

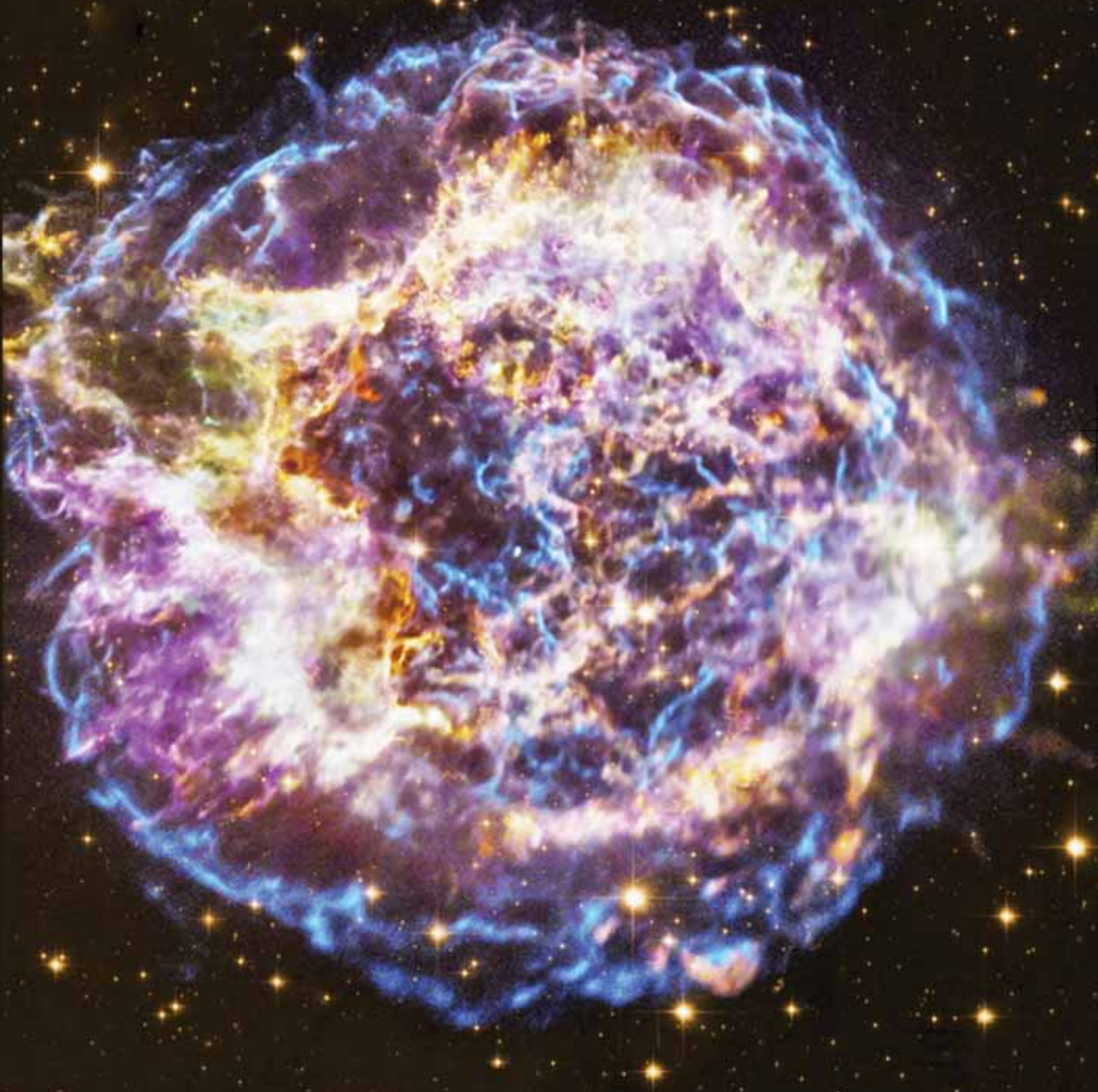
The Theosophist



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Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: Remnants of supernovas (such as Cassiopeia A. in this image) provide raw materials for future stars and planets, an example of the cyclic renewal of Nature. (See article on p. 9 of this issue.) Image credit — X-ray: NASA/CXC/RIKEN/T. Sato et al.; Optical: NASA/STScI

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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.

The Practice of Inspiration — II

TIM BOYD

WHEN the Theosophical Society (TS) in America invited His Holiness the Dalai Lama to speak, his plane landed at a private airport in Chicago. A small group of us went to meet him at the plane. There is a tradition among Tibetans of presenting and receiving a scarf, or *khata*, as a blessing. As I was representing the TS, when he got off the plane my family and I were at the head of the greeting line. I handed him a scarf and he placed it around my neck. He then did the same thing with my wife and daughter.

At that time my daughter knew very little about the Dalai Lama. She knew he was famous for something spiritual. He spoke briefly to me and my wife, and then he went to my daughter. She was preparing to go away to college. He talked to her for maybe a minute about school and other things. He then got in the car to leave and she just broke down in tears.

I put my arm around her and asked her why she was crying. Her response was: “I’m crying because when he looked into my eyes I felt so strong!” The sudden upwelling of this sense of strength was not the result of anything he said. She had an unexpected momentary glimpse of the deep source of power to which the Dalai Lama is connected, awakening her to that same source within her.

One of the characteristics of inspirational experience is that it transcends our normal limits. It moves beyond our conditioned boundaries of thought and feeling. It is transcendent and motivating. Anything that we might describe as an inspiring experience motivates us. The unique makeup of our temperament determines the manner in which it expresses. It could be physical involvement in a work project where the body becomes energized; or a sudden uplift of the emotions; or a heightened insight of the mind. The higher source pervades and touches them all.

Real inspiration is not about motivational speaking. There are many people who can move others to emote. This is a common form of motivational speaking, often described as “inspirational”, but because of its limited focus on personal goals or accomplishment, I would not call it genuine inspiration. From a theosophical point of view, true inspiration results from the light of *buddhi*, the intuitional field, illuminating the mind and its contents.

Just like the sun’s rays, *buddhi* is *always* shining. The reason its light does not fall on the mind is because of the clouds that stand in between: our distorted emotions, constant personal

The Practice of Inspiration — II

desires, and imbalanced ways of living, all block our exposure to higher influences. This is where our work begins. The whole idea of practice is not about correcting or manipulating *buddhi*, but in regulating and, ideally, quieting the mind so that it can have its impact on *all* of the personality's aspects.

The idea of practice is no different than someone who determines that they are going to improve the quality of their diet. With the physical body one of the first things that happens as we start to eat higher quality foods is that toxins that have built up within the body are expelled. Part of the process of practice, even at the level of diet, is that the materials that contradict or stand in the way of our higher nature are expelled; and whether it be a physical, mental, or emotional diet, materials capable of functioning and vibrating at a higher level are built into the body.

One of the reasons the TS came into being is to reaffirm that we live in an intelligent universe. We are surrounded continually not just by intelligence in the abstract, but by infinite different forms through which intelligence is continually expressing itself. Whether we think of it in terms of beings or patterns, this is part of the makeup of the universe. There is no such thing as empty space. At the most basic, material level we are aware of how deeply we are immersed in patterns of intelligence — microwaves, waves from television, the radio, the Internet, and so on.

In *The Key to Theosophy* H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) writes: “We [theosophists]

believe in ‘communion’ and simultaneous action in unison with our ‘Father in secret’, and in rare moments of ecstatic bliss, the mingling of our higher soul with the universal essence.” This is a description of a very high moment of inspirational experience, where our higher nature mingles with the universal consciousness. In *The Light of Asia*, Sir Edwin Arnold describes the life and enlightenment of the Buddha, where the language used is: “The Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea.” The image of the drop of water, a metaphor for soul, or Higher Self, merging with the shining Sea, the endless body from which it is emanated, which gives it its meaning, purpose, and existence, is a powerful expression of inspiration at its pinnacle. Having had this “mingling” experience we return, changed, to the personality and our day-to-day life.

Three Avenues Toward Inspiration

I would like to suggest three avenues along which we could cultivate the possibility for the experience of inspiration. It is said that, “Enlightenment is an accident, [in other words, it is not something that we can control] but spiritual practice makes us accident-prone.” Our role as spiritual practitioners is not to attempt to will, or power our way, to enlightenment, but to put ourselves in the neighborhood for this unexpected, non-personally controllable experience to take hold of us. One requirement is that we have to some degree the capacity for quiet. We learn, at least temporarily, to still the constant

waves of thought. With this as a starter we have the potential for the experience of inspiration.

1. In Nature

At this point in the world Nature is becoming more remote. It was never the case in the past, but now the majority of people on the planet live in urban centers where, for many, all they know of the natural world is the tree that is planted on the sidewalk.

Human energy patterns tend to be fragmented and chaotic, whereas in Nature the energy patterns are stable: the growing of the trees, the movement of the branches and the leaves in the wind, the movement of the wind, the flowing of the river; these are all stabilizing patterns. William James, a theosophist and one of the great influences on psychology, wrote in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* his observation that the majority of all mystical experiences take place in Nature. It is not surprising that the deepest inspiration occurs in forests and mountains and not while we are fighting our way in traffic or negotiating the business deal.

