

# On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

## What is Our Aim?

People are apt to forget the core teachings of the Theosophical Society, and of Theosophical work, after more than one hundred and thirty years which have passed since the Society was founded. Many things have happened in the Society, and all around the world, during this fairly long period. Therefore, a number of members are not conscious of the central purpose of the Society, and are completely ignorant of the Society's aims and its support from the inner worlds. As Dr I. K. Taimni says in his book *Principles of Theosophical Work* 'The Work of the Theosophical Society can be organized only by the large majority of its members scattered throughout the world who understand clearly the aims of the Society and the general principles which should guide them in planning and carrying out this work.'

The aims of the Society are lofty, and not easily understood by persons engaged in general social work. Therefore, there are at present a considerable number of members who do not understand what the Society stands for, and what it really intends as a remedy for the world's ills. They think that they must do something to help, and engage themselves in doing

some work of a philanthropic nature, or there are those who feel that their only work is to understand our general intention of improving human life. This is all very good up to a point, and what is meant for members who do not understand much; but there has always to be at the heart of the Society people who know it has a deeper purpose.

Quoting again from Dr Taimni, who has some valuable points to make: 'No one who observes even casually the works of Nature can reasonably doubt that there is some kind of Intelligence at work behind the natural phenomena.' Science today has advanced very much from what it was when Dr Taimni wrote the book. People like Paul Davies and Conran-Smith, who are among the pioneer scientists of today, may not approve or believe that there is a Plan. But whether they approve of the way it is phrased in statements or not, in Nature itself it can be seen that advances have been made towards greater intelligence, beauty and unity in all of life. Each unit in this great scheme, which we call the Plan, has a part to play. Every unit is concerned with its own task, as are the units of which the human body is composed, but together they work out what the whole is intended for. The plan

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of the cosmos is so stupendous that nobody can understand it in the present condition, but intelligent human beings realize that there is a great purpose which is fulfilled by this Plan. They can see something of it as they progress.

The Theosophical Society seeks to communicate to people that there is this mighty work which is being done. It is not being done by human beings who believe that they are at the top and nothing further beyond them can be found. In fact, all old philosophies and myths indicate that there is a vast life around us, and that there are many aspects to the fulfilling of the divine objects, which we may easily ignore as most human beings do. There are hierarchies of various realms, some of which have been called angels, devas, etc., and all have a work to do in the vast process. We who are on this plane understand very little, but can have a concept that there is a purpose, a plan, a glory, of which we do not know much.

Dr Taimni says that there are at least some functions which we can note. As humanity we have to understand a little bit of the fact that the journey does not stop here; it proceeds far beyond. In fact *Light on the Path* refers to it in mystic terms:

When the final secret of this great lesson is told, in it is opened the mystery of the new way — a path which leads out of all experience, and which is utterly beyond human perception or imagination.

To come to this we must learn some guiding principles, for instance

Brotherhood, which is a very important element in learning to understand the whole process, and also a desire to cooperate with this great task which is being carried out, and not merely read or talk about it.

So the Society is not merely for study, and propagation of certain ideals of brotherhood. Those who have this ideal can be useful, but only that will make the Society into an academic body or serviceable Society, and not a spiritual organization. If a true concept of the Society's work does not exist, and if we do not realize the possibility of going ahead, the Society will become very ordinary — perhaps a good and well-thought-of organization, but not an instrument of the noble and all-embracing nature that it is meant to be.

## The Future

Most people, in the present day, are merely occupied in looking after the physical body, although some are finding greater attraction in the things of the mind, and still fewer are concerned with the real purpose of life — which is what the future really is. But all are going into the future, whether they are aware of it or not; only the future is 'dead' slow in coming to those who are really not aware of what must take place in everyone's life.

What does the future mean when people do not even ask the question — asking only for immediate things. They are concerned with how to get more food, better food, and all the little things which make physical life livable or more livable.

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That is all they can manage — the minimum — before their energy is exhausted. Unfortunately, there are millions in the world who are in this condition, merely struggling to keep alive. The other category of people are going mentally far. Their minds are not confined, they are speculating on far-away facts, and drawing conclusions which earthy minds do not touch. Yet they miss the depth.

The purpose of life becomes clearer only for those who are not too much caught up in the physical. Purpose has naturally something to do with the physical. But looking at Nature, at the inherent features and movements hidden below the surface, some sufis and saints began to know something of the real 'future.' The far-off event comes closer as sight expands. They are conscious of the divine presence more often and ordinary-looking things begin to shine with divine radiance.

