



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.

On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

Devotion as a Way

Devotion has been considered one of the principal ways through which a person can have greater understanding and closeness to higher levels of being. But at the lower levels, we find devotion often does not amount to much. Devotion can be to many different things, depending on a person's intelligence. It is said that on the path, some feelings and thoughts which are highly valued, are not of much use if they are taken separately. For instance, if you take devotion, it depends much on what one is devoted to. It can be something of a lower order, in which case the value of that devotion becomes less; not that it does not have value, because to possess devotion at all to anything, even to what is bad, has some value. Sometimes this is indicated in novels.

In one of Dickens' novels there is a bad character, who has a dog attached to him. He is somewhat attached to the dog, but turns upon it and sometimes behaves in a way which one does not expect from a man who loves his pet animal. But it is the one thing which he learns to love, and so has value; it keeps the flame of love alive within him (though burning very low), which is very important. So, whatever devotion a person has to anything,

even to a god made of stone, has a certain value. Dr Besant had two servants who did various things for her: not as she wanted, but as they wanted. One of them had been a criminal but she said that there was some good in him, and she nourished it. My brother and I as small children used to be afraid of him, because he looked rather frightening. Dr Besant was very good to him and probably during that incarnation, he improved because he learnt to have devotion to her.

We do not know what makes a person better, but it is certain that devotion does bring about a change in the character of an individual. And therefore it does not matter to what a person learns to be devoted at his stage in life. But there are various stages. And there are people who are known to have developed spirituality by devotion, may be by devotion to a god to whom they attributed all kinds of fine qualities. But when it comes to one who is more developed, the devotion has to include more things. True religious devotion, which feels the necessity to help all things, high and low, marks a turning point.

In some of his works, Dr Taimni speaks of a very high type of devotion — devotion to an idea. That kind of devotion

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is advocated to spiritually oriented persons. When a person has true devotion, he begins to learn that the life of God is everywhere, in all things, small and big. We know that even small creatures which may appear insignificant to us now, have a role to play in the process of evolution. We can know something of how great a role small insects have. Ants, for instance, learn to work together; and even if we learn a little of the details of its existence, the ant is amazing. One wonders how there can be a creature so small, having a very tiny brain, which has the kind of intelligence it has. Or does it allow the universal intelligence, working through it and the company of other ants like him, to do something which is valuable from a larger view?

It is very enlightening and inspiring to learn, even gradually, about how evolution works. It works in many ways, not in one way alone, and all the time it finds ways to develop intelligence and the qualities necessary for the higher life of various beings. We who are highly developed mentally, from a certain point of view, must learn what elements make for devotion. Devotion is not merely to a single individual, it is much more than that. If it is dedication to a higher being, like one of the Mahatmas, then it must exist for the good of all creatures, because the Mahatmas are not concerned with only one or two people. Sometimes it appears as if they take more interest in one individual, rather than another, because those who are highly developed have choices before them. They are given opportunities

and much depends on whether that individual takes advantage of them or not. The Mahatma does not say this is the opportunity. Opportunity may come in hidden ways. It may be of a kind that is not easily recognizable.

If we believe in Theosophical literature, we know of some individuals who have proceeded very far, and then stop, or even go back. But this does not happen to someone who has devotion in a real sense, because he has devotion not only to a person who may be a teacher, but to one who has shown the way is universal. It is not limited to any one person, even to a Mahatma. Devotion to a person is devotion to that which that person is working for; that is the good of all creatures which I believe every Mahatma represents. There is something in every individual which can take him on the spiritual path, and it is for us to become aware what this is; not to condemn some people because we see that they are not doing what we think they should. We may help them to take a positive interest, perhaps not at the physical level but at a different level.

In one of the talks that Dr Besant gave, she said that in our meditation, we can think of a person who has had difficulties, and pour out, as much as possible, the kind of feeling that will encourage the better side of his or her nature to come up. The help we give need not necessarily be at the physical level. The person may reject our approach to him, but our attitude towards that person can be helpful all the same. So, at the

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back of our mind, there is the good of all.

So in devotion to an individual, you do not remain enclosed. The heart becomes larger. The heart of the Adept is as large as life itself. So if devotion limits a person and he says he is devoted to this or that and everything else is ordinary, there is something wrong. A good teacher is concerned with the good of all, and he who is devoted to the teacher is also concerned with the good of all. The Adepts perhaps do not allow contact with themselves to anyone who has not come so far, because he has not yet the capacity to widen his interests and feelings.

All of us can look at ourselves. We may be devoted in many ways, or only devoted to certain members of our family, and not to all. We may be devoted to one Master, or one teacher, but not to everyone who has the character of a holy person. Tradition often suggests devotion only to a chosen person. This may be fine, but only at a certain stage. Beyond that stage, which may be the beginning of Theosophical life, there must be a devotion towards the good of humanity itself, including all people, the bad as well as the good, animals, birds, in fact, everything. A benevolent attitude must come to the fore, an attitude which does not change according to the behaviour of others, but remains the same.

A Brotherhood which is Different

More than a century ago, HPB wrote certain things which are valuable to us even today. One such thing was concern about the impact that Theosophy could,

and will have, one day on people. She wrote as follows:

On the day when Theosophy will have accomplished its most holy and most important vision, namely to unite firmly a body of all nations in brotherly love — on true altruistic work, not a labour with selfish motives — on that day only will Theosophy become higher than any nominal brotherhood of man.

The brotherhood we talk about, and what most of us practise, is only nominal, not deep. It does not overcome obstacles and is not better than brotherhood spoken about, but not really put into effect. As HPB says, it has a mission, a work, to do, which is most holy and important. It must unite all people who are touched by high ideals into a brotherhood of all men and all nations, so that the world really becomes one at heart.

It is important that brotherhood does not remain a word which conveys only what is superficial. It must be deeply felt and practised, touching all people and all creatures. It should not eliminate the poor and the dirty, and those who err in various ways. To regard all as brothers is a holy, a most holy and important mission. The purpose for which we are working is not merely to create a little friendship between the many people of the earth, but a real bond which is altruistic. Till that day, Theosophy is only nominal but when the brotherhood is real, it will unite not only all human beings but all nations. Nations will have their particular characteristics, but will be united by a common basis of

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altruistic work and absence of selfish motivation. If we see this at all, we see how far away we are from real brotherhood.

Science, Religion and Philosophy, which we speak about in the second Object, must be understood at a deep level. Science, for example, is not merely a matter of knowing and of studying more about how the universe works. It is a question of understanding the meaning of the universe as a whole. It is not a process whose meaning and purpose nobody knows; the real scientist is asking what the universe means while he is studying scientifically who we are.

What is the meaning of our life is a question that begins to touch philosophy. Religion also in its own way asks this question. Is there an element of sacredness which connects all things of which we come to know? Are all parts of that one supreme substance which is Brahman, a unity which is not mechanical and which makes disparity look unreal? Science is not merely a classroom knowledge or indicative of a capacity to invent. It is what unites in thought the world: people, trees

and earth, and fish and everything that we know. What is this interconnectedness and what is the key to it? It is interesting in this connection to learn of the laws which apply to things on this earth and also apply to distant things, to what happens both on the earth and in the universe.

This interconnection may be what is important to know. All of us who are Theosophists know that the smallest creature is still part of a great system; it is growing in awareness, not only in body. This is one of the things that connect us to everything on earth and beyond. The Buddha said that compassion goes to all creatures, feeling the goodness in them, which is a way of feeling unity. People who know this will come upon a different way of looking at things, a different plan of existence.

Brotherhood is brought about in many ways. The second Object of our Society is a way, which we do not usually think of, towards the unity of life. It is the meaning of life, perhaps of life being one. The objects of the Society all point to the same truth. ✧

Q: What is the easiest way to God?

A: Profuse tears.

Q: And if tears do not come?

A: Then you should seek the company of those who shed tears, namely in the company of the good (*satsangh*). This is the easiest way to God, through love and devotion.

Ma Anandamayi

The Nature of the True Path

COLIN PRICE

ONE of the most frequently used analogies for progress in the spiritual life is that of travelling on the path. As with all journeys the traveller has to decide upon the destination and mode of travel. Naturally it varies from person to person and journey to journey. While the mode of travel is often a matter of choice the destination is of supreme importance and often predetermined.

The theosophical message strikes a common chord with people from many religious persuasions and cultural backgrounds just because it makes truth a primary objective of the spiritual quest. This search for truth defines the nature of the true path. The primacy of truth was realized so acutely by the early members of the Theosophical Society that they chose the motto 'There is No Religion Higher than Truth'.