The simple act of exposing ourselves to Nature with a quiet mind requires no willful activity. I have been in forests in different places around the world, where setting foot in that forest, without giving it any thought, one finds ourselves whispering. Like in a temple the sense of presence in the place causes us to speak low.

In the Society's history we have people such as Geoffrey Hodson, C. W.

Leadbeater, Dora Kunz, and others who would speak of the great beings or the angelic beings that inhabit different places in the natural world. These are presences, or beings that we can expose ourselves to. Even a plant or a bird-feeder at home puts us in the presence of stabilizing rhythms and patterns of Nature, and creates an opportunity for higher forms of knowing to have access to us.

2. In a Spiritual Community

Another avenue toward inspiration is to be found in spiritual community. In India and other places they use the term *sangha*. HPB made the statement that "personality is the curse within the TS and every place else." Our highly treasured, if false, sense of self is the largest problem not only for ourselves, but for that which we value and love.

All of us would wish for the TS or any spiritual organization to flourish, but somehow we cannot help ourselves, we have to express our personality, and it creates difficulties. One of the beauties of a spiritual community is that the isolated personality, which we are continually encouraged to cultivate and project, is to some degree subsumed, made a part of a greater whole, a greater expression.

There is a principle of the spiritual life expressed in the Bible as, "Wherever two or more gather in my name, there I am in the midst of them." So wherever you find a community of people whose focus is on something deep, the presence of that

consciousness is attracted and functions through that center, magnifying the experience of everybody involved. Whether it is called the ashram, the sangha, the monastery, or simply the group, this has been a fact of being in spiritual communities throughout history.

There are moments when, as a group, something of an exalted nature flows through these gatherings. It is not information, or a psychic sensation, but we find ourselves connecting with some aspect of the greater consciousness which has drawn us all together. That is the value of spiritual communities. To the extent that we create the opportunity to connect with others, we open ourselves up for the transformative possibility of being inspired, being breathed into.

3. In Consciousness

With or without a spiritual community or a connection with Nature, we have the capacity to generate a state of consciousness that is expansive, and it is accomplished through the very simple mechanism of gratitude or appreciation.

This is not just a matter of appreciating all of the “good things” that have happened to us. I have yet to meet the person who has not had difficult experiences flow into their lives, who has not had moments of hardship, rejection, shame, pain, and loss of many kinds. Difficulties and suffering are unavoidable features of human life. Often, with hindsight, we realize that it is the difficult moments that have opened deeper, sometimes

unknown, capacities within us. Although it may be difficult to do while they last, it is a powerful practice to be thankful in those times. There is an expression that “the same one who sends the rose, sends the thorn.

The beauty and power of gratitude is that one can begin at any point, anywhere we look, at any moment of the day. Whenever we are engaged in this practice the barriers of self absorption drop away, even if for a moment, we become available to inspiration. The self-cherishing mentality that all of us carry becomes diminished, and can at times move into a condition of the absence of the self, no self on the horizon. Although temporary, the experience roots us in an awareness of the possibility for the direct perception of Unity, of Oneness.

In her “Diagram of Meditation” the very first thing HPB mentions is: “First conceive of Unity.” Her counsel on meditation has us begin with an effort of mind — “Conceive”. If, as we practice, we move beyond mental effort to a point where concepts are left behind and we are imbued with the experience of Unity, there is no need to go any further.

Theosophy is rich in knowledge, thoughts, ideas; it is conceptually rich, and all of them are intended to be applied. What does it mean to practice? What is inspiration? How does this affect the way that we live? How is Unity involved in *everything* that we do think, every possibility that opens to us? These are just a few thoughts for contemplation. ✧

Mastering the Cyclic Nature of Existence — I

ELENA DOVALSANTOS

IN periods of difficulty or amidst catastrophic, life-changing events such as the current pandemic, many ask the most basic questions about life, such as: Why is this happening? Did we do anything to deserve this? What is this pandemic telling us? Are there lessons we are being made to learn? How do we navigate through a great crisis as this and come out the better for it?

The Theosophical View of Existence

Theosophy provides answers to the most fundamental questions of life based on the wisdom of the ages. It draws the common thread between the great religions of the world, philosophy, and science to provide an all-encompassing view of existence.

First and foremost, Theosophy presents a view of the universe that reveals the interconnectedness of everything. The idea that there is something that connects us all is a view that is now gaining more and more acceptance even in many fields of science.

As symbolized in Figure 1, we are like the drops in the web of life. Every

drop on the web reflects the world around. Every drop shares the same essence. Any disturbance in one part of the web causes vibrations that affect the whole web. We are seeing this clearly today with the current pandemic that has changed life as we know it.



Figure 1

In *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (Letter 47, chron. ed.), it is written: “Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy, and there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man. . . .”

The same sentiment is echoed in the poem “The Mistress of Vision” by Francis Thompson:

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All things by immortal power,
Near or far,
Hiddenly
To each other linked are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star . . .

Besides the concept of our interconnectedness, another fundamental teaching offered by Theosophy is the purpose for existence: the realization of our true nature, which is divine and ONE WITH ALL, and consequently, the perfection of all the powers latent within us.

The way to achieve this purpose is through cycles that provide endless opportunities for growth and renewal. In a cycle every period of activity is followed by a period of rest, followed by another period of activity and so on. We see this in our days and nights. We wake up each morning renewed, ready to start afresh to continue where we left off the day before. Periodicity is a fundamental law of the universe that is observable at all levels in all of Nature. We thus have not only day and night, but also birth and death, the ebb and flow of tides, changing seasons, biorhythms, blood circulation, water evaporating and condensing as rain or snow. There is also the rise and fall of civilizations, and even the revolution of planets and stars.

Cycles of Renewal

Cyclic renewal is seen at all levels great and small. Cycles are everywhere. They are so common, so much a part of ourselves and the universe, that they must have a purpose. For example, fallen

leaves decompose and return to the soil to feed new growth. In the same way, a supernova explosion (the death of a massive star) provides the raw materials for future stars and planets. Cycles bring endless new beginnings. Is it not interesting that cycles are everywhere but we usually do not even stop to think about why they happen at all?

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) wrote: “There is a purpose in every important act of Nature, whose acts are all cyclic and periodical.” (*The Secret Doctrine*, 1:640). Unlike scientific theories that propose randomness in evolution, Theosophy teaches “the progressive development of everything, worlds as well as atoms; and this stupendous development has neither conceivable beginning nor imaginable end.” (*Ibid.*, 1:43).

Reincarnation is an example of cyclic renewal. It is a doctrine that has long been accepted in many of the great religions, including early Christianity, until the Second Council of Constantinople banned these teachings. However, clues to it remain in some biblical accounts.

In the concept of reincarnation, every return from life to life is a chance to gather experiences for growth until we are able to transcend human limitations and achieve enlightenment which is the knowledge of our own true being. The cyclic process of development is therefore not a closed circle but is a spiral, expanding and advancing as evolution proceeds. “The whole order of Nature evinces a progressive march towards a higher life.” (*Ibid.*, 1:277) It is

a continuous unfolding towards greater and greater expression of our true nature.

A rose, which, incidentally, has petals arranged in a spiral, starts off as a bud without much of a scent but when it is fully opened, its fragrance can spread throughout a room. Likewise, in everyday terms, we may say that someone who has matured and achieved his or her full potential has “bloomed”. In the *Dhammapada*, the simile of a flower in full bloom is used to describe a sage whose influence can spread far and wide in all directions. We know that the sages of old are still being studied and quoted today. We might say then that the influence of a sage even transcends time.

In India, the never-ending cycles of destruction and creation are represented by Natarāja — the Lord of the Dance, or Dancing Śiva (Figure 2). It has very deep and varied meanings. We do not need to go into all of them but perhaps we can point to a few: (a) in Śiva’s right hand is the drum that beats the rhythm of creation and time; (b) in his left hand is *agni*, the fire of destruction; (c) in his lower right hand is a gesture that says: be not afraid, follow the path of righteousness and all will be well; (d) his front left hand points to his raised left foot, signifying the possibility of emancipation as his right foot is placed firmly on the demon of ignorance.

It is ignorance that keeps us trapped in the world or cycles of illusion. Śiva dances to keep the cycles of destruction and creation going on. After all, there must be endings in order to have new beginnings. The image thus hints that over time,

after many cosmic cycles and lives lived in righteousness, it will be possible for us to stamp out ignorance and win our liberation from the never-ending cycles.



Figure 2

The Law of Karma

The growth necessary for us to achieve our purpose is spurred by karma, the law of action and reaction, cause and effect, harmony, and equilibrium. With karma, we see another demonstration of a just, impersonal, and unfailing cyclic law. Whatever we do comes back to us in the same degree as the intent and energy that we put into the action. This law gives back to everyone the actual consequences of their own actions, without any regard to their moral character. Each of us will be made to atone for all sufferings which we cause, or reap in joy and gladness the fruits of all happiness and harmony that we help to produce.

(HPB, *The Key to Theosophy*, Section 11.)

Karma never affects an individual alone, just as a disturbance in water creates ripples that can spread throughout a whole pool. In the words of HPB, the “waves oscillate backwards and forwards till at last, owing to the operation of what physicists call the law of the dissipation of energy, they are brought to rest, and the water returns to its condition of calm tranquility.” (Ibid.) This is another testament to all of us being part of a single web of life, how we all affect one another.