The Theosophist who knows something of the truth — being thus different from the member of the Theosophical Society who may engage himself or herself in ordinary 'good' ways — is one whose very presence has an influence. This influence and power comes from 'living and realizing these truths' in one's life.

Such Theosophists are few; but they

can do a great deal, and we can all learn to become Theosophists. It is amazing how much can be done in one life if the mind is firm, but when it wavers between doing what will be beneficial as one works at it, and the temptation to live as the world does, nothing much happens. But when the mind is clear, even in difficult circumstances it continues on the right path.

It is a fact that the large majority of people in the world do not take note of what they know to be right from the higher point of view, but the Theosophist must be ready to suffer some inconvenience, because he knows it will not be for a long time. What happens inwardly, morally, is much more important than what takes place from the worldly point of view.

It is important that we know the direction in which we have to travel — this being nothing less than the Supremely Divine. If we travel in every direction according to our physical circumstances, we will be lost. So we must consciously decide which way to go. If we go in the wrong way, we will be a long time searching and struggling. The Theosophical Society exists in order to prepare the mind to find the way and to show which direction the people who are clear should take. ✧

#### OFFICIAL NOTICE

**Dr C. V. Agarwal was appointed as International Secretary of the Theosophical Society from 2 March 2009, in the place of Mr Keith Fisher who has returned to Australia.**

## *Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom*

BUT enough of the past. Let the encouragement we draw from a survey of the results accomplished in the year that has fled serve to spur us on to greater efforts and more strenuous exertions. Let it make all feel that there is now a power behind the Society which will give us the strength we need, which will enable us to move the world, if we will but UNITE and WORK as one mind, one heart. The Masters require only that each shall do his best, and, above all, that each shall strive in reality to feel himself one with his fellow-workers. It is not a dull agreement on intellectual questions, or an impossible unanimity as to all details of work, that is needed; but a true, hearty, earnest devotion to our cause which will lead each to help his brother to the utmost of his power to work for that cause, whether or not we agree as to the exact method of carrying on that work. The only man who is absolutely wrong in his method is the one who does nothing; each can and should cooperate with all and all with each in a large-hearted spirit of comradeship to forward the work of bringing Theosophy home to every man and woman in the country.

H. P. Blavatsky

*Message to the American Convention* (1890)

# Action and Reaction

COLIN PRICE

**A**CTION without attachment is one of three options, the others being: inaction, and action with attachment. In *The Voice of the Silence* we learn that inaction in a deed of mercy is as action in a deadly sin. How often in life people turn away from doing a good deed because they fear the attachment and commitment it may involve. How much easier in life it is to take the easier option and do nothing in the hope that someone else will do it instead of us. Indeed our Karma may be composed more of the things we have not done, of the opportunities we have failed to grasp which came our way rather than of the deliberately wrong things we have done. A hallmark of the compassionate, civilized society is the extent to which the strong are prepared to come to the aid of the weak, the disadvantaged and the needy. Surely the message to all who aspire to tread the path of the Aspirant is that inaction when an opportunity arises in life to help someone in need is not an option, because action is a duty.

When action is taken, the would-be helper is faced with a number of issues. Should he permit himself to become

emotionally attached? If he is driven to act because of feelings of love and compassion, how can he remain aloof and dispassionate? Or should he set a limit to his involvement, for fear that the recipient should become dependent on him? Does this mean that there is a limit to love and compassion? In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan set no limit. Indeed we are told that having helped the wounded traveller all he could, he then promised to pay for any further aid which might be required. It appears he sought nothing in return. His action had been performed without personal attachment or any expectation of a reward. There could be only good karmic consequences from a deed performed with such a selfless attitude of mind.

Then there is the concept of going the second mile and the denial of self. Here we can see the subtlety of the way the law of Karma operates in the underlying processes of our lives. Although the good Samaritan sought no reward, by his action, he enhanced, reinforced and confirmed his compassionate nature. If faced with a similar situation again, he

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would be even more likely to respond in the same way. We are creatures of habit. Each time we choose to act in a certain way we increase the probability that when similar circumstances arise we will respond in the way we did previously. (This is how we become addicted in all sorts of ways.)