It is relatively easy to give intellectual assent to such a statement, and it does give a very beautiful basis for the establishment of brotherhood across a great diversity of spiritual seekers after enlightenment, but the consequences of acceptance of such a motto begin with the necessity of finding the right direction to

travel if the objective is to be reached. It has been a universal quest down through history. Philosophies, and many religions, have arisen in an attempt to answer the question 'What is Truth?' A huge diversity of answers has been offered. So much so that the seeker may well complain that many are incompatible with observations of laws of nature and with each other. It is hard to resist the conclusion that much of the teachings are based upon speculation, and are just conjecture particularly when the discoveries of modern science have often shown them to be wrong and mutually incompatible. It is not surprising that a crisis in belief has occurred in many people today who find it impossible to see any evidence of a fundamental underlying truth.

It is to Madame Blavatsky's everlasting credit that she dared to propound the universal truth regardless of the consequences, and the personal antagonism directed against her. She had spent many years touring the continents of the world. At first hand she had experienced a wide range of cultures and religious beliefs. By a process of comparison and evaluation with reference to nature's laws she was

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inspired to proclaim the truth which underlies the outward forms. So what is the route map which the intrepid pilgrim has to follow to reach enlightenment and Nirvānic bliss? In the Proem to *The Secret Doctrine* she explains that there are three fundamental propositions. The acceptance and understanding of these are the very first steps on the Path, and they help to define both its nature and direction. They guide the traveller away from the many pitfalls and dangers which can ensnare him and cause him to lose his sense of direction and become confused. In *The Voice of the Silence* we read: ‘Alas, that so few men should profit by the gift, the priceless boon of learning truth, the right perception of existing things.’

The First Fundamental Proposition deals with the vexed subject of the nature of deity. In order to define the goal we need to define the destination which means for most people to define heaven or Nirvāna. If it is that state of enlightenment which implies the presence of an anthropomorphic god then this idea is such a handicap to the traveller that he can barely enter on the Path. Theosophy offers a better start with the concept of an unknowable first cause beyond the range and reach of thought, and yet existing in all time and space and in a deeply mystical way actually being time and space themselves. *This deep esoteric teaching is so difficult for most people to understand that it is a major difficulty* for those who wish to enter the true Path.

HPB provides another clue when she answers the question: ‘To whom then do

you pray when you do so?’ She replies: ‘To our Father in heaven — in its esoteric meaning. An Occultist or Theosophist addresses this prayer to his Father which is in secret, not to an extra-cosmic and therefore finite God; and that Father is in man himself — in our sense, the inner man is the only God of whom we can have cognizance.’ And how can this be otherwise? This is why right thinking about the concept of God is so important, because it determines right thinking about the Path. How can you enter a path if you have a completely false notion of what it is, or what it looks like, or where or whom it leads to?

In his book entitled *The Search Within*, Christmas Humphreys explains that the Path is an inward Path, one which can only be travelled by those who practise meditation and embark upon the long process of ‘Self’-finding or soul-searching. It sounds highly paradoxical to suggest that one has to find oneself, but this is explained by the Theosophical teachings about self, in fact about our two selves.

Madame Blavatsky explains that the clue lies in the double consciousness of our mind, and also in the dual nature of the mental principle. ‘There is a spiritual consciousness — the *mānasic* mind illuminated by the light of Buddhi — which subjectively perceives abstractions, and a sentient consciousness — the lower *mānasic* light — inseparable from our physical brain and senses . . . It is not the world in which blossom the transitory and evanescent flowers of personal lives, which is the real permanent world: but that

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one in which we find the root of consciousness, the root which is beyond illusion and dwells in the eternity.’

There is such a deep fundamental truth embedded here that the seeker recognizes it as such. She writes in her first book, *Isis Unveiled*:

From the remotest antiquity mankind as a whole has always been convinced of the existence of a personal spiritual entity within, the personal physical man.

And again in *The Voice of the Silence*:

For mind is like a mirror, it gathers dust while it reflects. It needs the gentle breeze of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions,

and again, ‘Thy body is not Self, thy Self is in itself without a body.’

The Second Fundamental Proposition is also relevant to an understanding of the nature of the Path with its teaching on cyclicality. It provides the basis for the extremely important teaching about reincarnation. We need to be aware that the Path is long, and stretches through many human incarnations, both forward into the future as well as reaching backwards into the past. It is essential that the pilgrim accepts that this is the nature of the true Path.

The Third Fundamental Proposition is equally relevant because it refers to our ultimate identity when we reach the end of the Path. We need to be aware that our brotherhood is not an option which we can choose to have when we join the Theosophical Society. We are told in this Proposition that it arises from our

fundamental identity with every other soul, and with the universal Over-Soul. The failure to realize this is a huge impediment on the journey, because this teaching also helps to define the nature of the Path and its goal.

In a very real and significant sense, the true Path is a journey of SELF-discovery. A journey of the ordinary everyday consciousness to the awareness of its higher esoteric counterpart. This journey is hindered, if not prevented, by the refusal of many people to acknowledge their higher SELVES. They resent the possible interference of conscience in the way they live their lives. They do not want to change their lifestyles particularly where a high degree of selfishness is involved. The WILL has long been subjugated to the demands of the personality, and it will be prevented from re-asserting its authority if at all possible.

The famous electrical engineer and scientist, Nicholas Tesla, writes: ‘When I was a boy and I was given sweets, or a cake, I deliberately gave them away, although I would very much have liked them. In so doing I developed will power so that eventually my will and my actions were the same.’ We are advised in *The Voice of the Silence*: ‘Seek O Beginner, to blend thy Mind and Soul.’

The path to enlightenment is an oath of renunciation of selfishness, and the embracing of a life dominated by altruism. For many, this journey will be a journey in which many battles will be fought as the Higher Self strives for control again and again. We are told:

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Not one recruit can ever be refused the right to enter on the Path that leads towards the field of battle.

The doctrine of the two Paths in one . . . The Law which, shunning learning, teaches Wisdom, reveals a tale of woe. Alas, alas, that all men should possess Ālaya, be one with the great Soul, and that possessing it, Ālaya should so little avail them!

The Eye doctrine, we read, is the Path which leads to selfish bliss. It is pleasing to the eye, it looks desirable and good. It is seductive, but it is not the Path to enlightenment or Nirvāna, and its end is death.

Considerable attention is given to the other Path: the dharma of the heart. It can only be trodden by those who are willing to embrace the life of altruism, the life of unselfish devotion to the service of others. It is the embodiment of the reincarnating Ego.

It is this Path which is the true Path, but to successfully progress along it requires the power of will, the right attitude of mind, great determination and strong motivation. Where else can these qualities come from but from the Higher Self? As we read our newspapers we see little evidence that mankind in general is interested in this Path or the qualities of life that it represents.

However, the Theosophist is a seeker after the truth about life. He wants to know what life is all about. What is its purpose? Does it have a deeper significance than the obvious superficial one? Mankind has been hindered in the search for the true answers to these questions by the many

false clues produced throughout history by religion and philosophy. The absence of answers which have the ring of truth about them may partly account for the lack of interest in the true Path.

Some examples of common misconceptions are given:

Believe thou not that sitting in the dark forests, in proud seclusion and apart from men, believe thou not that life on roots and plants, that thirst assuaged with snow from the great Range — believe thou not, O Devotee, that this will lead to the goal of final liberation.

Think not that breaking bone, that rending flesh and muscle, unites thee to thy higher Self. Think not, that when the sins of the gross form are conquered, O victim of thy Shadows (physical body), that thy duty is accomplished by nature and by man.

The blessed ones have scorned to do so. The Lion of the Law, the Lord of Mercy (the Buddha) perceiving the true course of human woe, immediately forsook the sweet but selfish rest of quiet wilds. From Āranyaka (his forest retreat), he became the teacher of mankind. After he had entered the Nirvāna he preached on mount and plane, and held discourses in the cities, to deva-s, men and gods.

The inward Path of self-discovery of one's spiritual reincarnating Higher Self is a Path which yields its secrets only to the very few who seek it with total dedication and sincerity. Only those are empowered to successfully complete the immense journey which leads to final liberation and Nirvāna. ✧

Practical Mysticism

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

IN spite of the growing interest in mysticism around the world genuine mystical awareness continues to elude the many that seem to be interested in the subject. There are those who seem always ready to believe anything they are told by the latest 'corporate' mystic. The word 'corporate' is here used purposefully as the subject of mysticism has now become a multi-million dollar industry. Others attempt a premature beginning in the inner life only to become convinced that they *did* have an authentic mystical experience and that such an event has 'empowered' them to teach others. In many cases, what passes by as 'teaching' is basically an exercise in unadulterated self-promotion and hedonism.

A look at the etymology of the word may help us to understand the depth and rigour intrinsic in true mysticism. The word 'mystic' is derived from the Greek verb *muein*, 'close the eyes or lips'. The genuine mystics in many ages and cultures testify to the truth of the above definition. At the very heart of real mysticism is an untranslatable experience, so deep and powerful in its profound meaning that it completely silences and ends the chattering, inner and outer, which constitutes the

cherished self-importance of the personal mind. From the life-altering testimonies handed down to us from earlier ages, the mystics affirm, in a melody of meaning which is almost like a sung offering, that their experience has come from outside the confines of the everyday mind, from a source in which wholeness and meaning are like two intertwined perennial flames. It is something that has come to them, not a thing which was sought by an ignorant mind.