Karma is a great teacher. No one can avoid this law. So its lessons cannot be ignored. “Karma is that Law of readjustment which ever tends . . . to restore Harmony and preserve the balance of equilibrium, by virtue of which the Universe exists.” (Ibid.)

What does this mean for us? For as long as our actions cause a disharmony or imbalance in the equilibrium of this life that we share, we will be subjected to the karmic repercussions of our actions until balance is regained. In the same way, a beneficent action or influence will also spread throughout our whole world and bring back favorable results to the originator. We just never know how far our actions can go or how far our thoughts can travel, but travel they will.

The Global Pandemic

Let us think for a moment about what is happening in the world today with Covid-19. If everything happens for a reason, then this pandemic, with its staggering global impact, can in no

way just be an accident. We know that everything that we do is recorded somewhere. In Theosophy there is the concept of the ākāshic records. HPB wrote that all the vile emanations of our planet are stored in the astral light. The astral light is the invisible region surrounding our globe equivalent to our etheric double. It is a lower region of the ākāsha, where the coarsest vibrations we have generated are collected. In time, the astral light reflects back to Earth what it has received. So HPB said that epidemics are but the effects of the influence of the astral light. (*Theosophical Glossary, Collected Writings*, 10:251)

With so many epidemics that have come up over the years, and now in the midst of a globally devastating pandemic, one might surmise that a great accumulation of iniquities that our humanity has generated and stored in the astral light has now returned as global karma. Divisiveness, wars, greed, cruelty to our fellow humans and to animals, destruction of our environment — all of these and more have marked much of human activity. We can see that even in the response to Covid-19 there is the general tendency to say: “My interests, my enjoyment, my rights, my welfare, my needs are more important than yours — Me first!”

It is said that we attract to ourselves what we always think of. Could it be then that our tendencies towards separateness have now attracted to us the mandatory social distancing that we are learning is not much fun? Nature is wise in her ways, always seeking to maintain balance.

For example, have you noticed that while we are social distancing, there has been a boom in online theosophical programs? It is enabling many of us to study Theosophy on a regular basis with friends from across the globe. It is facilitating the spreading of these important teachings. It is bringing us theosophists closer together. Is this the new normal? Well we do not know, but it is interesting to think about.

The Ultimate Cause of Our Troubles

HPB wrote: “The one terrible and only cause of the disturbance of Harmony is *selfishness* in some form or another.” (*The Key to Theosophy*) She also wrote that we have an “inborn habit . . . of always placing [ourselves] at the center of the Universe. Whatever [one] might act, think, or feel, the irrepressible ‘I’ is sure to be the central figure.” (*Collected Writings*, “Morality and Pantheism”, 5:337)

Our self-centeredness is the principal cause of trouble in the world. The biggest illusion is that we see each other as separate individuals. It is not readily apparent that in essence we are all the same; that the life and spirit inside of us is the same as that in every other. This is because to the physical eye, we all look separate, we all look different. But has it not been said that “What is essential is invisible to the eye?” (A. de Saint-Exupéry, *Little Prince*)

Therefore, if we can perceive beyond the physical, we may be able to sense the “subtle threads of magnetic sympathy” that connect us all, as described in *The Mahatma Letters*. We do know that this

invisible connection exists. We feel it with the ones we love. If we can all gradually widen the circle of those whom we love and care for, then maybe empathy and altruism will become natural and we can have a better world.

As shown in Figure 3, karma drags us down, again and again around the wheel of existence until we can work out the consequences of our past actions and eventually attain enlightenment.



Figure 3

According to Buddhist philosophy, what drives this wheel is the hub containing the three poisons. (1) **Ignorance**, symbolized by the pig, which does not mind living in dirty surroundings and does not discriminate much about what it eats. The poison of ignorance means being oblivious to the real nature of things: ignorance of what is permanent and unchanging; ignorance of the Real. This keeps us thirsting for material existence. We cling to this material

world. In fact we are even afraid to die, no matter how much suffering we are in, not knowing that the real life is there after death. Everything in this world is impermanent, transitory, fleeting.

(2) **Attachment** to the objects of our desires or of the senses (symbolized by a bird that mates for life) is the second of the poisons.

(3) **Anger** or **aversion** is the third poison (symbolized by the snake which is quickly aroused and strikes back at the slightest touch). Aversion is, in a way, just another kind of attachment. The reason we shun something is because we prefer, or are attached to, something else — its opposite. So this clinging to this world of sensation is what keeps us trapped in this wheel of birth, death, and rebirth. All three poisons — ignorance, attachment, and aversion — keep us coming back again and again to the world of sorrow and disappointment, to suffer and to cause suffering.

Figure 4 is called the *bhavachakra*, usually found outside of Tibetan Buddhist temples. *Bhava* means “worldly existence” and *chakra*, means “wheel”. This has been variously called the wheel of cyclic existence, of worldly existence, of karma, or of birth, death, and rebirth, sometimes called *samsāra* in Sanskrit. (The earlier image, in Figure 3, with the three poisons of ignorance, attachment, and aversion, is at the center of the *bhava-chakra* and drives the whole wheel.)

The wheel is held by Yama, the Lord of Death, or the Demon of Impermanence. Thus, everything in the cycle is imperma-



Figure 4

nent. This is why, for as long as we are in the cycle of worldly life and craving material things, we will have to suffer loss, anxiety, frustration, heartbreak, pain, suffering, and death. In the upper corners of the image are the “pure land” and the Buddha. Those who have mastered the cycles are able to transcend the wheel and are no longer subject to the illusions of terrestrial existence and worldly sorrows. They show that it is possible for us to achieve the same. We too can be free!

There is the story of a man who went to the Buddha and said: “You are enlightened. Why don’t you give us enlightenment?” The Buddha replied: “I will give people enlightenment, but first show me that [enlightenment] is what they want most.” So the man went off and asked each person he met what they would want most if they could have anything at all. The answers of course were the usual:

Mastering the Cyclic Nature of Existence — I

great fortune, fame, power, health, long life. Nobody asked for enlightenment. And so it seems that we, as humanity, are still very much of this world, and are destined to be subject to the cycles for a long time still, until we decide we are ready to work to master them.

“Mastering the Cyclic Nature of Existence” means understanding what keeps us trapped in the wheel so we can avoid the pitfalls as we navigate through life. It means mastering the laws of existence, to be able to be in this world but not of it. One then becomes liberated from the karmic wheel and is able to help others to achieve the same. This is the essence of the Bodhisattva vow.

“To attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings” is the vow of the Bodhisattva. HPB’s *The Voice of the Silence* states: “The Bodhisattva who has won the battle, who holds the prize within his palm, yet says in his divine compassion, ‘For others’ sake this great reward I yield’, accomplishes the greater Renunciation.”

Mastering the cycles then does not mean leaving everything and everyone else behind to claim nirvana. Remember, since we are all one, we all must move forward together. In truth, no one can move forward without pulling everyone else along.

(To be continued)

We are told that only when we have ceased seeing the many can we discern the One. The many are the numerous false voices, suggestions and inducements which the world presents to us and to which the mind so eagerly listens. It thinks that it will be able to enjoy life more by acting on these suggestions but in the end they turn out to be false. The soul, in its immaturity, lends itself readily to every kind of illusion and is easily taken in like a little child that can be led astray by a few sweets. Not until we “forsake the region of *asat*, the false, [can we] come unto the realm of *Sat*, the true”.

N. Sri Ram
The Way of Wisdom
Commentary on *The Voice of the Silence*, I.8.

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

WHAT the Theosophical Society has hitherto done — its great merit in the eyes of some, and its terrible fault in the estimation of others — is *to make people think*. No one can for long belong to the Society without beginning to question *oneself*. We begin to ask: “How do I know that?” “Why do I believe this?” “What reason have I to be so certain that I am right, and so sure that my neighbours are wrong?” “What is my warrant for declaring this action, or that practice, to be good, and their opposites bad?” The very air of Theosophy is charged with the spirit of enquiry. It is not the “sceptical” spirit, nor is it the “agnostic”. It is a real desire to know and to learn the truth, as far as it is possible for any creature to know it who is so limited by their capacities and so biased by their prejudices as is a human being. It is *that* which has raised the Theosophical Society above the level of all other aggregations or organizations of people, and which, so long as its Fellows abstain from dogmatizing, must keep it on an altogether higher plane.

H. S. Olcott

Applied Theosophy and Other Essays

Planetary Awareness: The Worldwide Demand of the 21st Century

YULIIA SHABANOVA

THE phenomenon of consciousness, being the subject of study of many modern sciences, such as biology, sociology, informatics, cognitive science, cybernetics, linguistics, psychology, quantum physics, and so on, is not to be reduced to a common understanding in interdisciplinary dialogue. In philosophy, consciousness is one of the main categories which is basic for various ontological, epistemological, axiological, ethical, and even social positions. There are three methodological points of view: either based on the predominance of consciousness over substance, or the sub-servience of consciousness to substance, or the dualism of consciousness and substance.

Theosophical understanding of consciousness stands apart because of the essence of Theosophy as “Divine Wisdom”, in contrast to philosophy’s desire to grasp it. On this basis, the European philosophy of the classical period relates the concept of consciousness to man, giving consciousness the integrative nature of rationally irrational structures. However, consciousness is not reduced to any of its structures and is substantially greater than their sum.