The summation of this process is what we call in Theosophy *ever-becoming*. Every decision we make in life — to act or not to act, with or without attachment, makes us what we are. There is certainly no possibility of detachment from the Karmic consequences of all this. This world, says HPB, is a world of causes, the next is the world of effects. In *Isis Unveiled* (I.317), she says:

physical death, or the death of the body, was a provision of the divine economy for the benefit of man, a provision by means of which he attained the higher ends of his being. But there is another death which is the interruption of the divine order and the destruction of every human element in man's nature, and every possibility of human happiness. This is the spiritual death, which takes place before the dissolution of the body. 'There may be a vast development of man's natural mind without that development being accompanied by a particle of love of God, or of unselfish love of man.' When one falls into a love of self and love of the world with all its pleasures, losing the divine love of God and of the neighbour, he falls from life to death. The higher principles which constitute the essential elements of his

humanity perish, and he lives only on the natural plane of his faculties. Physically he exists, spiritually he is dead.

HPB raises the importance of our motive in acting; is it at a level that threatens spiritual life or develops spiritual lives? *The Voice of the Silence* draws a distinction between the lower personal self and the higher Self, which is associated with our individuality. This lack of awareness of what we are, who we are and where we come from, may help to explain why so many people seem to live their lives with no concern for their spiritual well-being.

HPB tries to explain our origin and nature in *Isis Unveiled* (II.153):

Each immortal spirit that sheds its radiance upon a human being is a god — the Microcosmos of the Macrocosmos, part and parcel of the unknown God, the First Cause of which it is a direct emanation. It is possessed of all the attributes of its parent source . . . but yet is unable to fully manifest them while in the body, during which time they are obscured, veiled, limited by the capabilities of physical nature . . .

In the creation story of Genesis, God forms man from the dust of the earth and breathes into him the breath of life. While this expresses the basic duality of spirit and matter it leaves us no wiser as to the origin of the dust and the breath. HPB makes a second attempt to answer these questions more deeply in *The Secret Doctrine* (vol. I), where she introduces the

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idea of Ākāśa. It is described as the primordial root substance, the subtle supersensuous essence which pervades all space, i.e., three-dimensional space and also occult or dimensionless space, the latter being the realm of the noumenon or subjective planes. This provides the explanation for our origin in primordial matter and primordial consciousness, the divine spark. The spirit uses the process of gradual densification downwards through the cosmic planes to gain greater expression in matter. It can be compared to the formation of a cloud in a previously cloudless sky. As the atmosphere cools it can hold less water and at dew point the excess water condenses forming minute droplets which form into clouds. If the process continues the clouds become so dense that these droplets join together to form rain which may turn to hail or snow at low temperature. We are told that every snowflake is different in its crystal pattern. Likewise every human being is a different expression of the divine life. In fact all life could be described as a precipitation of Ākāśa into a multitude of unique forms.

It would seem from this that the significance of attachment to our actions is dependent upon the part of our make-up from which the desire for action emanates. This whole matter is developed further by HPB in *The Key to Theosophy* where she describes how man has seven principles with different characteristics and functions, the first being the physical body and the seventh the immortal spirit to which we have just referred and which is the origin of Ākāśa.

Obviously our actions are performed by our physical bodies, but they may be initiated by whichever one of these principles is appropriate in a particular case. The needs of the physical body which are discerned by the five senses are an obvious example of attachment at the physical level. However, the fourth principle, *kāma*, which relates to our emotional nature, is more relevant to our theme. Most of us have a lot of trouble with it as we go through life. When our consciousness is focused in this principle we can be tricked into actions because of our emotions which often ignore the voice of reason and which are not subjected to our powers of discrimination. We commonly say that such actions do not heed the promptings of conscience. This principle is linked with the lower part of the fifth principle, and is referred to as *kāma-manas*, which together with the other three lower principles are what HPB refers to as the personality or self.

The term upper or higher mind is used to describe that other part of our fifth principle which is associated with our higher consciousness. It is the seat of our will and our conscience, and combined with our two highest, the sixth and seventh principles, constitutes our individuality, our egoic nature and our Higher Self which can reincarnate and possess immortality. Remarkably, we can be aware of our consciousness simultaneously in our personality, the lower self and in our individuality, the Higher Self. It is an awareness of this duality which enables us to control our own thoughts at will

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providing we have developed the necessary self-control. The discovery of this fact about ourselves provides us with the intellectual tools which we need to achieve action without selfish personal attachment. St Paul was well aware of this duality when he wrote ‘The good that I would do I do not and that which I would not, that I do.’