The teachings of the great mystics also show that their mysticism was always a practical experience, not a conceptual creation fanned by imagination, illusion or desire. Real mysticism is experience, an immediate, complete and irreversible awareness of a life which has no beginning and no end, which blesses all, unreservedly, and which is the only reality hidden behind every appearance. When the mind, heart and soul are truly open then they can be flooded by the Other, the birthless and deathless Spirit into which a new birth can take place. The selected passages below may perhaps help in showing how direct and practical mysticism is.

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I took the lamp and, leaving the zone of everyday occupations and relationships where everything seemed clear, I went down into my inmost self, to the deep abyss whence I feel dimly that my power of action emanates. But as I moved further and further away from conventional certainties by which social life is superficially illuminated, I became aware that I was losing contact with myself. At each step of the descent a new person was disclosed within me of whose name I was no longer sure, and who no longer obeyed me. And when I had to stop my exploration because the path faded from beneath my steps, I found a bottomless abyss at my feet. (*The Divine Milieu* by Teilhard de Chardin)

Our image of ourselves is essentially superficial. It includes a cluster of memories to which we are attached, and that, we think, defines us. It also involves the amount of knowledge we have gathered in this life. The more one reads, the greater is the tendency to unquestioningly believe that such acquired knowledge is self-sufficient. However, in moments of great loss or inward darkness the accumulated knowledge proves unhelpful. Without self-knowledge every other form of knowledge is an impediment to spiritual growth. As T. S. Eliot wrote: 'Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?' Chardin's passage, mentioned above, also shows that our own conditioning is very deep, has many layers to it, and that the source of

consciousness is beyond the grasp of the personal self. One must be prepared to meet the unexpected on the mystical path.

Much has been written about Krishnamurti's life and the experiences he went through. His was a genuine case of someone who did not seek any transcendental experience at all, but to whom life-changing experiences did come which helped him to understand life at a very deep level. Reports about his life show that what was called a 'vacant' mind was in reality an extraordinary state of availability and receptivity to that Otherness that is the very source of the sacred. Below is his own record of one of such transformative experiences which came to him in Ojai, California, in 1922:

There was a man mending the road; that man was myself; the pickaxe he held was myself; the very stone which he was breaking up was part of me; the tender blade of grass was my very being, and the tree beside the man was myself. I almost could feel and think like the roadmender, I could feel the wind passing through the tree, and the little ant on the blade of grass I could feel. The birds, the dust, and the very noise were a part of me. Just then a car was passing by at some distance; I was the driver, the engines and the tyres; as the car went further away from me, I was going away from myself. I was in everything, or rather everything was in me, inanimate and animate, the mountain, the worm, and all breathing things. (*Krishnamurti: Years of Awakening* by Mary Lutyens)

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Mystics have pointed out that one of the very first expressions of a mystical state of consciousness is the dissolution of the 'I'-sense, the prison-house that shuts out consciousness from the abiding truth of the undivided wholeness of existence. Liberated from the illusion of separateness the feeling aspect of consciousness expands to embrace every manifestation of life and unfolds into forms of sympathy, appreciation and understanding that know no limits. Krishnaji's experience in Ojai shows that what we consider to be one's self is indeed the self of all. The immediacy described in Krishnaji's experience clearly shows that it is an illusion to believe that only certain special or secluded places or conditions could yield it. The present moment is the door through which it comes when the heart is free from every longing and all expectations.

Religion has had a bad press for a number of centuries now. It is undeniably true that serious perversions have crept into many religious traditions, perhaps the most serious of all being the notion that the Divine inhabits a totally inaccessible dimension separated from our daily experience and living. Many have benefited from this supposed impassable gulf: preachers, gurus, 'spiritual' organizations, as well as our very sense of self. As long as the Divine is 'out there', in a dimension beyond our experience, the status quo can be maintained. No real change can take place when religion or spirituality consists in the perpetuation of empty formulas and beliefs. One of the important aspects of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's utterances below is the

compelling realization that the Divine, the uncreated Intelligence, pervades every aspect of life with its irresistible energy:

I the oblation; I the sacrifice; I the ancestral offering; I the (fire-giving) herb; the mantra I; also the butter; I the fire; the burnt-offering I; I the Father of this universe, the Mother, the Supporter, the Grandsire, the Holy One to be known, the Word of Power, and also the Ṛk, Sāman, and Yajus [Veda-s], the Path, Husband, Lord, Witness, Abode, Shelter, Lover, Origin, Dissolution, Foundation, Treasure-house, Seed imperishable. (*Bhagavadgītā*, IX.16–19)

This celebrated passage of one of the most cherished spiritual texts of all time indicates that, at a very deep level, there is no distinction between knowing, devotion and faith. The realization that every aspect of life is a manifestation of the Divine causes a veritable fusion between mind and heart, resulting in a perception that rises beyond the realm of differences to the Ground of reality and truth, the very cornerstone of existence. One of the many expressions of such experience is a deep and abiding reverence for all life.

The practical nature of an 'unveiled spiritual perception' has been affirmed by one of the Elder Brethren who inspired the formation of the Theosophical Society. His statement below, contained in a letter to A. P. Sinnett, shows how immediacy of understanding is a natural result of true spiritual progress:

Believe me, there comes a moment in the life of an adept, when the hardships he

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has passed through are a thousandfold rewarded. In order to acquire further knowledge, he has no more to go through a minute and slow process of investigation and comparison of various objects, but is accorded an instantaneous, implicit insight into every first truth. (*The Mahatma Letters*, No. 17)

The expression 'is accorded an instantaneous, implicit insight into every first truth' is worth considering carefully. First, such experience is 'accorded', that means, not taken but given to an extraordinarily receptive consciousness. The insight which is mentioned is 'instantaneous' and 'implicit', that is, not mediated by brain processes or conceptualizations, but direct, timeless, coming from the very depths of consciousness. Such insight penetrates 'into every first truth', those fundamental principles which lie at the core of manifestation. The Adept, in order to know, does not need to gather data or information as we do. His direct perception penetrates the very essence of any subject he needs to know. As the *Chāndogya Upanishad* states so poignantly, he 'knows That which, once known, everything else is known'.

Perhaps the most important aspect of practical mysticism is compassion. The notion entertained by us that such a thing as 'my life' is real may be based on a terribly wrong assumption. When one looks carefully at life there is pretty little that we can call 'mine'. Life is interaction and relationship at every level. What happens when you see someone with sadness written large on his or her face? Does not

it become, at least momentarily, a part of your life? You may brush it aside and say that is not your business. But the truth of the experience is that for a fleeting moment the life of a fellow human being has entered yours. We probably respond to such moments with callousness or indifference, and usually explain them away in the hope that such explanation will cause that truth to go away. However, not all respond in that fashion:

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Mark, 25:35-40)

What is the nature of a consciousness that is one with those who suffer, who are in need, who are sick, or in prison, or who have nothing? The same question could be asked about those who are experiencing oppression, torture, loneliness, which may include thousands of animals around the world, locked up in laboratories. Is there any difference between such consciousness and compassion? It

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may be easy to talk about compassion but to truly experience it is an altogether different reality. The teaching by Jesus to his disciples, mentioned above, dramatically shows the fundamental identity between oneness and compassion. They are one and the same.

The teachings of the mystics are essentially practical and of great relevance to the transformation of the human consciousness. Perhaps their most directly practical teaching is that what we consider to be our selfhood is indeed just an

appearance, 'a passing guest', a mirage in the desert. They maintain that to live within this prison-house is not the real life and that when the heart and the mind are purged of all self-seeking and self-importance the ground becomes ready and right for the Divine to dwell therein. They say that without seeking anything they gained all and that the Divine gave of itself unreservedly in the depth of their mystical experiences. Some of them have said that the Divine is just boundless giving, and that life, in each of its forms, is such giving.

I wished, and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me:

And I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her.

Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone: for all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay.

I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light: for her light cannot be put out.

Wisdom, 7:7–10

The Pioneering Spirit

MARY ANDERSON

THE spiritual life is often symbolized as a path, a journey, a quest or a pilgrimage. We may be reminded of *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. Bunyan, who lived in the seventeenth century, was a narrow Puritan, serving an anthropomorphic god, imagined to be jealous and cruel. He lived in great fear of not being 'saved', of ending up in hellfire. But he depicts in *The Pilgrim's Progress* the many difficulties and the many encouragements on the path of spirituality. He symbolizes them as features of the landscape, towns, etc., and companions on the journey. For example, he journeys through 'the Slough (swamp) of Despond', 'the Valley of the Shadow of Death', 'the Valley of Humiliation', 'the City of Destruction', 'Vanity Fair', 'House Beautiful', 'Doubting Castle', 'the Celestial City', etc., and his companions and enemies at different times are Hopeful, Faithful, Talkative, Fair Speech, Ignorance, Giant Despair (who keeps the hero and his fellow-pilgrims prisoners for a time because they stray from the path).