The philosophy of the non-classical period, referring to the ontological category of the unconscious (Arthur Schopenhauer), and then the anthropological concept of the subconscious (Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Jung), points to the irrational-intuitive aspect, which opens the potential of human expansion of consciousness. Thus, the philosophy of classical and non-classical periods balances rational and irrational modes of consciousness.

Post-classical philosophy of consciousness is represented by Edmund Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, which explores the immanent acts of pure consciousness and the dialectics of Martin Heidegger’s everyday and ontological existence. It should be noted that the difference between the positions of Husserl and Heidegger lies in the recognition or denial of the metaphysical status of consciousness of an extrinsic space, which allowed one and did not allow others to consider the form of the essence of consciousness.

In modern philosophy of consciousness, there is an attempt to go beyond the classical definition of consciousness, which

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is directly related to human activity and to give consciousness an independent metaphysical and ontological status. Reviewing the scientific paradigm associated with the post-classical period demonstrates a tendency to form a picture of the world on the basis of a single field of consciousness.

Modern philosophical and scientific views (quantum picture of the world) on consciousness are close to the theological views, as the affirmation of the single field of consciousness existence, which takes self-reflecting forms and performs the function of self-awareness of spirituality in human form. The universe, the Universal Being, possesses self-awareness in which the reflecting capacity of the human being contributes to the process of self-reflection of spirituality as the core of living space. Our evolutionary task is to expand consciousness and enter into new forms of its objectification — that is, new forms of being.

Peter Russell, a modern British scientist and thinker, believes that the next stage of the evolutionary development of consciousness will not lead to a change in physical form, as it happened in the previous stages, but to a qualitative change of the whole planetary culture.¹ According to him, just as the unification of the simplest at the cellular level led to the creation of more complex evolutionary forms, the unification of individuals into clusters (groups of people) will become the basis for the formation of a single planetary consciousness.

The modern world is already demonstrating this tendency for unification:

1. *Social integration.* Globalization, the common nature of environmental and economic crises, global pandemics, and so forth, lead to the unification of all humanity towards solving problems. In this regard, world public organizations against the pandemic, terrorism, environmental destruction, and other global problems are becoming more active.

2. *Managerial unification.* Modern management tends to teamwork, a policy of cooperation, not competition. Everyone, and not just the best, is important today in the professional world. The concept of the new leader is not an administrator or an authoritarian manager, but a self-sufficient authority, wisely encouraging teamwork.

3. *Unification at the information level.* In the age of digitization, the internet, and social networks unite people not by national, religious, racial, or age characteristics, but by interests, values, knowledge, views, and so on.

4. *Consolidation at the level of consciousness.* This refers to the union of a soul with a soul, humans with humans on the level of relations, understanding, awareness of oneness. In the days of metamodernism, sincerity, openness, and sensuality are becoming more and more important.

Thus, in today's world there is a tendency to unite at the social (physical, organizational), mental (information), and spiritual (at the level of consciousness) levels. Humanity seeks to function as a single organism, as a single field of consciousness. This is how the tendency for the formation of planetary consciousness,

the evolutionary task of which is the self-exploration of the spiritual, is realized.

This is the unity to which Theosophy calls and the Theosophical Society seeks to realize — to create a single organism (World Brotherhood), the only field of consciousness around which an evolutionary (quantum) leap towards unification will take place. However, the association does not absorb its structural components, but exists due to the uniqueness of each of them. According to physicist/psychologist/futurist Peter Russell, a qualitative transition to a new planetary level of consciousness will require 10 billion human consciousnesses on the planet.² Today, the planet's population is approaching 8 billion. The quantity has nearly been reached, given the upward trend in Earth's population.

However, the unfavorable egoism of consumer society can be the cause of the negative course of history. If in the initial stages of self-awareness humanity had to go the way of individualization in the form of personal separation, today the higher self is the true essence of man, the bearer of consciousness, increasingly closed into the shell of self, complicating the process of evolution.

Alan W. Watts, the Anglo-American philosopher, a well-known translator, and popularizer of Eastern philosophy in the West, introduces the concept of the "skin-encapsulated ego" as a state of self-identification with one's body, mental stereotypes, social roles, beliefs, behaviors, and so on.³ This is the process of replacing oneself with true (essential, spiritual)

external forms of activity — career, financial well-being, social or ideological dependence, and so forth. Anything outside the "skin" is automatically defined as "Not Self", separated from any other "encapsulated ego skin" as well as from anything we perceive as our physical environment. "Encapsulation" of the ego was a natural stage of human consciousness of previous periods of evolution for the formation of individuality, without which the uniqueness was lost, and there would hardly be any clear texture for life's reality. Without a wide range of individualization, there would be no source of renewal as a form of eternal life support.

Having accumulated a wealth of experience of individualizations and fragmentary concretizations, the history of planetary humanity ends the era of self-centered "encapsulation" and moves on to a new evolutionary stage — the collection of this experience at a new qualitative level of a single consciousness. It is time to refine, to "soften the ego membrane", to carry out the processes of integration into a single field of consciousness. Today is the time to strike a healthy balance between caring for one's personality and constant openness to one life. Scattering the boundary of the "skin" allows consciousness to merge into a single field.

It is today that the phase of the development of billions of consciousnesses on the planet is being fixed, whereby evolution shifts into our inner world. Technogenic civilization fulfilled its task — created comfortable conditions for human existence.

Robotization and digitalization help to turn to one's inner self. It is already clear that the multiplication of forms of consumer culture is meaningless. We have gone through the stages of external change, science has done everything to enable man to direct his efforts inside himself. This picture coincides with the theosophical scheme of cosmos evolution cycles, according to which, the subtle spirit-matter, having passed the stage of involution (descent into matter), begins to move along the path of evolutionary matter collapse, by expanding consciousness to a single field. In this way, the Covid-19 pandemic has created the conditions for internal concentration and evolution, an expansion of consciousness at the individual level for the reproduction of a single field of planetary consciousness.

Li Edelkoort,⁴ a well-known global trend forecaster, founder of Trend Union,⁵ calls the pandemic a “quarantine of consumption”.⁶ We must learn to live in a world free of unnecessary things, external stereotypes, and a consumption cult. But today, there is clearly a stratification in society of those who have remained in the skin and continue to divide the world, and those who are conscious of the integrity of consciousness and are following the path of internal evolution.

Turning to the historical periodization of culture which underlies the level of consciousness development, we note that today we have entered the phase of metamodernism, the conditional beginning of which is determined in 2010 and is associated with the release of “Notes on

Metamodernism” by the Dutch cultural philosophers Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker.⁷ The authors define metamodernism as a discourse of oscillation (fluctuation) between the optimism of modernity and the irony of the post-modern, as the oscillation between the internal and the external in search of true meaning, and the acquisition of a new quality of consciousness, a depth of essential understanding of the world in the first decades of the 21st century. Metamodernism looks for the place where our true self feels “at home”, that is, itself, not the form from which it is usually identified. This search is done through the oscillatory combination of inner focus and external involvement. An attempt is made to hold the outside life and its inner depth. This depth is not something new. It is age-old wisdom that permeates and holds the whole of human culture: wisdom that is embedded in all spiritual teachings, practices, and philosophical views; wisdom which is the transcendental source and foundation of Theosophy.

Whereas in earlier periods of individual consciousness this wisdom was revealed through spiritual teachers and absorbed by the mass consciousness of time, now, given the above social trends, eternal wisdom is revealed through the internal transformation of everyone, which should lead to a highly organized society. This transformation of consciousness — that is, the awareness of the need to remove the “skin” — must occur at the level of individual self-awareness of the responsibility for the fate of planetary evolution.

According to Peter Russell, the main task of humanity at this stage is “not only to think in the new, but also to be in the new.” That is, to make this path from “ego” that is immersed in “skin” to “ego” with blurred borders. And if we do not do that, then we just keep *talking* about unity.

Thus, based on the theoretical achievements of the philosophy of consciousness and theosophical understanding of consciousness as a single field, as well as the processes of civilizational development and its crisis phenomena, one can argue that the modern period of human development is a time of dramatic evolutionary changes on the way to the achievement of essential unity. However, it is the only field of consciousness that exists beyond time and space, presenting eternity. That is why every moment of our lives is the most precious point of consciousness. And it is necessary to live in such a way as to give every moment fullness of meanings, that is to the maximum, to fill the living space with the inner activity of individualized consciousness, and not to dream of future improvement or probable changes. As Alan Watts said, “You do not play a sonata in order to reach the final chord, and if the meanings of things were simply in ends, composers would write nothing but finales.”⁸

Practical Theosophy is a way of life according to the attainment of unity at the level of consciousness. On this basis, we must follow the steps that contribute to the expansion of consciousness of modern mankind, not at the level of abstract theories that are not perceived by the masses,

but at the level of individuality, which according to the principle “like attracts like” changes itself, contributes to evolutionary processes — forming consciousness.

The above can be briefly restated as follows:

1. Conscious understanding of the inner essence of man. The change of focus from its external, conditional forms of existence to internal ones. To live consciously is to realize and hold on to one’s true self, own depth or higher self in everyday life.