*The Voice of the Silence* tells us of the parameters of the life which must be lived for the Higher Self to be able to gain the mastery over the lower self. We are told that it is ‘a path steep and thorny beset with perils on every side’. There is a need to maintain a constant awareness of this basic duality of our human consciousness so that our will retains the ability to say ‘No’ to our inherent tendency towards the selfishness where all our actions have an attachment to self-interest. The failure of our Higher Self to make this effort at mastery and control in a regular habit forming way can cause us to be prone to addictions of all kinds. Indeed attachment can be examined in the form of three different types of addiction.

### 1) Addiction to thought-forms

Many of these are deeply rooted because they were implanted in our minds during childhood. By the time we reach the age of discrimination, we lack the desire and will and hence the motivation to step aside from them and consider new ideas. Those of us who have managed to dislodge old beliefs and ideas, many of which we may have held for much of our lives, in order to embrace Theosophy, can

testify to the reality and strength of these addictions. We may like the safety of the status quo, of what we are familiar and comfortable with, and of what is acceptable to our friends and family, etc. How can we act without attachment if we are limited and controlled by inadequate and inferior patterns of thoughts or paradigms?

In Mahatma Letter No. 49 we read:

The lower world of effects is the sphere of such distorted Thoughts; of the most sensuous conceptions, and pictures; of anthropomorphic deities, the out creations of their creators, the sensual human minds of people who have never outgrown their *brutehood* on earth. Remembering thoughts are things — they have tenacity, coherence and life — they are real entities — and the rest will become plain.

### 2) Attachment to people

Sometimes people refrain from right action because they have relationships to which they give priority. We all know that the principle of a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood is based on the concept of equality regardless of race, creed, gender, caste or colour. The challenge to act without prejudice or attachment can be particularly strong in all sorts of situations where all or some of these things become an issue. How often are jobs not awarded to candidates entirely on merit because these things are taken into account. It is said that nepotism and favouritism corrupted the governance of the Roman Empire and was ultimately responsible for its downfall.



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### 3) Attachment to property

The desire for possessions of every kind drives people to steal and even kill, to take from others with no regard to ownership. Ambition, avariciousness, greed and jealousy are some of the worst examples of this type of attachment and the actions generated by it. How many people have ruined their lives by sacrificing everything to the pursuit of material wealth! For such people action without attachment is a virtual impossibility.

Action without attachment is an ideal to be striven for as we go through life. It demands the highest self-discipline and the acceptance of the principles of altruism and unselfishness as a way of life. Acts of compassion and loving kindness performed by those who have acquired the ability to act without attachment to their own personal self-interest are the source of hope and strength for all mankind. They move the human race forward in its spiritual evolution and clear the path for all those who seek enlightenment. ✧

. . . Harmony, from its stainlessness, luminous and healthy, bindeth by the attachment to bliss and the attachment to wisdom, O sinless one.

Motion, the passion-nature, know thou, is the source of attachment and thirst for life, O Kaunteya, that bindeth the dweller in the body by the attachment to action.

But Inertia, know thou, born of unwisdom, is the deluder of all dwellers in the body; that bindeth by heedlessness, indolence and sloth, O Bhārata.

Harmony attacheth to bliss, Motion to action, O Bhārata. Inertia, verily, having shrouded wisdom, attacheth on the contrary to heedlessness.

*Bhagavadgītā*, XIV.6–9

# The Moral Order of the Universe

HUGH DIXON

THE student of Theosophy is reminded that intellectual knowledge can illumine and expand the mind; however, it is only through interior realization that we can be transformed; the proverbial teacher being *experience*. Experience teaches us that in living life there are rules of behaviour to follow; rules by which we discipline and control the ‘horse we ride’. These systems of behaviour — the morals and ethics acceptable to the society in which we live — are perhaps more importantly acceptable to our *conscience*. What does Theosophical literature say about conscience?

In the *Collected Writings* H. P. Blavatsky tells us that the impressions projected into the physical person by the Ego constitute what we call ‘conscience’. The enquiring student may then ask: what is this term ‘Ego’? So, turning to the Theosophical Glossary he or she finds a definition: It is a Latin word meaning *Self*; the consciousness in man ‘*I am I*’ — or the feeling of ‘*I-am-ship*’. Esoteric philosophy teaches the existence of two Egos in man, the mortal or *personal*, and the Higher, the Divine and Impersonal, calling the [mortal personal one], *personality* and the [immortal Ego], *individuality*.