In different religions there are symbolic maps showing dangers to come on the Path. The Christian Mystic Way warns of

Purgation after the joy of Conversion and the 'dark night of the soul' following 'Illumination' before the final Mystic Union. The pilgrimage or the Way has a goal. Even if we do not know that goal, we envisage it, we imagine it, we may even 'sense' it.

There is another symbol, that of a traveller who has no map to guide him and does not know the next step on his path or the end of that path, if it is to have an end at all: the pioneer. A pioneer does not know what awaits him or her around the corner or at the end of the way if it has an end at all. He may speculate and theorize, but he does not know in practice, because the pioneer is the first to travel on that particular path. So the pioneer has to face much hardship. The word 'pioneer' originally meant one who goes on foot or a foot-soldier. One who goes on foot has to 'slog it'. He or she travels more slowly, with greater effort and greater hardship. 'Does the road wind uphill all the way?' 'Yes, to the very end.' Pioneers are adventurers, explorers, going where no one has been before. Therefore they prepare the way for those who come after them by eroding the land, drawing

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maps, pointing out dangers; making life safer and more understandable for those who follow. And when they follow, the pioneer has already gone off into uncharted land. Pioneers are pathfinders, scouts, torch-bearers.

The word 'pioneer' may remind us of the pioneering days in North America. These pioneering days are familiar to us from the cowboy films so popular in the first half and the middle of last century. Watching these films, we were led to expect the unexpected; we were shown how so-called 'heroes' coped with the unexpected. Today pioneering days in the traditional sense are over. Human beings have explored almost every corner of the earth, mapping out the land and unfortunately exploiting it! Now man has turned to the exploration of outer space with spaceships of various kinds, cumbersome and ruinously expensive, with remote control and computer backing from the earth. There is increasing exploration into the very large in astronomy and into the very small in nuclear physics, genetics, etc. But perhaps the spirit of the pioneer remains the same. It is characterized by curiosity, courage, adaptability, inventiveness, etc.

But is not life itself pioneering? Even if we lead a very sheltered life, we may one day be confronted with the unexpected. Again and again we may have to tread ground that is new, at least for us. The unexpected may take the form of the loss of our possessions, our job, our health, our nearest and dearest by estrangement or bereavement, or the

prospect of our own death. It may be promotion that faces us, involving more responsibility. Human beings tend to like routine and comfort. They fear the unexpected, the unknown. It is said that an evil that one knows is better than an evil that one does not know. People even deny the possibility of the unexpected happening to them: 'This can't happen to me!' But when we are confronted with the unexpected we have an opportunity to develop qualities we perhaps lacked, like curiosity, adaptability, courage and inventiveness. The unexpected cannot be dealt with in the way we have learned to cope with even emergencies, that is, with the logical mind, following certain rules — or only to a limited extent. So the unexpected may call forth in us something beyond the mind; the intuition. It may lead us to the Spiritual Path. Indeed, the Spiritual Path itself is the Unexpected and calls for the pioneering spirit.

What can the pioneering spirit in the 'pioneering days' in the United States teach us? There is a poem by Walt Whitman: 'Pioneers! O Pioneers!' Different qualities of pioneers are brought out in this poem. They may be understood not only literally but also psychologically and spiritually. Let me summarize them: constant movement, watchfulness, being prepared for anything, adaptability, not looking behind us, courage, effort, the simple life, responsibility, readiness for self-sacrifice, brotherhood and sisterhood, the integrated personality. All those qualities of the pioneers are needed on the spiritual journey. I shall take each in turn, quoting

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from the poem and adding some remarks:

1. *Constant movement*: 'For we cannot tarry here; we must march, my darlings.' — This implies non-attachment to what is pleasant, comfortable or perhaps exciting, readiness to drop our conditioning, keeping to a certain direction, though the goal is distant and unknown.

2. *Watchfulness — Being prepared for anything*: 'Have you your pistols? Have you your sharp-edged axes?' — Being prepared for anything means being prepared for nothing in particular — for the unexpected; not imagining what is to come or what we shall do if it comes, but meeting what comes anew.

3. *Adaptability*: 'Are there some of us to droop and die? Has the hour come? Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is filled.' — This implies readiness to adapt to the unexpected, even if it means that we no longer play an active role, readiness to change what we can change and to accept what we cannot change. Perhaps we cannot change circumstances, but we can change ourselves, our attitude, we can adapt.

4. *Not looking behind*: 'All the past we leave behind.' — Does this not mean not being attached to the past, not regretting losses, not mourning over the good old days, not nurturing old grievances, not being like Lot's wife, turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back on the city she and her husband had had to leave?

5. *Courage*: 'We must bear the brunt of danger.' — Courage is not just fearlessness, but also going on in spite of our fear.

6. *Effort*: 'Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep, conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways . . .' — This means readiness to work hard in spite of difficulties, to try again and again, against apparently impossible odds.

7. *The simple life*: 'Not for delectations sweet. Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious. Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment . . . Do the feasters gluttonous feast? Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? Have they lock'd and bolted doors? Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground.' — Making do with the minimum is a pioneering quality. Even if we have the means to buy what is unnecessary, are we giving in to consumerism, for example, being influenced by advertisements, in doing so? Can we travel light?

8. *Responsibility*: 'All the rest of us depend . . . Have the earlier races halted? Do they droop and end their lesson . . . ? We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson. By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or falter . . . We today's procession heading, the route for travel clearing.' — Responsibility follows inner freedom. We make a choice of our own free will and must assume responsibility for the consequences and deal with them.

9. *Readiness for self-sacrifice*: 'O to die advancing on!' — We may go without many things, but can we give up our secret wishes for appreciation from others, our self-congratulation? Can we give up our

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self-interest, our self-centredness? Can we die in this sense?

10. *Brotherhood–sisterhood*: ‘Full of manly pride and friendship.’ ‘O you daughters of the west! O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives! Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united . . .’ — Brotherhood is imperative in any great movement. In great part, for this was the Theosophical Society founded. All the more so is brotherly love necessary on the spiritual path: ‘The Upāsika while studying must take care to be united as the fingers on one hand . . . whatever hurts one should hurt the others . . . The co-disciples must be tuned . . . as the strings of a lute (*vina*), each different from the others, yet each emitting sounds in harmony with all’ (*Practical Occultism*, pp.16–17). ‘Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love’ (1 John, 4:7).

11. *The integrated character*: ‘I too with my soul and body, we, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way, through those shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing . . .’ — Are we at peace within ourselves? Man is a complex being. In him there are three streams of evolution: The Spiritual or Monadic, the intellectual or Kāma-Manasic, the physical, that is, the body and its vitality. ‘Each of these three systems has its own laws . . . Each is represented in the constitution of man . . . it is the union of these three streams in him which makes

him the complex being he is . . .’ (*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, p.181).

What the spiritual element aspires to, the intellectual often rejects. What the intellect wants, the physical often abhors, and vice versa. ‘The good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do’ (Romans 7:19).

Are we integrated within ourselves, in a state of friendship with ourselves? This too is necessary on the spiritual path. We speak of Oneness, and we often think of it horizontally, as oneness with our fellow humans, our fellow creatures. Is there not also a *vertical oneness*, a oneness within ourselves in the case of what we call the integrated personality? A graphologist was once shown the handwriting of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, without knowing who the writers were, and he remarked that they must be highly integrated persons. It is sometimes said that, if we should love our neighbours as ourselves, then that means that we must love ourselves. Yet self-love has a nasty flavour. Perhaps we should rather say we must be integrated, at peace within ourselves, before we can be at peace with others and truly love them. The way of the pioneer may seem a warlike way, but it is trodden most safely with peace in the heart.

Can we think of pioneers on the Path of Theosophy? — on the Spiritual Path? All truly great Theosophists throughout the ages have been pioneers, have broken new ground. Even if others trod it before them, it was new and unique for them, and sometimes for their age. Mystics like

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Meister Eckhart, St Teresa, philosophers like Plotinus, Ammonius Saccas, Giordano Bruno, Jakob Boehme and others, and — more familiar to us — H. P. Blavatsky and Col. Olcott — were all pioneers. Both HPB and Colonel Olcott — individually and as a team — had the pioneering spirit. They were ready to accept suffering, hardship and apparent failure. HPB was a pioneer in her private life, if we consider how she mastered her psychic gifts, how she left her husband, if we remember her travels and her adventures — often disguised as a man. She was also a pioneer in her Theosophical life and writings, unafraid to break taboos, to demolish idols, to offer a pioneering philosophy, new for her age. She is referred to in *The Mahatma Letters* as being ‘sent out alone into the world to gradually prepare the way for others’ (Letter No. 26, p. 201). Colonel Olcott was also a pioneer in all he undertook before meeting HPB; agriculture, the law, a fearless fight against corruption, journalism, his interest in spiritualism. And the Masters testify to his pioneering qualities in his work for the Theosophical Society: ‘(he) esteems the sacrifice of comfort and even life something to be cheerfully risked whenever necessary; (he) will eat any food or even go without; sleep in any bed, work in any place, fraternize with any outcast, endure any privation for the cause’ (Letter No. 5, p. 17). Regarding both HPB and Colonel Olcott, it is said: ‘our two agents are given the task and left . . . to do the best they can under the circumstances . . .’ (Letter No. 8, p. 35).