2. Integration of the higher self into external life forms. The methodology of such ideological changes is the theosophical understanding of the indissoluble connection of consciousness and matter. In this regard, Annie Besant states: “Consciousness and matter affect each other because they are the two constituents of one whole, both appearing as they draw apart, both disappearing as they unite, and as they draw apart a relation exists ever between them.”⁹ At the philosophical level, this connection is substantiated in the dialectic of the ontological and everyday existence of Heidegger.¹⁰

3. The expansion of consciousness is due to the thinning of the membrane “ego”, so that the individual no longer perceives himself as separate, but joins a single field of consciousness. Oriental mystics call this transcendental state of *satori*, *samādhi*; Western esotericism, *ecstasy*, *insight*, *illumination*; and psychoanalysts, “changed states of consciousness”, *death of ego*, *psychedelic episodes*. Regardless of the name, *transpersonal*,

peak experiences contribute to the disincarnate to one's own ego. That is why in the modern world the meditative and spiritual practices of the traditional East have become widespread in the non-traditional culture of the West. Spiritual practice should not be a fascination with the elect, but a daily work of the modern man.

4. Empathy and compassion. The inner concentration and focus on the unconditioned state is the point where empathy and compassion begin, held not on emotional short-lived states, but on the realization of the unity of being, as a single reality, of a single field of consciousness. Empathy is the way to blur the skin shell, to the dispersion of the Ego.

5. The ethics of accepting each is based on an understanding of the unity of the world and the right of each individual and individuality to exist and to manifest according to one's level of consciousness. By embracing the world in its multifaceted nature, we are expanding our vision to a holistic picture of the universe, where everything is appropriate and natural. This is a condition at the world level, the expansion of consciousness to the planetary, and at the social level, the formation of tolerance and the elimination of conflict and aggression.

6. Ripple effect (Irvin D. Yalom).¹¹ The realization that each person spreads concentric influence circles, both around others or the environment, and on a single field of cosmic consciousness, changes the world at the energy-information level. Any existence, though limited in time, or little visible in its achievements, makes sense

to the universe. Material or socially conditioned things are not evolutionary, because they are finite. The resonance in the universe has what is spread at the level of consciousness: meaning, understanding, experience, the values which compose wisdom. In practice, it is widespread through the acts of anxiety, help, understanding, consolation, comfort.

7. Death as the definition of conscious life. "The thought that we will die makes us human beings".¹² This position forms a conscious attitude towards life. Epicurus's argument of symmetry reminds us that the eternity from which we come and into which we depart is the only reality. We are torn from eternity into the illusion of temporal dimensions and not feeling eternal. Moreover, eternity before birth is of little concern to us, and eternity after death frightens us.¹³ As death is inevitable, we must remember it throughout life, that is, to give life meaning in eternity, keeping the memory of the eternity from which we have been torn out and contributing to understanding who we are and what consciousness is.

Modern phenomena of global geopolitical conflicts, world crises, and pandemics are a clear hint from the universe to the need for worldwide changes at the level of consciousness. Covid-19 related, forced, solitary confinement, self-isolation, removal from the hustle and bustle of society and its false roles and goals, natural slowing down of the pace of life, abandoning unnecessary activities (the era of digitalization created conditions for virtual events, conferences, communi-

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cation within interest groups), conscious self-education and self-improvement, all have become the reality of every person today.

Through these forms, humanity must come to the understanding of changes and specific actions at the individual level. Planetary consciousness is formed “from below” by a quantum leap from individual life forms as a linear process to a holo-

graphic awareness of one’s higher self as the defining part of the universe. This is the manifestation of the theosophical postulate “All in All”.¹⁴ According to quantum physics, the consciousness of the subject creates worlds, manifesting a single field of consciousness in actualized Reality, through which the “Absolute Consciousness, however, the only Self-Reality” is manifested.¹⁵ ✧

Footnotes

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Awareness of the Divine Spark Within

RACHNA SRIVASTAVA

SAIN**T** Kabir says: “Why and where do you search for me, my friend? Neither in the temple nor in the mosque, neither in Kaaba nor even on Mount Kailas will you find me. I’m not in the rituals and ceremonies that you perform, nor am I in the practices of yoga and austerities. You will find the reality in a moment if you want, as I am, within your own being! I’m the very breath of all breaths.” Another of Kabir’s famous couplets says the same: “Though musk is in its navel, the musk deer keeps searching for it in the forest. Similarly, people keep searching everywhere for God, when it is within themselves.”

The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and smritis (Hindu scriptures) reveal that all of existence is parented by a pure infinite consciousness named Brahman. And the *raison d’être* (reason for being) of this universe is the realization of the individual soul’s oneness with Brahman, says the *Mundaka Upanishad*.¹ The whole universe is a manifestation and product of

that universal, formless, causeless Being.

The sun, moon, every particle of the universe, all knowledge, and the souls of all existing beings are parts and manifestations of that single, all-immanent Being. All life and all qualities, functions, and activities are forms of that single Energy. He is the Fire which has lighted the Sun and makes it burn, like a log burning in the fire. Thereby does the Sun give us warmth and light. The rain does not rain, but it is He that rains through the clouds. Beings come together and multiply, but it is He alone that multiplies through them.²

Man searches for Brahman in vain, stumbling as far as his quicksilver mind can take him. When the consciousness of man reverentially tiptoes into the temple of his own body and enters the deepest recess of his own heart, he beholds Brahman as his own soul. This is the true *sanctum sanctorum* where the soul’s aspiration is the priest and breath is the *ārati* (ritual), the offering of light. Such a realization leads to the *jivātma*’s union

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with the *paramātmā*, the merging of soul with Brahman. It is in this unfoldment of consciousness that one understands the profound statement in Sanskrit: *sarvam sarvātmakam*: “All abide in the One and the One abides in all.” Brahman encompasses the universe just like salt dissolved in water: it can be tasted and felt but cannot be seen and touched. The purpose of life is the manifestation of the unmanifest.

All religions and saints speak of the yearning to be one with the Supreme Self. Jesus tells us to “do unto others what you would like others to do unto you”. Nearer home, we have the examples of a number of saints who taught the same. Gautama Buddha saw misery all around him. He was so pained to see this that he renounced the world and went into soul-searching. When he became enlightened, he realized the divinity within him and in all those who dwelled on Earth; he was at peace with himself. He came back to society, renouncing the renunciation, and strove to awaken people to their inner self, to their soul. If we come to modern times, we have the examples of Swami Vivekananda and Dr Annie Besant, both of whom espoused Advaita Vedanta.

Perhaps we all know this. However, we consider all this talk of self and supreme self as something which is not for common human beings, but for the ascetics who renounce the world. This is probably the most misconceived notion and this is why the world is full of pain, sorrow, jealousy, and hatred, and devoid of love, compassion, empathy, and service.

In the *Mundaka Upanishad*, Rishi

Angiras expounds his concept of *jñāna* in the central word of the Upanishad, *munda*, which etymologically refers to a person who has shaved his head, whereas in the larger sense, Angiras meant that this word should denote the shaving off of the layers of ignorance which cover us all, to enable us to see ourselves as being one with the universal self.³ He who knows the Supreme Spirit that dwells within the heart cuts off all the knots of ignorance which bind man.⁴ So long as we are ignorant of the innate divinity in all of us, we make divisions between man and man, between races and races, and between nationality and nationality. Owing to these sorts of differences, we quarrel with each other and make this world a place uninhabitable for sane people.⁵

We can remove this kind of difference and parochial outlook not by any kind of intellectual understanding but by the practice of true Vedanta. Instead of going to temples, churches, mosques, and gurudwāras, see the divinity within and remove the consciousness of otherness.

Guru Nanak, when told not to sleep with his feet towards the temple, asked a very simple question as to which direction he should put his feet where God does not dwell. We have such practical examples that do not require any intellectual knowledge. Yet we tend ardently to the comforts of our body, accumulation of wealth and relatives, that we forget there is a soul within. The main obstacle in the path of those striving for the higher life is the identification of oneself with the body:

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God, who is concealed in all beings, is One. He pervades everything; he dwells in all forms of life and is the overseer of all activities.

If one sees all living things as if they were in his own body, that is, feel their joys and sorrows as his own, and sees the same Universal Spirit in all things, then there is no need for protecting oneself against others.

If one realizes the divinity of the eternal spirit and the oneness of all things, the battle is won and all the confusion of joy and grief disappears, thereby bringing release.

If water is poured into water, it becomes one and the same with it. Thus it is with the self of those of understanding who see unity in manifoldness. And when the knots of the heart are untied, and we are freed from worldly attachments, we become immortal. Not by reasoning, but only by an awakening can we get a vision of the supreme spirit. Life in relation to the Ultimate Reality is like a state of sleep and reason is like the impossible conception of those who are sleeping trying to know what they are about without waking up. As sleep is to waking, so is ordinary life to the state of Realization. How can one be enabled to have a vision of the Supreme Being within oneself? Mere learning does not reveal him. One has to realize that the Lord is the life that lives and the light that shines in everything, and that the soul is like the spark thrown out and reabsorbed by the blazing fire.