In proportion as the personality unites itself to its higher consciousness, or Ego, does the action of the Ego upon the life of the mortal man become more marked. It is the higher *manas* [or Higher Mind] illuminated by *buddhi*, the immortal man, which passes from one incarnation to another.<sup>1</sup>

*Buddhi* is defined as Universal Soul or Mind; the spiritual Soul in man; the sixth principle and the vehicle of *ātmā*. And, thus, the beginner student of Theosophy is confronted with one new term after another, arriving now at the word *Ātmā*. Here, the explanations diffuse into metaphor as attempts are made to define the more ‘rarified height’ of our sevenfold nature, *Ātmā* (or *Ātman*), the so-called Seventh Principle — with such expressions as: the emanating spark from the uncreated Ray; one of the beams of the Universal Sun; the One Reality linked with Paramātmā by the Thread of Radiance; the universally diffused divine principle; the Breath of the first principle of the Great Mother; the root that never dies; a ray of the One eternal Flame; and, the irradiating Spirit of every creature of the human family.<sup>2</sup>

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HPB indicates that ‘the eternal and universal essence which pervades everything and everywhere and which in man is the divine essence [Ātman], which is his moral guide, is recognized in the instincts of conscience, makes him aspire to immortality and leads him to it.’<sup>3</sup>

We are advised that ‘no one else’s opinion should be considered superior to the voice of one’s own conscience. Let that conscience, therefore, developed to its highest degree, guide us in all the ordinary acts of life. As to the conduct of our inner life, let us concentrate our entire attention on the ideal we have set ourselves, and look *beyond*, without paying the slightest attention to the mud upon our feet. . . . Those who are capable of making this effort are the true Theosophists; all others are but members, more or less indifferent, and very often useless,’ says HPB.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, we may say that conscience is the benchmark by which we can measure and judge not only our physical actions, but, also, our feelings and thoughts. It is very important to remember that thought can be acceptable or not acceptable when measured against conscience.

### Dharma

To explain conscience is one thing but to elucidate dharma, a word so full of meaning, is quite another thing.

Described as the basis of human morality and ethics, dharma can also be thought of as the ‘moral order of the universe’.<sup>5</sup> It is said to be the foundation of all religion. Literally, it means holding,

carrying, sustaining, maintaining, preserving, but dharma also includes a number of other meanings, such as: righteousness, duty, justice, order, law, truth, virtue, innate nature or condition, sacrifice.

Often dharma is translated solely as ‘duty’. HPB remarks that

‘Duty’ is an incorrect and unhappy expression . . . *Duty* is that which a person is bound by any natural, moral, or legal obligation to do or *refrain* from doing and cannot be applied but to intelligent and reasoning beings. Fire *will* burn and cannot ‘refrain’ from doing it.

The highest, the best, the most beneficial . . . and omnipresent Religion or *dharma* of a rational being . . . is not only to know, but also to experience . . . personally, i.e., to feel this . . . unconscious immateriality, or Paramātmā — the Infinity and Eternity of Existence and Happiness.

This state of unconscious immateriality is the *true* or eternal state of every being, for, saving it, there can be found no other true existence; therefore, every rational being’s *dharma* or natural duty and Religion is first to acquire the knowledge of its real Self, and then by the annihilation of its *worldly* self, to experience the infinity of Happiness prevalent in its unconscious Immateriality.<sup>6</sup>

### The Question of Morality

Annie Besant put forward a number of interesting ideas on the subject of dharma in three lectures she gave in Varanasi in

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1898 which comprise the main thrust of this article. After first relating the story of Bhishma, the mightiest incarnation of duty, she continued with the following:

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke on the question of the difficulty of action. He said: 'What is action, what inaction? Even the wise are hereby perplexed. It is needful to discriminate action, to discriminate unlawful action, to discriminate inaction; mysterious is the path of action.'<sup>7</sup>

Annie Besant expanded these last words by saying:

mysterious, because morality is *not*, as the simple-minded think, one and the same for all; because it varies with the dharma of the individual. What is right for one, is wrong for another. . . . Morality is an individual thing, and it depends upon the dharma of the man who is acting, and not upon what is sometimes called 'absolute right and wrong'.

There is nothing absolute in a conditioned universe. And right and wrong are relative, and must be judged in relation to the individual and his duties. Thus the greatest of all Teachers said . . . 'Better one's own dharma, though destitute of merit, than the dharma of another, well discharged. Better death in the discharge of one's own dharma; the dharma of another is full of danger.'<sup>8</sup>

The Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa repeated the same thought again at the end of that immortal discourse, but changed in such a way as to throw fresh light on the subject. He said:

Better is one's own dharma, though destitute of merits, than the well executed dharma of another. He who doeth the karma laid down by his own nature incurreth not sin.<sup>9</sup>

Notice how the two words dharma and karma are interchanged. Herein lies the key to the understanding of dharma.