Pioneering qualities like courage, inventiveness and responsibility were expected of them. The Master KH speaks of ‘a forlorn hope’. Do not pioneers sometimes strive and fight for just such a hope?: ‘What I meant by the “Forlorn Hope” was that when one regards the magnitude of the task to be undertaken by our theosophical volunteers, and especially the multitudinous agencies arrayed, and to be arrayed, in opposition, we may well compare it to one of those desperate efforts against overwhelming odds that the true soldier glories to attempt.’

Annie Besant was a pioneer in her private life. She left the Church of England, she left her husband, she abandoned her socialist friends. She was a pioneer in her social work long before meeting HPB and she showed all the qualities of a pioneer in her work for Theosophy and the Theosophical Society, for education, Home Rule for India, etc.

But perhaps the greatest pioneers are the Masters themselves, as forerunners of our human race. Is it not said that when one overcomes self, it becomes easier for all coming after to take the same step? At the same time, though it may become relatively easier, it is still a Herculean task. The founders of the great religions were all pioneers, however much their message was distorted later. The greatest pioneer was perhaps the Lord Buddha, said to be the first of our human race to attain the status of Buddhahood.

Perhaps the whole of evolution is pioneering. The descent of spirit into matter, however often it recurs, is unique

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each time. It is pioneering! Just as in nature each springtime is unique, so each flower that blooms is breaking new ground — is a pioneer. We may think of that particularly in the spring. The first snowdrops, the first crocuses are pioneers, but also the first dead leaves in autumn. In the human kingdom, we are pioneers each time we are born into the unknown, into a new-old world. We are pioneers each time we die, passing into the unknown, however many near-death experiences we may have had or we may have read about!

The whole of Life itself is pioneering, from day to day, from moment to moment. We may think of the involution of spirit into matter, the adventure of the Logos crucified on the cross of flesh, as pioneering.

But perhaps some of us think above all (being human at our stage of evolution) of the ascent of spirit out of the bonds of matter or of materialism as pioneering, requiring — as we said — constant movement, watchfulness (being prepared for anything), adaptability, not looking behind, courage, effort, the simple life, responsibility, readiness for self-sacrifice, brotherhood–sisterhood, the integrated personality.

Perhaps there remain some seeming contradictions, some paradoxes which we have partly touched on. We may symbolize the pioneer's career as a path, but the path is only a symbol. What is called the path is really day-to-day life.

In this connection it is said that one who has become truly spiritual makes it easier for all those who follow. This is obvious, since all are one and the more aware a person is of that Oneness, the more he shares in it. Yet for everyone the pioneering path is new. There is no map-reading, no reference to a textbook. If it were so simple, the Masters would only have to write a textbook, as they say! The path, which is only a symbol, is unique, just as each individual is unique, although one with all others.

The way of the pioneer may seem warlike, when we hear about 'pistols and axes'. Yet in the case of the spiritual pioneer, the only war to be fought and won is waged against one's own selfish nature. He who conquers self is greater than he who conquers a thousand armies in battle. But the spiritual path can be trodden only with peace in the heart. It is the peace of the stable will, the peace of one-pointedness.

Finally, the spiritual pioneer does not necessarily invent new methods or do things in a novel way, create new fashions that attract others. We are speaking of the pioneering spirit. And it is the spirit that is the eternal pioneer. In another sense, the spirit in which things are done, the attitude and the motive — that is what is important. If the spirit or the attitude is one of self-forgetfulness, then we shall be pioneers continually breaking new ground within ourselves. ✧

Thou art much too full of business; the essential for thee is to love Me.

Sister Consolata

The Privilege of Ill-Health

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

‘**Y**ES, thank God, I have been quite ill.’ Does this sound strange? But why should it? It expresses a wonderful truth, if we but understand.

For God expects from each a harvest from the seeds He gives to each life after life. We sow, and we reap; yet are we only harvesters, not the owners of the harvest. There is only one Owner, God himself; into his hands we commit our harvest; and for the new sowing. He selects from that portion of our store of the harvest some seeds of grief and some seeds of joy. And so we return into life, and are born again.

Who toiled a slave may come anew
 prince,
For gentle worthiness and merit won;
Who ruled a king may wander earth in
 rags,
For things done and undone.

We come to our role in life primarily neither to be happy nor miserable, but to make God’s work easier. Our happiness is from him, as we do his work. It is He who guides to a little child at play the happiness the little one finds in the game; it is equally He who guides the

pain to him who has earned that pain. How can He plan happiness, and yet as his gift send pain?

From each of us He wants a contribution, for the building of his great Edifice. From the man to whom He gives health, He requires activity of the physical body, movement from this place to that; from the one to whom He sends ill-health, He requires activity of the finer bodies, by patience, long-suffering and resignation. Both kinds of toil — the outer of the man in robust health, and the inner of the ailing — He requires. For the former brings bricks for the Edifice; but the latter brings the mortar that welds all the bricks into one unshakeable mass. To the Master Builder both bricks and mortar are indispensable, and there is before him neither first nor last as between the offerings given to his hands.

How often, when in ill-health, have we not said: ‘I am no good for anything now; the Great Work is left unfinished; I am only a burden myself now, and no longer a burden-bearer.’ And that is true, if we cannot bring our contribution to the great Edifice. But if we understand, we shall see that while we suffer on beds of pain, we

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yet may be mighty workers.

What more virile than the active virtues of a king:

the king — becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude.

Will not a king with this high ideal fail again and again? But suppose then in his kingdom there is a man or woman in ill-health, who is resigned, long-suffering, and patient; then to that king there comes from an inner source courage to go forward, and a gleam irradiating his darkness. Once again he will run yet another lap in the great race; but his flagging strength was made whole by the strength of patience of a 'useless' man or woman on a bed of pain. Look at the men in the trenches today; do they not require a limitless patience, a courage when the body fears, and a trust when all is dark? Who sends them what they need, but their fathers and mothers, sisters and sweethearts, men and women far away from the battlefields, who hope, and hope ever on, for the welfare of their beloveds? And among those that help the fighters in every battle of God — now the fighter of civic sloth and corruption, now the fighter for the grace of manhood and womanhood for all, and now the fighter against superstition and darkness — foremost of helpers can such men and women become who, suffering ill-health, do not cry and complain, but are patient and understanding.

It is a wonderful purification that

physical pain can give us, if we will but accept that purification. Even the vilest man scarce removed from the brute shows something white and pure when he lies in a hospital on a bed of pain. I have not been in a hospital ward as a patient, but I have been in many a ward watching, sensing, trying to understand. And this I know — that ghastly as it often is to the eyes, and pitiful always to the brain and heart, yet it is a mighty purification to be in a hospital ward even as a visitor; for those ideals one longs for in one's own battle — strength to persevere, patience to endure, trust in a health of heart once again — those ideals, not less, flash on all sides, now from the face on this bed, and now from the face on that other. As a mighty Atonement takes place when the consecrated priest transmutes Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of a Saviour, so too, not less, another mighty mystery is enacted in the operating rooms and in the wards of our hostels for the sick and the maimed; the priests and the priestesses of the new ritual are in vestments too, white and immaculate; they too wash hands and use spotless napery. For where even one alone is working to relieve suffering there God is with him; for who may heal, but He who dealt the wound?

There are in our visible world men and women of the Red Cross going forth into the battlefields to heal and to restore men's physical bodies. But surely there must also be on inner planes a White Cross brigade, of men and women who bear on their foreheads a cross of silver fire, who heal men's *soul bodies*? And if

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men and women may be consecrated with that Cross, is it not a privilege to accept the karma of ill-health joyfully as God's gift, and to join that band of White Cross healers?

If we but understood! For to suffer is to be purified, to use power, and the keener the pain the greater will be the power to use. For we must all become Flame Children, to give a flaming quality to all that our hands shall touch wherever

we be. So shall all things make one Flame rising up to God. One soul comes to his heritage of Flaming through uttermost renouncement, annihilating self in all its transformations; another by offering up a Love that sees no Beloved neither in heaven nor in earth. And some there are who become Flame Children by pain.

So, in deepest verity, 'Yes, *thank God*, I have been quite ill.' ✧

**It is not the principles that give breadth to the man;
it is the man who gives breadth to the principles.**

Confucius

OFFICIAL NOTICE CONVENTION 2011

In accordance with Rule 46 of the Rules and Regulations of the Theosophical Society, the Executive Committee has determined that the 136th international Convention of the Theosophical Society will be held at the international Headquarters, Adyar, Chennai, India, from 26 to 31 December 2011.