When they realize this, they lose their dependence on externals and find bliss in themselves. And this realization can come only from inside through the practice of truth, meditation, and control of the mind and senses. Make the body the lower piece of *arani* [wooden pieces used to ignite a fire], and understanding the upper piece, and by practice of meditation, churn the fire out. When the heart is cleansed, Brahman is revealed, and He is seen shining like a burning light within oneself.⁶

Truth, penance, understanding, and purity are essential requisites for this revelation of the Brahman within. "There is no religion higher than Truth." Truth wins always and with it is paved the road to the divine. Being true to oneself is the beginning to the supreme revelation.⁷ In a village in Kalavamcode in Kerala, there is a temple in which a mirror is installed for worship instead of deities. This is to emphasize that God is within oneself and one should find salvation by accessing the inner Self. In another temple in Murukkumpuzha, in place of a deity a bright light illuminates the words, "Truth, Duty, Kindness, Love". (Both temples were consecrated by Sree Narayana Guru, the silent-revolutionary sannyasi of Kerala.)

So far we have deliberated upon the meaning of and the path to the awareness of the divine spark within. Now comes the "why" part. Why do we need to be aware of the divinity within, the Brahman consciousness in me and you? We need it for our own salvation. Here I would

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like to direct our attention to Swami Vivekananda's *Practical Vedanta*, the Karma Yoga of the *Gītā* and the universal prayer of Theosophy.

Practical Vedanta says: If God was everywhere, if everyone was divine, one should behave in a way that would lead to the realization of the oneness of humankind, or the Brahman-hood of the whole world. This wonderful idea of the sameness and omnipresence of the Supreme Soul has to be preached for the amelioration and elevation of the human race. If only we are awakened to this great Truth, the whole world will undergo a wonderful change.

If we could really get it through our heads and hearts that we are the Brahman, divinity itself, can you imagine what a tremendous push our spiritual life would get? All of the weaknesses we so dearly love to dwell on, all of the hurts others do to us; all of the smallness would be replaced by an invigorating freedom flowing from the Self. An identity centered in the Brahman would revolutionize our spiritual and secular lives. We would act from the highest motive to the highest goal, letting go of the sense of accomplishment and failure, the petty lies, and the devastating jealousies.

However, such an identity does not give us license to commit any act we desire. We must be honest, cautious, and circumspect as we practise this truth. If we practise being the pure, infinite Self, then all of our actions will begin to conform to the highest ethical, moral, and spiritual principles. This practical method

of change is one of Swamiji's great spiritual treasures. We can change ourselves and we can change the current of history.

Swamiji considered the worship of the human being as the highest worship. He says: "If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the living god, Daridranarayan, the man god — every being that bears a human form is god himself." We are to see humanity as divine so that part of our service becomes the recognition of the divinity in men and women:

What is the good of that spiritual practice or realization which does not benefit others, does not conduce to the well-being of people sunk in ignorance and delusion, does not help in rescuing them from the clutches of lust and wealth? When this feeling of the all-round good of all without distinction of caste or colour will awaken in your heart, then I shall know you are advancing towards the ideal.⁸

Vivekananda further says that if worship of stone images can bring about inner transformation, why not the worship of living images of God? It is in this spirit that he wrote:

These are His manifold forms before thee,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?

Who loves all beings, without distinction,
He indeed is worshipping best his God.

He considered Brahman as truth. He named it *satchitānanda*. He propagated Advaita Vedanta, which has three pillars:

1. The purpose of life is to experience

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divinity in all human beings. If you cannot see God in your fellow beings, how can you worship God?

2. Man not only has body and intellect, he has a soul too. His soul is unexpressed, unseen Brahman. The Soul is part of God and so it is immortal.

3. If we realize that there is one Brahman in all, then there will be only the relation of love and service.

Vedanta gives the message of universal love and brotherhood.

Dr Annie Besant says in *The Wisdom of the Upanishads* that the supreme self always dwells in the hearts of the beings. We need not fear to declare that “I am He, and there is none other”. If we live, we are part of him:

When the Self manifests, all is manifested after him. No matter then if you blunder, if you are still blind, if your *upādhis* (bodily sheaths) fetter you; it matters not if you recognize the one great truth of your own divinity. As the sun burns up the clouds that obscure him by the glory of his light, so shall the glory of the Self, shining within the heart, burn up everything which obstructs, until it shines forth undimmed.⁹

. . . step by step, strive to pierce into your Self, and if you would begin the search, begin with everyday life. You have a tongue, sight, and hearing. Dominate the tongue, and let it never speak an unkind or untrue word; no harsh language, no sharp criticism, no claim to judge your brother, no claim to condemn. Speech is a power of the Self, and is degraded . . . when under the control of outer objects. . . . Master

the eye and ear, teaching the eye to see the Self . . . [because] “as a man thinks so he becomes”¹⁰ . . . “The embodied Self, beholding his real nature, obtains his true end, and every pain ceases.”

With the awareness of divinity in all human beings comes empathy, love and brotherhood and the realization that:

1. What you do not want people to do to you, do not do to others.

2. The behaviour which brings joy in this world and in the next world too, is religion.

3. Just actions form religion; and unjust, non-religion.

4. Truth is religion.

5. Whatever is for the welfare of humankind must be practical.

6. Truth, seeing all as one, control over the senses, keeping away from jealousy and animosity, forgiveness, good conduct, not hurting others, courage, knowledge, a clean heart and mind — this is religion.

When we treat all human beings as ourselves and not as the other, then only we are truly awakened. I conclude with Annie Besant’s universal prayer of the Theosophical Society, which imparts the same message.

O Hidden Life, vibrant in every atom;

O Hidden Light, shining in every creature;

O Hidden Love, embracing all in oneness;

May all who feel themselves as one with Thee,

Know they are also one with every other. ✧

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Endnotes

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³ Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya, op. cit., p. 123.

⁴ C. Rajagopalachari, op. cit., p. 56.

⁵ Man’s suffering lasts only until he sees the Supreme Being that dwells within himself. The indwelling Supreme Spirit and the individual soul are like two birds. They cling to one another and are on the same tree. One eats the fruits of the tree, the other looks on, happy. One is attached to works, the other is free. When a man sees the Universal Ruler in himself, then the distinction between good and evil drops out. He is freed from passions and reaches the goal, that is, becomes one with the Universal.

C. Rajagopalachari, op. cit., p. 60.

⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

⁷ Truth is the only pathway to God, and the seers pursue this to reach him. Not by the eyes nor by speech or through other senses can He be apprehended; not even by austerities or ceremonials. He whose mind is pure and serene can by meditation attain a vision of the Indivisible. The Subtle Spirit dwelling within, into which the fivefold life has entered, can be realized by the understanding. If the understanding that is pierced and pervaded by the senses is purified, then the spirit reveals itself unto it.

Ibid., p. 62.

⁸ *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati Memorial Ed.), Part I, 1936, p. 140.

⁹ Annie Besant, *The Wisdom of the Upanishads*, a series of lectures delivered at the 31st anniversary meeting of the TS in Dec. 1906, TPH, Adyar, 1907, p. 46–7.

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The great are they who see that the spiritual is stronger than any material force, that thoughts rule the world.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

A Few Lessons to Be Learnt at Adyar — I

MARGHERITA RUSPOLI

EVERY privilege brings with it a duty. One of the most highly-prized, one of the dearest privileges that a Theosophist can have, is that of coming to live awhile at Adyar, and those to whose lot it falls must see to it that they hand on to their comrades as much as possible of the benefit which they themselves receive by doing so. Indeed, were it not for this duty one could not desire the privilege; those whose karma allows them to come here rejoice, because it is a great opportunity for fitting themselves to serve better, either immediately or in some future time. Were it not so, were the joy and the benefit to be for it alone, what generous soul would not prefer to stand aside, and yield, if so it might, the privilege that its past has won for it to someone else, seeing that all cannot have it?

In the fifteen months that I have been here, some things have been growing very clear to me, they have been impressing themselves very deeply on my mind. So much instruction is given to us, there are so many things to be learnt, that for some time it would be difficult to say

which of the ideas that come to one are going to assume the most prominence. But now this mass has fallen into order and I see a few ideas as the central ones, around which the others group themselves. I therefore think it may be useful if I try to express these leading ideas.

I am quite aware that other students here may arrange the same lessons which we are all learning in a different order of importance, and I think it would be very instructive if several of them would tell us what seems most essential to them among the things they have learnt. There would be a uniformity underlying the diversity; for I am not talking now of ideas that may spring up in the mind in the course of study, or while one is thinking or meditating; but of principles given to us from outside: explained to us first of all by our Teachers, and experienced by living at Adyar.

To live at Adyar connotes a vague beauty and wonder, I suppose, in the minds of many — an inevitable vagueness, which accurate accounts of personal experiences there may, however, do

Mrs Margherita Ruspoli and her husband Don Fabrizio dei Principi Ruspoli were workers at Adyar for a while and also for the TS in Italy. Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, vol. 32, no. 7, April 1911, p. 36.

something to dispel. I think also (although I speak under correction) that very often it is not sufficiently realized that life at Adyar must be one of strenuous effort. It is difficult to live at Adyar. If one is wise at all, one adds one's own willing effort to that imposed on one by circumstances; but even if one should not do so, one could not escape from the strong pressure that is brought to bear on all.

