Emperor Aśoka. These great individuals strived to bring solace to suffering humanity. He mentioned some individuals in India who have been influenced by Theosophy, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, especially through his association with Dr Annie Besant, who contributed substantially to the life of India, as well as Mahatma Gandhi, who would enter the home of a person from any caste.

After some closing remarks by the

international President, offerings of flowers were made by members in memory of Mme Blavatsky and Col. Olcott, and the great work they have done in helping forge a Society which remains a significant presence in the world today.

## **Karnataka Federation, India**

During November, the annual Karnataka Theosophical Federation Conference was combined with the Centenary Celebrations of Chitradurga Lodge in Karnataka. This function was attended by the international Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, and Mr Pedro Oliveira, Head of the Editorial Office at Adyar. The Vice-President gave a lecture to inaugurate the celebrations of the Lodge Centenary and Mr Pedro Oliveira gave a speech to inaugurate the Conference. The themes of their addresses related to the purpose of a TS Lodge and the purpose of the Theosophical Society respectively. The Vice-President also gave a valedictory speech at the end of the function.

The Karnataka Theosophical Federation is one of sixteen Federations in the Indian Section. Approximately two hundred members were in attendance on this occasion, coming from many different places in the region. There was a noticeable atmosphere of dedication to the Society's work, cooperation and brotherhood among those who were present. ✧