Mrs Kusum Satapathy
International Secretary

Qualifications for the Path

CHONG SANNE

ALL earnest students of Theosophy are familiar with the qualifications for the Path. There is no scarcity of books on this subject. One only has to search under the keyword 'path' in a Theosophical library to find numerous books, written to guide aspirants in pursuit of the Path. Some of the highly illuminating books include *Viveka-chudāmani*, *The Masters and the Path*, *The Path of Discipleship* and *The Pathway to Perfection*. There is, however, no book that more succinctly tabulates the qualifications for the Path than the little book, *At the Feet of the Master* by J. Krishnamurti. Together with *The Voice of the Silence* and *Light on the Path*, these three little gems and the accompanying commentaries, *Talks on the Path of Occultism* (vols. I–III), provide possibly the most complete guidelines for aspirants to a very high degree of spirituality.

The Four Qualifications enumerated in *At the Feet of the Master* are:

1. Discrimination
2. Desirelessness
3. Good Conduct, which is subdivided into six points, and
4. Love

We understand that if one could abide by these qualifications and live a life in accord with them, one would be brought onto the Path of Occultism, leading to attainment of the First Initiation. We have considerable commentaries on these qualifications in our Theosophical literature and I need not repeat what has been written.

It must, however, be noted that teachings on the Path of Occultism and the qualifications are not the exclusive domain of Theosophy and the esoteric tradition. It would be true to say that all the major religions and exoteric traditions prepare their devotees for the Path by exhorting them to live a life of virtue and purity in accord and harmony with nature. Every religionist is taught to be good, and goodness is the fundamental qualification for one on the spiritual quest.

It is said that the entire teaching of the Lord Buddha could be summarized in one verse — *Dhammapada*, v.183:

To refrain from all evil, (*Vinaya Pitaka*)
To do what is good, (*Sutta Pitaka*)
To purify the mind, (*Abhidhamma Pitaka*)
This is the teaching of the Buddhas

A careful look at this verse would

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reveal its depth. The first statement, ‘To refrain from all evil’, is said to be a summary of the *Vinaya Pitaka*. The *Vinaya Pitaka* is a Buddhist scripture, one of the three parts that make up the *Tripitaka*. Its primary subject matter comprises the monastic rules for monks and nuns. This is a demanding qualification as all the world’s ills are attributed to the generic term ‘evil’. Evil is one of the twin poles of man’s nature. Yet, ‘to refrain from all evil’ would only suggest that one is not evil, or ‘not bad’, but not necessarily good. At best we could say it is ‘negative goodness’ or ‘passive goodness’. Interestingly, the phrase ‘negative goodness’ was used by the Master KH in a letter to Francesca Arundale:

It is not enough that you should set the example of a pure, virtuous life and a tolerant spirit; this is but negative goodness — and for *chelas*hip will never do. (*Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, Letter 4)

To qualify as good, one has ‘To do what is good’, the second statement in the verse. This is said to be a summary of the *Sutta Pitaka*. The *Sutta Pitaka* is the second of the three divisions of the *Tripitaka*. The *Sutta Pitaka* contains more than 10,000 *sutta-s* (teachings) attributed to the Lord Buddha or his close companions. The *sutta-s* are rich with anecdotes illustrating and exemplifying goodness. One not only refrains from all evil but has to actively engage in meritorious acts. It is not enough to think or say good things: ‘To do what is good’ demands positive

goodness or active goodness.

Not being evil and being positively good does not make one wise nor free from ignorance or delusion. Hence, one needs ‘To purify the mind’. This is said to be a summary of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is the third of the three baskets of the *Tripitaka*. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is a detailed scholastic reworking of doctrinal material appearing in the *Sutta-s*, according to schematic classifications and has been variously described as philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, etc. ‘To purify the mind’ would suggest acquirement of knowledge to rid one’s ignorance of the scheme of things and the workings of Nature. We learn that one of the first teachings of the Lord Buddha is the chain of causation, the twelve *nidāna-s* which explain that ignorance is the origin of all suffering. This teaching is found in the *Mahāvagga*, a section of the *Vinaya Pitaka*, divided into chapters called *khandhaka-s*. The introductory chapters give an account of the incidents immediately following the Lord Buddha’s enlightenment. Students of the Mahatma Letters would remember that this teaching of the Lord Buddha was introduced by the Master KH to A. P. Sinnett in Letter 88. The Master kindly translated the first *khandhaka* for the benefit of Mr Sinnett as follows:

At the time the blessed Buddha was at Uruvela on the shores of the river Neranjara as he rested under the Bodhi tree of wisdom after he had become Sambuddha, at the end of the seventh day

Qualifications for the Path

having his mind fixed on the chain of causation he spoke thus: 'From Ignorance spring the *samkhāra-s* of threefold nature — productions of body, of speech, of thought. From the *samkhāra-s* springs consciousness, from consciousness springs name and form, from this spring the six regions (of the six senses, the seventh being the property of but the enlightened); from these springs contact from this sensation; from this springs thirst (or desire, *kāma, tanhā*), from thirst attachment, existence, birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair. Again by the destruction of ignorance, the *samkhāra-s* are destroyed, and their consciousness, name and form, the six regions, contact, sensation, thirst, attachment (selfishness), existence, birth, old age, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection, and despair are destroyed. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.'

Knowing this the Blessed One uttered this solemn utterance:

'When the real nature of things becomes clear to the meditating Bhikshu, then all his doubts fade away since he has learned what is that nature and what its cause. From ignorance spring all the evils. From knowledge comes the cessation of this mass of misery, and then the meditating Brāhmana stands dispelling the hosts of Māra like the sun that illuminates the sky.'

Meditation here means the superhuman (not supernatural) qualities, or arhatship in its highest of spiritual powers.

The first teachings of the Lord Buddha

are very significant as they are in reality the guidelines to qualifications for the Path. Paramount in the first teachings is the Lord Buddha's first discourse after he reached enlightenment as given in *Dhammachakkappavattana Sutta*. The Lord Buddha in his very first sermon to his five disciples, taught *ariya-sacca*, the Four Noble Truths, which are the briefest synthesis of the entire teachings of Buddhism, since all those manifold doctrines of the threefold canon are, without any exception, included therein. The Four Noble Truths explain Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering and the Way to the Cessation of Suffering — The Noble Eightfold Path, which is tabulated thus:

1. Right Belief/Understanding (*sammā ditthi*)
2. Right Thought (*sammā samkappa*)
3. Right Speech (*sammā vācā*)
4. Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*)
5. Right Livelihood (*sammā ājiva*)
6. Right Exertion or Effort (*sammā vāyāma*)
7. Right Memory or Mindfulness (*sammā sati*), and
8. Right Meditation or Right Concentration (*sammā samādhi*)

Exploring the Noble Eightfold Path, we find that each of the eight steps is extremely profound.

The very first step — Right Belief, Right Understanding or Right Knowledge would certainly lift us out of ignorance, which in the context of the twelve *nidāna-s*, brings about the cessation of suffering. It would certainly free us from superstitions,

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bigotry and delusions. We would have *viveka*, the discriminative power stipulated as the first qualification in *At the Feet of the Master*.

Right Thought refers not merely to cerebral action, but processes of the mind, the *manas*, thought being the foundation of man's words and deeds.

Right Speech, Right Action and Right Form of Livelihood may appear to be self-explanatory but the implications of right speech, right action and right livelihood have far-reaching ramifications dictating every moment of our waking consciousness and our mode of life.

Right Exertion or Right Effort is discrimination in another form — to be ever aware of one's purpose and priority in life.

Right Memory or Right Mindfulness is a process of purification of the mind as stated in *Dhammapada*, v. 183, mentioned earlier.

Right Meditation or Right Concentration we understand would mean

superhuman qualities for the occultists.

Here then is the Noble Path as prescribed by the Lord Buddha for spiritual development and growth. We understand from some occultists that the first teaching of the Lord Buddha, *ariya-sacca*, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, has great and special significance for occultists. It is said that the very first sermon of the Lord Buddha is repeated and reaffirmed every year on the occasion of the Āsāla Festival. We are also told that the teaching lends itself to progressively higher levels of interpretation depending on one's spiritual attainment.

The Noble Eightfold Path is unquestionably one of the most comprehensive guidelines for aspirants on the mode of life and qualifications for the Path. One could easily see that the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path encompass the Four Qualifications that are given in *At the Feet of the Master*. Undoubtedly, to accomplish the above would be to qualify for the Path. ✧

The Bodhisattva should adopt the same attitude towards all beings, his mind should be even towards all beings, he should not handle others with an uneven mind, but with a mind which is friendly, well-disposed, helpful, free from aversions, avoiding harm and hurt; he should handle others as if they were his mother, father, son, or daughter. As a saviour of all beings should a Bodhisattva behave towards all beings. So should he train himself if he wants to know full enlightenment.

Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines

The Integral Vision

D. P. SABNIS

IT is not difficult to accept vaguely the metaphysical conception of the duality of Spirit — matter as the prototype, the essential polarity of Life, finding expression in every aspect, great and small, of that Life. We cannot fail to see something of the duality of the positive and negative, centrifugal and centripetal, day and night, life and death, heat and cold, attraction and repulsion, pleasure and pain, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, freedom and slavery, and so on through all the pairs of opposites. The trouble is that in expanding and applying the ideas, we too often see them only in their opposing aspects, and forget that they are to be viewed, not as independent actualities, but as two facets of the same underlying reality. Apart from it and apart from each other, they have no existence. Concretized Spirit is Matter, and etherealized Matter is Spirit.

The 'Manifested Universe' . . . is pervaded by duality, which is, as it were, the very essence of its EX-istence as 'manifestation'. But . . . the opposite poles of subject and object, spirit and matter, are but aspects of the One Unity in which they are synthesized. (*The Secret Doctrine* I.15–16)

We would not recognize light as light if there were no shadow to act as a complementary foil.

According to the tenets of Eastern Occultism, DARKNESS is the one true actuality, the basis and the root of light, without which the latter could never manifest itself, nor even exist. Light is matter, and DARKNESS pure Spirit. Darkness, in its radical, metaphysical basis, is subjective and absolute light; while the latter in all its seeming effulgence and glory, is merely a mass of shadows, as it can never be eternal, and is simply an illusion, or Māyā. (*SD*, I.70)

Just as Light and Darkness, Spirit and Matter, are not distinct and separate, so also good and evil. No one can point to the existence of good per se in Nature; nor can evil be shown to have a separate independent existence. Reality is neither good nor evil, as Life is neither Spirit nor Matter.

Archaic philosophy, recognizing neither Good nor Evil as a fundamental or independent power, but starting from the Absolute ALL (Universal Perfection eternally), traced both through the course of natural evolution to pure Light

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condensing gradually into form, hence becoming Matter or Evil. (*SD*, I.73)

In human nature, evil denotes only the polarity of matter and Spirit, a struggle for life between the two manifested Principles in Space and Time, which principles are one *per se*, inasmuch as they are rooted in the Absolute. In Cosmos, the equilibrium must be preserved. The operations of the two contraries produce harmony, like the centripetal and centrifugal forces, which are necessary to each other — mutually interdependent — ‘in order that both should live’. If one is arrested, the action of the other will become immediately self-destructive. (*SD*, I.416)

Good and Evil are twins, the progeny of Space and Time, under the sway of *Māyā* [illusion]. Separate them, by cutting off one from the other, and they will both die. Neither exists *per se*, since each has to be generated and created out of the other, in order to come into being; both must be known and appreciated before becoming objects of perception, hence, in mortal mind, they must be divided. (*SD*, II.96)

Because of man’s dual nature, spiritual and material, which the philosophers have always traced to its true source in the two spirits, the doctrine of two minds in man naturally and logically, arose. They are the higher and lower minds of our Theosophical philosophy. Just as the primeval spirits emanate from one source, so also the two minds are expressions of the Spirit in Man, the *Ātma-Buddhic* Monad.

Their mutual interdependence can be seen from the fact that a virtue on which

too much stress has been put is transformed into a vice, in the same manner as the eye that is tired from too long a gazing on one colour will change over and reproduce its complement. The man who is over-generous usually ends by being so at the expense of other people, his very craving for ‘generosity’ leading him to acts of meanness. Even the intensive gratification of a vice can produce a temporary surfeit, but such satiety is only a temporary suspension; it is not a reformation and a cure, and there will be a swing back once more into vice, since good and evil *per se* have no real permanence.

The duality of the higher or spiritual aspirations and the lower or material desires which in embodied existence work in every human consciousness, produces the three pairs mentioned in the *Bhagavadgītā* — heat and cold, pleasure and pain, fame and ignominy. *Kṛṣṇa* reiterates the advice that Arjuna should rise above these pairs.

If the conception of the ‘pairs of opposites’ still keeps the mind in its old separative groove, the conception of the ‘pairs of complements’ can profitably be superimposed thereon. But though the theoretical distinction is made here between ‘contrast’ and ‘complement’, in reality there is none. The finite mind is accustomed to attach one or other idea to certain expressions, and it is therefore possible to circumvent the separative tendency of the mind by dwelling on those expressions that convey the idea of cooperation rather than of opposition.

It is in the realm of ethics and of

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self-development that these cooperative dualities are most easily seen. For example, we can link as complementary two qualities essential for self-control — practice and absence of desire, *abhyāsa* (self-study) and *vairāgya* (renunciation). The two are mutually interdependent, and only when they are practised together does progress result. Each of the Divine Pāramitā-s, likewise, has its complementary counterpart.

Wherever we look we find duality piled

on duality, contrast and complement, two in one. On the physical plane a man who has lost an eye finds that his vision loses thereby its stereoscopic sense of reality, its depth. It is the same thing with the inner sight, and there most people are unfortunately one-eyed or cross-eyed. Our task is to balance and unify our dual vision, to blend the mind and soul, for behind the illusion of the ‘pairs of opposites’ lies the integral vision of the Third Eye, the Single Eye of Wisdom. ✧

Two souls alas! are dwelling in my breast;
And each is fain to leave its brother.
The one, fast clinging to the world adheres
With clutching organs, in love's sturdy lust;
The other strongly lifts itself from dust
To yonder high, ancestral spheres.

Goethe
Faust I, Sec 2

To See the Self Everywhere is Wisdom

G. RAMANATHAN

THIS is the state of consciousness where one is totally aware of that mysterious magnetism linking everything in the universe. The Universal Brotherhood of Humanity being the first objective of the Theosophical Society is the manifestation of this perception. We have no experiential knowledge or perception of this state of being. The day-to-day life of ordinary persons like us is governed by personality-oriented thinking and actions, which are obviously of a divisive nature. All the efforts by politicians and intellectuals to unite people in one form or other have ended up in failure. The United Nations organization has not been able to wipe out violence, cruelty and wars from the world so far, even though its aim is to establish peace. The communists could not establish a brotherhood of humanity or even unity of the proletariat of the world and it has split into Maoism, Leninism, Stalinism, etc. Serious divisions exist among them and they are fighting each other. The capitalists also could not establish a society without violence or corruption even though they boast of

freedom of thought and expression. Examples are the violence, exploitation, and cruelty in developed countries. It is very clear from these unpleasant developments that any attempt to forge Unity at the physical level or the personality level, while ignoring the fundamental unity of existence at the deeper level, is ignorance or *avidyā*. At the personality or form level, there are differences, and it is a fact in Nature. Even the fingerprints of two persons are not alike. The violence, corruption, cruelty and war we experience in the world today, is the result of this divisive thinking. It is the bounden duty of every man, especially a TS member, to make conscious efforts to bring peace and harmony in the world. But how can we meet this situation in an intelligent manner? This is the challenge before us. In the first fundamental proposition in *The Secret Doctrine*, it is stated there is 'an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable Principle on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression

Mr G. Ramanathan, a member of the Indian Section, has retired as an officer of the police. Talk given at the South India Conference, Adyar, 2011.

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and similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought — in the words of *Māndukya Upanishad*, “unspeakable and unthinkable”.

It is emphasized as ‘unspeakable and unthinkable’. The unity of existence paving the way for the manifestation of Universal Brotherhood is at a very deep level and beyond the reach of human thought. It is not something to be learnt from books. It would be a waste of time to talk much about this. It is better to have a look at what we are now and what we can do. We have to investigate in this direction and find out for ourselves. The knowledge about the theory of evolution and involution explained in the Theosophical teachings is very helpful in making conscious efforts towards making Brotherhood a living reality in life. According to Theosophical teachings there are seven planes in nature through which the evolution of a human being is taking place. To recapitulate, the planes can be broadly grouped together as the upper triad *constituting the spiritual part of Man* and the lower quaternary *constituting the Personality*. The personality consists of the physical body, etheric double, astral body and the mental (lower) body. Here we should not forget that we are not shaped in a day or two, but are the product of millions of years of evolution. Globe after Globe, Rounds after Rounds, plane after plane, we have undergone evolution through millions of years. During the course of evolution, the mental body, astral body and the physical body have become so intertwined and

inseparable that the mind-body reacts to every situation in life in its own old-fashioned way and has become non-receptive to the impressions from the Higher Self which is quite new to it. The personality is not tuned to the impulses from the upper triad. As explained, any thought or actions emanating from the level of personality is inherently divisive and cannot bring about brotherhood or unity. The ordinary everyday life is controlled by the mind-body which has become a prisoner of sensual cravings and lower animal passions during the long course of its evolution. The personality can see things only at the form level which is obviously divisive. In the book by Dr Annie Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, it is stated in the chapter on Mind Bodies that ‘the mind speaks by colour, sound and form, so that the complete thought is conveyed as a coloured and musical picture, instead of only a fragment of it being shown, as is done here by the symbols we call words’.