The tremendously powerful vibrations in this sacred place are all the time acting on one's various bodies; some are more sensitive to the action, some are less so, but all are well-advised, if only for the sake of their own comfort, who get rid as quickly as possible of everything in themselves that does not harmonize with these vibrations, for they are too strong to be resisted. One needs to be constantly on the watch; for it is easy under this strain to slip into irritability or depression; also because old faults one thought one had conquered have a habit of reappearing, and weak points are probed. One is not engaged in celebrating a love feast! We do not meet — like the primitive Christians at their agape — to commemorate any event and to exchange any outward sign of brotherhood; we meet with our faces turned to the future, and though the love and the peace here are not to be told of in words, and mutual goodwill is free to find expression, our bond of union is a common endeavor; we are here to learn and to grow, and meanwhile and always, *to work*.

(1) The first thing I would lay stress on among those which here one learns

to understand *is that our Theosophical nucleus proceeds from the Great Brotherhood, and spreads outwards from it into the world*. Theosophists, then, have not got to try and believe that the great natural fact of human brotherhood has yet been realized, or is immediately realizable, on this plane; but to study how it may be reached, what qualities have to be developed before a brotherly civilization is possible. We cannot get this knowledge from the Fifth Race, for it does not belong to it; we have to search for a conception of what the Sixth Race virtues and characteristics will be.

We are all one, truly — on the buddhic plane. That is the plane of unity. On the physical plane we are different, and always shall be. What down here we have to do is to try and see the one divine life which we all have in common — to see the Self behind the forms. We do not want to do away with the differences between our personalities. Many have attempted to believe that people can be non-separated down here, on this plane, but it is a vain attempt. It is only on the buddhic plane that no sense of separateness is found, and in order that this absence of separateness should be a fact to us, we have to rise to that plane.

Till we have developed ourselves sufficiently to be able to do this, we must take the glorious truth, like so much else, thankfully from the hands of our Teachers, but must not pretend that we ourselves have realized it. In order to “kill out all sense of separateness” we have to try to raise our consciousness to higher

planes, where separateness does not exist; down here it does exist, and it is no use pretending it does not. Even at the level of the ego it exists; our causal bodies are separate bodies.

We are told that it is at the First Initiation that a man first gets a touch of buddhic consciousness; and it is only when he has taken the First Initiation that he is really a “Brother”. The title “Brother” technically belongs only to the Initiates. We may loosely speak of ourselves all as brothers, and there is a truth behind the words, as there was behind the words of St Francis when he spoke of “Brother Sun” and “Brother Ass”. (The latter term included both the beast of burden and his own animal, his body.)

We are a stage or two nearer to realise Brotherhood than are the animals, but we have not reached it yet. We are brothers in the making, we are not yet brothers in fact. Brotherhood to us is an *ideal*; let us press forward to it, not drag it down to our level; let us strive to reach the spirit of it, not warp it by trying to apply it literally under impossible conditions; remembering that in this also “the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life”.

(2) Loyalty. Out of a true conception of Brotherhood springs naturally an impassioned loyalty to the Elders who are able and ready to help us. Realizing how far beyond our grasp our ideal shines, we eagerly follow those who can lead us towards it. Realizing that the heritage they have entered upon waits also for us and that they desire we should share it with them, we come to them to learn how we

may fit ourselves to claim our birthright, what it is that we must do. We should all win to it at the long last, in the slow course of evolution; but if we would reach it sooner, we need the aid they voluntarily give. If we would strike out for ourselves along a quicker road, we cannot do without their guidance.

Moreover, if we are really searching for the Self in all, we cannot but be attracted to those in whom the Self is so much more manifest than in the rest. Our need of them and our love for them draw us to them; and when we really begin to follow their instructions, when we put to the proof what they tell us, then little by little an unshakable trust grows up in our hearts, and that deepens into devoted loyalty. We see how before they came to us we were blinded and helpless, and jogged along the ordinary ways of the world, unconscious that we might do differently; sensible perhaps of a craving in our hearts that we could not satisfy, and so did our best to smother.

Then they revealed another world to us, and offered to lead us towards it, if we on our part would make the exertion of walking along a steep, rough road. And if we have accepted their offer, our wisdom is to follow them to the uttermost, unafraid. Even supposing they were to make a mistake, that may be a risk; but that without them we could not progress at all is a certainty. A man who wants to scale the Alps neither resigns himself to sitting down at the foot of them, nor attempts the ascent without guides, because of the possibility

that the guides themselves may blunder.

I for my part echo the words recently spoken of our Leaders by Mr Arundale, in the course of his most valuable Convention Lectures: "I would rather go wrong with them, than go wrong by myself in my ignorance." But soon these fears, if ever we entertained them at all, begin to look at once mean and ludicrous; it dawns upon us that it is they who suffer for our blunders; that they are assuming risk and responsibility and endless trouble for our sakes, while the prize of the endeavor is ours. We have all to gain; they, nothing.

The Theosophical Society is a living, growing organization; if we would take part in its development, we must move with it, and we cannot do that unless we follow its Leaders. Those who, having appropriated the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation and one or two elementary ideas, do not want to go any further and learn any more, belong properly to the outside world which soon will do as much. Those who think they drank so deeply of the waters of knowledge from the hand of Madame Blavatsky that they can dispense with her successors, that they are grown wise and great enough to have the right of despising and rejecting these, may nominally belong to the Society, but cannot really form part of it.

(3) The absolute necessity of getting rid of the personality. All the difficulty we have in recognizing greatness, in welcoming superiority, in subordinating ourselves, comes from the personality. All that hinders us and all that makes us discontented and unhappy comes equally

from the personality. If we would see the Self in others, we must first find it in ourselves; and in order to find it, we must disentangle ourselves, draw ourselves apart from our lower bodies. Perhaps we should be more ready to make this effort, if we realized that the personality causes us perpetual pain and discomfort.

No wrong thought or feeling is pleasure-giving; anger, jealousy, suspicion are most uncomfortable guests; self-love, vanity, ambition bring us mortification and disappointment. Only it is a trouble to resist these things when they come; and what makes our difficulty greater is that we identify ourselves with them. Gradually, as we make the effort we know we should make, our sight grows a little clearer; we begin to recognize the slavery we are in, and the sense of it grows and grows until we could pray to be delivered from some fault that vexes us and with which we do not feel ourselves able successfully to cope, at the cost of whatever suffering may be necessary. So gradually we begin to understand what I have heard our President say: "On the Path, the suffering which purifies is the most welcome of friends."

Personalities are not proper objects of admiration. We do well to gladly acknowledge all the good and beautiful qualities we see in anyone, knowing that in so far as it shows out those, the personality is shadowing forth the real man; we do well to be tolerant of his bad qualities, gently putting them aside, for they are only encumbrances from which he will some time free himself, and meanwhile they are

no business of ours. But the personality as a whole is not an admirable thing; if it is weak, it is uninteresting, and if it is strong, it is dangerous. Even with our dearest friends, though some tenderness of ours may cling round the bodies they are using, as it even may round any material object which they have in constant use, we should always try to reach the real man shrouded in each, and love that.

A strong individuality we naturally admire; and when it is also a purified one, it has felt the “grasp of the awakened spiritual will,” it is being used by the latter, and so we may fitly honor and study it, and will profit much by doing so. A strong individuality implies a considerably-developed ego; the personality is only an individualized animal. Of course one might even speak of the “personality” of an Adept, but then clearly one would be using the same word in a totally different sense; there it would designate the manifestation of himself in the matter of the lower planes, the perfect expression in that matter of the Perfection behind.

We must not try to cement the bonds of Brotherhood at the level of our animal selves. A herd of cattle lives amicably and peaceably on the physical plane. Any ordinarily united family does as much on the astral and lower mental levels. We are comrades in a high emprise, or we are nothing to one another. Those in the Society who are struggling onward together are knit by a friendship that will endure till the Great Portal is passed, and they are Brothers indeed. We must not expect the great people among us to cater

to the approval of our personalities. Since they care for us, they want what we really want, that we should break them and be free. Over and over again we make the mistake of taking our stand on too low ground, of being satisfied with a small perfection. A Lodge meeting will degenerate into a pleasant gathering of friends; the aspiration for unity sink into a kindly “family” feeling for the people around one. Welcome anything that breaks up these forms and forces us to start again at a higher level! At Adyar one is fortunate in this as in so much else. Anyone who comes here hoping (even unconsciously) for a pleasurable time for their personalities will not get it. When they forget all about it, or refuse to care, they remove the barrier, and the great joy which is here floods every layer of their being.

We have each to train and purify our lower bodies for our own use, killing out the personal will and substituting the true will. From this follows (*a*) that we shall have plenty of occupation for our energies, and (*b*) that we have no right whatever to interfere with anybody else. Every personality is the concern of the ego behind it. We talk so much of other people being our brothers, and are so unwilling to allow them their most elementary rights! Real love for our fellows is the crown of long and patient exercise of so many other virtues with respect to them! If we judge them, carp at them, ignore them at the moment when they need us; if we are not always forbearing and just and kind; if we are not always polite, standing ever-ready to help, but

recognizing that they have as much right to liberty of action as ourselves, how can we say we love them? The perfect love of those who have realized unity is at present beyond us who are but students; and we do not want to cultivate high-flown sentiment that masquerades as such; what we do need to cultivate is that sober love-attitude that always sees *first* the good in everyone and everything.

“Kill out all sense of separateness,” it is written in *Light on the Path*, “yet stand alone and isolated, because nothing that is embodied, nothing that is conscious of separation, nothing that is out of the Eternal can aid you.” And if not you, then not your fellows either. We are all isolated. This isolation cannot be broken through; and we cannot even bridge over the gulf from below. We may not realize it when life goes brightly and smoothly, but pain shows us our true isolation. What can we do to relieve the pain of another? And when it is our turn to suffer, though we be in a crowd of friends, not one of them can break in upon our solitude and bring relief.

There is no bodily affliction which so cuts a man off from his fellows as deafness; and to realize how dependent we are for communion with them on the ear, may help us a little to understand how much is meant by the words: “Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness.” The silence and solitude

are not a matter for regret; when we begin to live the inner life, we begin to desire their deep and fruitful peace. A Master has said: “Those of you who would know yourselves in the spirit of truth, learn to live alone even amidst the great crowds which may sometimes surround you. Seek communion and intercourse only with the God within your own soul.”

All that we can do when we think another person is not acting wisely, be it an important matter or a trivial one, is quietly and in the most friendly spirit to put the case to him, and then leave him alone to follow whatever course he thinks is best. Too often we are not content with doing that. The hankering for more primitive and forcible methods is not yet quite extinct in us. One savage will kill another for disagreeing with him; semi-civilized man will try to bully and brow-beat. We may only put ourselves at the service of others.

Why are we so impatient with one another? We know how hard it is to change anything in our own characters, but expect other people to be able to do so all at once, and even think our blame and interference ought to effect such changes in them. Not our real selves, of course; it is always the personality that cannot let well alone, the fretting, petty creature whose span of life is so brief that it is always in a hurry.

(To be continued)

Spirituality — A Holistic Approach

PATRICK KAFUNGA

THIS talk is intended not only to provoke discourse but also to rekindle interest in some areas of our spiritual endeavours that we may have overlooked, as we have been busy with other equally important matters of spiritual concerns, perhaps more advanced and fantastic.

To begin with let us try to define what spirituality is. Of the many perspectives and interpretations that have been advanced regarding this subject, I would like to zero in on one definition that I hope is so appreciably unrestricted in its generality that we may all relate to it: spirituality is the process of awakening from ordinary to universal consciousness. This definition implies the search to know our real self. It also implies the search to discover the true nature of our consciousness with the ultimate goal of achieving spiritual awakening, or self-realization.

In dealing with spirituality, we encounter religion, philosophy and science — these are three thought systems that make up the bulk of the knowledge that we need to deal with in order to progress on our spiritual journeys.

To suppose that one can acquire a perfect state of awakening by merely falling in love with religion alone or science alone or philosophy alone is something that we may need to seriously look into. My little experience with this fanatical approach only took me into a cul-de-sac. Human nature being what it is, even after reaching the dead end we still want to hold on to this dead end and make it more comfortable for ourselves, and then come up with apologetics, doctrines, theories, admonitions, and even threats of doom to those who will not adhere to this proverbial dead end.

I call it a dead end because the more we succumb to it the more we experience spiritual stagnation; we also experience the disappearance of intellectual curiosity and self-determinism. Our knowledge base becomes limited and constricted, leading to the loss of our volition. After so much trouble, after so much faith, what we get in return is just mental gratification. We have managed to be faithful even for lifetimes and still remain aloof and oblivious to cycles upon cycles of awareness to

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the extent that our fears, insecurities, prejudices, stereotypes, and social norms remain with us all the same.

Religion correlates with the path of devotion, philosophy with that of knowledge, and science with the path of service.

Among the problems that humanity has been facing in dealing with the deeper aspects of its spirituality is the failure to harmonize these three thought systems in order to deal with a complete puzzle of knowledge. Apart from this we also have been paying too much attention to our religious beliefs, which we cannot question, unfortunately. And it is due to this absence of scrutiny that organized religion became an imperial tool administered in the colonization of Africa and other parts of the world with special regards to Christianity and Islam.

We also have been paying too much attention to our cultural norms, which we also do not question, and traditional practices that in most cases have been inhibiting our natural instincts to explore and exchange information of mutual interest, of mutual benefit, as we come into contact with the larger human family. Then also we have to deal with the animosity, both in concept and context, exhibited by the proponents and exponents of religion, science, and philosophy.

Those of us who have been exposed to the comparative study of these thought systems can attest to the beauty of this holistic approach. We can also attest to the beauties that esoteric religion, philosophy, and science reveal to us, coupled with the joy of self-discovery that it

brings. At this stage we are going to briefly look at how our various approaches towards spirituality have been encumbered or limited and dwarfed by our somewhat fanatical preferences.

For a start let us look at **philosophy**, which principally is the seeking of knowledge or wisdom, and whose foundation rests on natural (physical) and moral (ethical) principles. In the absence of science, which represents the natural, and religion, which represents the moral, philosophy is seen to degenerate into baseless rhetoric, dry syllogism, and self-conceited paradigms that have only led to ideologies and isms of race and class systems — we have the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, and so on. We experience in living colour how these isms have promoted strife and spiritual poverty.

Science, being a theoretical / experiential construct built around the workings of the laws of Nature, has in the absence of philosophy and religion sought to defy the very laws of natural philosophy upon which it is founded. Now, driven by greed, men of science are busy inventing weapons of mass destruction, pandemics, GMOs — including the same pandemic we are experiencing now. Modern science is now caught up in its own web of finding solutions to remedy what it has been busy creating — all just for profit.

Religion, whose foundation was firmly stationed on moral philosophy as the basis for the pursuit and realization of knowledge pertaining to divinity or God, has in the absence of philosophy and science

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fallen to be a mere tool for the elite, the priests, the politicians, to be used in the subjugation of functional intelligence and free will in the masses of people who look up to them. It is no longer about enlightenment any more, but about indoctrination and blind credulity. It has relegated itself to an entity that is intolerant and impervious to reason and common sense. Overshadowed by greed, it promotes disunity through the promotion of bigotry, sophistry, and apologetics. Organized religion has become the number one source of human conflict on the planet and hence a useful political tool for mind control.

Theosophy, being the synthesis of all the thought systems, lays before us the most profound hypotheses that provide the missing pieces that help us unravel the path to our divinity through the labyrinth of myths, folklore, and historical tale-tellers. The path of spirituality is a path that demands a functional participation of all the thought systems and the point at which they all meet.

I conclude with a quote from *The Secret Doctrine*: “Humanity is the child of cyclic Destiny, and not one of its Units can escape its unconscious mission, or get rid of the burden of its cooperative work with Nature.” ✧

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, “Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?” Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God.

Nelson Mandela
1994 Inaugural Speech

Theosophical Work around the World

Adyar Theosophical Academy —
Two blissful years learning together



Snapshot of an online session. Students come dressed as their favourite characters ahead of Halloween



A student works alongside her classmates on the screen to build a Hotel for Bugs



An LKG student tries a new painting technique



Holding up a painting of the Solar System, created as part of the “Into Space” exploratory project

Connecting with Nature through virtual classrooms



A student harvests groundnuts



An “under the sea” diorama by our pre-KG student



A student's rendition of a Tepee against a starlit sky



Nature Journaling, a weekly session of expression and creativity

Theosophical Work around the World

Two Years of ATA: Exploring the New Frontier in Schooling

The Director of the Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA), Mrs Sonal Murali, reports that on 24 June 2021, ATA celebrated its second anniversary. International President Tim Boyd joined the 3rd and 4th graders for an online session as part of a modest celebration. We were also joined online by the President of theosophical colleges in the Philippines, Vic Hao Chin, Jr., international officers Nancy Secrest and Marja Artamaa, General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society (TS) Pradeep Gohil, and the TS Adyar campus General Manager K. Jaikumar. Since we could not have all of our 130 students in a session, a video was put together giving a glimpse of what the two blissful years of learning and creating together were like, and how strong bonds were formed, what brought smiles to our faces, and joy to our hearts.

In its second year, ATA actively embodied its motto: “Learning through Transformation”, especially in the way it embraced the unforeseen challenge posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Classrooms went from being airy spaces to windows on a computer screen. While different in many ways from year one, there is much that we learned to celebrate as a community. Our online sessions retain the school’s joyous spirit — the sounds that emanate are quite like those found in a typical school setting. Children are buzzing with curiosity.

There is music, stories, and friendly chatter. What is more, this unique time continues to provide us all an opportunity to create new bonds and explore fresh ways of communicating.

The school is keenly aware of the pressures of the pandemic on the family unit. The duration of sessions and the curation of content to disperse syllabi were designed accordingly. Additionally, our teachers engage in regular workshops to update their repository of skills and tools for the new and shifting scenario. The focus is on providing our students an outlet for exploration and learning while giving them the comfort and joy of peer interaction. With these factors in place, our teachers have opted for an organic approach to schooling. Seamless transitions between various components, be it math, language, or nutrition, is done through music, stories, games, crafts, project work, and timely breaks.

Space was explored through videos, art, and stories, apart from the introductory session. An exploration of shapes and dimensions was expanded into an aid to create poetry. Meanwhile, art sessions gave life to these shapes by getting our students to try their hand at different styles of art. Scientific temperament and curiosity were steadily encouraged by providing a welcome space for questions on divergent topics. ATA is focused on continuing to make schooling and friendship accessible and the highlight of each week. ✧

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† Presidential Agency

▲ Lodge attached to Adyar

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