Right communication at the mental level takes place only when the mind is open and unconditioned. This is essential for rising above the level of divisions in our day-to-day life so that brotherhood becomes a living reality. Therefore, expanding the receptivity of the mind is the only recourse to right perception so that it will lead to right thinking and action. Removing all constrictions of the mind so that it will rise from a narrow personal level to a universal point of view is the big challenge before us. But there is no point in simply professing all these things

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at the verbal level. We have to see the challenge in depth directly. In *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (Letter No. 65), Master KH has written:

The recognition of the higher phases of man's being on this planet is not to be attained by mere acquirement of knowledge. One has to get a knowledge of spiritual facts by personal experience and from actual observation.

Again the Master writes in the same letter:

It is upon the serene and placid surface of the unruffled mind that the visions gathered from the invisible find a representation in the visible world . . . It is with jealous care that we have to guard our mind-plane from all the adverse influences which daily arise in our passage through earth-life.

Observation of one's own daily life with a questioning attitude is needed: Who is the thinker or the source of thoughts governing my daily life? Is it the desires of my personality or that consciousness which enables one to see the Self everywhere that is governing my life? Observation of one's own thought process, seeing the limitations of thought, is the only way to expand our consciousness from the crutches of past experiences so that we are ready to meet the present as it is without distortions. Observation of oneself helps us to get experiential knowledge. Once we identify our enemy, action takes place on the spur of the moment itself. But if someone says, why should I go after all these things when

everything is comfortable with the prevailing situation, the answer is that these things are only for enquirers and not for security seekers in life.

The most important thing is how to create an urgency within oneself to give a new direction to our life. To create that urgency is the need of the hour. It is our dharma. It cannot be created by analysis or thinking or adopting certain techniques because all these are the product of the desires of our personality. An enquiring mind, impartial observation of one's own thought process will generate right comprehension of one's own life process and develop awareness of one's link with the happenings in the world leading to the right understanding of the nature of the challenge before us. The world is progressing scientifically and technologically, providing material comforts to people, but cruelty is also on the increase, perhaps in alarming proportions. Universal Brotherhood is the only solution for a peaceful world because it is the Law of life. Let us be serious about it, compassionate and concerned about the fundamental questions of life, like birth, death, violence and the Laws of Nature, and if we are earnest and sincere in pursuit of Truth, that itself will enable us to see the Self everywhere.

All actions are the product of thoughts. Change has to take place at the level of thoughts. So once again I make an earnest appeal to all of us here to observe our thought process, so that the awareness generated by this action will definitely help us to identify our real enemy and find

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out lasting solutions to the problems affecting the individual and the world.

It is helpful to contemplate a few of the famous statements of J. Krishnamurti:

In the present is the whole movement of time.

The thinker is the thought.

You are the world.

In *At the Feet of the Master* very good suggestions are given. The chapter on Discrimination says:

they may greatly help themselves by stopping often to think 'what would the Master think about this? What would the Master say or do under these circumstances? For you must never do or say or think what you cannot imagine the Master as doing or saying or thinking'.

However, in the *Laws of the Higher Life* by Dr Annie Besant, she writes:

How are we then to distinguish when the personality is controlling us, and when duty directs?

I know of no safer way in such trials, than to retire quietly into the chamber of the

heart, to try to put personal desires aside, strive to separate our self for a moment from the personality, and look at the question in a broader, clearer light, with prayer to our Gurudeva to guide us; then, in such light as we may win by prayer, self-analysis, and meditation, to choose the path which appears to us to be the path of duty. We may blunder; but if we blunder, having striven to see clearly, then let us remember that the mistake is necessary in order to teach us a lesson, which it is vital for our progress that we should learn.

What is suggested in *At the Feet of the Master* is more helpful for an ordinary man because we are keeping an open mind, paving the way for intuition to work out.

In conclusion, in letter No. 5 of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Master KH has stated that:

The term 'Universal Brotherhood' is no idle phrase. Humanity in the mass has a paramount claim upon us . . . it is the only secure foundation for universal morality. If it be a dream, it is at least a noble one for mankind: and it is the aspiration of the *true adept*.

**Never will I seek or receive private individual salvation;
never will I enter into final peace alone,
But forever and everywhere will I live and strive
for the redemption of every creature throughout the world.**

Kwan Yin's Vow (paraphrased)

Books of Interest

ECHOES OF THE ORIENT, by William Quan Judge, vol. III, compiled by Dara Eklund, Theosophical University Press, Pasadena, USA, 2010.

Section I of the book under review contains a broad outline of Theosophical doctrines. Sections II to IV are a collection of articles, while Section V is entitled 'Eastern School of Theosophy — Suggestions and Aids'.

On the subject of Adepts, the following are typical statements. On page 29, we read: 'It is asserted by many, indeed, that at most of the famous places of pilgrimage there is an Adept of the same order to which the Theosophical Adepts are said to belong, who is ready always to give some meed of spiritual insight and assistance to those of pure heart who may go there.' And on page 379: 'For an Adept is one ahead of the rest. If he tries to benefit them he is of the White Path, if he works for his own advancement he is of the Black.'

Regarding Annie Besant he writes (on page 201): 'The Convention of the Society in London, in July last, attracted over twelve hundred people to a public meeting. . . . While her [Mrs Annie Besant's] lecture on Theosophy at the Democratic Club brought such a crush that doors and windows were pressed in.' On page 391,

we read: 'Annie Besant, as one of the two to whom MASTERS committed the charge of the E.S.T., was discharging an obvious duty when she called on members of the School to show strength, quietness, and absence of prejudice, and to try and infuse similar qualities into the branches of the Society at such an important time as the first Presidential election.'

The book includes an extensive appreciative reference to H. P. Blavatsky and a sketch of her career. Regarding H. S. Olcott, the author states in a letter to the editor of the *New York Sun*, entitled 'The Theosophist in Ceylon': 'The *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* on May 10 says: "The Theosophists cannot in any case be worse than the sectarian missionaries, and if Col. Olcott can induce the Buddhists to establish schools of their own, as he is trying to do, he will be doing us a service.'

On page 123 we find the following statement: 'We [the TS] are a society devoted to Universal Brotherhood and Philosophy. It was true that Col. Olcott, the President, related to Mr Hodgson nearly all the phenomena he had ever seen.' The voluminous writings of W. Q. Judge have to be considered together in all the three volumes and this study is indeed of much significance for all time.

A. KANNAN

Occultism is the science of life, the art of living.

Theosophical Work around the World

South India Conference

The 88th South India Conference of the Indian Section was held from 22 to 24 April at Adyar. The venue was, as usual, the historical Headquarters Hall, where Annie Besant delivered her soul-stirring lectures. Participants came from Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and several parts of Tamil Nadu. The theme of the conference was 'The Laws of the Higher Life' and the printed programme carried an inspiring quotation from Dr Besant: 'The true life of sacrifice is that which utterly forgets itself, in which renunciation becomes a thing of course.'

The event was inaugurated by the President, Mrs Radha Burnier. She emphasized one of the important laws of life: *ahimsā paramo dharmah*, 'harmlessness is the highest duty'. Questions, answers and discussion followed the talks, among which were the following: 'The Very Heart of the Universe is Love', 'Brotherhood, a Law of Nature', 'Fullness of Life through Service', 'To the Service of Man the Whole Universe is Yoked', 'To See the Self Everywhere is Wisdom', 'The Call of Duty and Dharma', 'All Evolution is Rooted in Sacrifice', 'The Heart of the Divine Life is Infinite Compassion'.

Every morning, the Universal Prayer was followed by a short meditation and chanting of verses. In the evening of 22 April, the Ritual of the Mystic Star, which commemorates the essential unity

of all religions, took place. On the last day, Mrs Linda Oliveira, Vice-President, delivered the closing address.

Vocational Training Courses Begin

A beginning has been made in giving vocational training; a course in electrical work has been started on the day dedicated to HPB, 8 May, also called 'White Lotus Day'. This will be the start of various courses for boys and girls, many from the Olcott School.

The course started in the Maintenance Department on 8 May because it is a special day. But, we expect to shift soon to Damodar Gardens where some buildings will, one hopes, be available. In India at present many pass out of the University course, but cannot find jobs. We hope that vocational training and similar programmes will bring much relief to these boys and girls. This will all be part of Colonel Olcott's gift to the poor.

The girls and boys will be able to learn a great deal from one of the twenty and odd courses, but also the basis for a sound character and life. The Olcott Education Society, an adjunct of the main Society at Adyar, consists of the Olcott Memorial School, a small free hostel for boys whose home life is difficult, the Social Welfare Centre for small children, the Animal Dispensary and now the Vocational Training Centre. They are all giving free care and doing good work. ✧

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