First, there is a partial definition of Dharma: The first half is that dharma is the inner nature, which has reached a certain stage of development and unfolding in each man or woman. It is this inner nature which moulds the outer life, which is expressed by thoughts, words, and actions; the inner nature which is born into the environment suited for its future growth. The first idea to grasp is that dharma is not an outer thing, like the law, or righteousness, or religion, or justice. *It is the law of the unfolding life.*

Annie Besant explained that in trying to trace out this difficult and abstruse subject, she would treat it under three main divisions, which she proceeded to do in three lectures on Differences, Evolution and Right and Wrong.

Some time was then spent in explaining that variety is the keynote of the universe as unity is the note of the Unmanifest, of the Unconditioned. So, diversity is the note of the manifested and conditioned, the result of the will to become many. No limited form may fully express the Divine. The perfection of the Universe is the perfection in variety, and in the harmony of interrelated parts.

DIFFERENCES: Having reached that

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conception, we may begin to see that the Universe can only gain perfection by each part performing its own function, and developing completely its own share of life. Dharma may now be defined as the 'inner nature of a thing at any given stage of evolution, *and* the law of the next stage of its unfolding'. The nature itself marks out the point in evolution it has reached; then comes what it must do in order to evolve further along its road. Take those two thoughts together, and then you will understand why perfection must be reached by following one's own dharma.

You might judge the progress of a man by his willingness to work with Nature and to submit to the law. That is why dharma is spoken of as law, and sometimes as duty; for both these ideas grow out of the root-thought that it is the inner nature at a given stage of evolution *and* the law of the next stage of its development. This explains why morality is relative, why duty must differ for every soul, according to the stage of its evolution.

'In a conditioned universe, absolute right and wrong are not to be found, but only relative rights and wrongs. The absolute is in *Ísvara* alone, where it will for ever be found.'<sup>10</sup> Differences are thus necessary for our conditioned consciousness. Differences and diversities are the things which make the growth of consciousness possible. The unconditioned consciousness is beyond our thinking. We can only think within the limits of the separated and the conditioned.

We will venture to iterate the definition

of dharma thus far adopted: 'That it means the inner nature marked by the stage of evolution, plus the law of growth for the next stage of evolution.'<sup>11</sup>

EVOLUTION: To examine dharma from the evolutionary point of view 'we start with the principle that all is from and in God. Nothing in the universe is excluded from him. "The seed of all beings", says *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, speaking as the supreme *Ísvara*, "that am I, O Arjuna! nor is there anything, moving or unmoving, that may exist bereft of Me."<sup>12</sup>

This life which comes from *Ísvara* contains everything in potency, but nothing at first in manifestation. It contains everything in seed or germ, everything in possibility, and from that seed is to evolve a life, stage by stage, rising higher and higher, until at last a centre of consciousness is formed capable of expanding to the consciousness of *Ísvara*, while remaining as a centre still, with the power to come forth as a new Logos, or *Ísvara*, for the production of a new universe. These germs of life involved in matter, these myriad seeds, or to use the Upanishadic phrase, these numberless sparks, all come from the one Flame which is the supreme Brahman.<sup>13</sup> The outpouring life was involved in matter, in order to bring the seed into the matter-surrounded conditions which should make evolution possible.

In the animal and in the young human soul it is the gratification of desires that is the law of evolution. One must realize that at that stage there is nothing that can be called morality. There is no distinction

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between right and wrong. When this commencing centre of self-consciousness is seeking to gratify desires, then alone it grows. In this lowest stage, of the early human, or the higher animal, the dharma is imposed on him. There is no choice. The inner nature, marked by the development of desire, demands gratification. The law of growth is the satisfaction of these desires. The dharma of the savage man is the gratification of every desire, and you find in him no consciousness of right or wrong, not the faintest dawning notion that the gratification of desires is forbidden by some higher law.

How can discrimination grow between right and wrong, unless there is the experience of both good and evil?

A universe can never come into existence except by the pairs of opposites, and these at one stage appear in the consciousness as good and bad. You cannot know the good that is harmony with the law without knowing the bad that is discord with the law. 'Man cannot become conscious of the difference between them unless he has experience of both.'

Now we come to a change . . .<sup>14</sup>

It would take a very long time for this dawning intelligence to put innumerable experiences together and deduce from them the idea that this thing is right, and that is wrong, so there come to him, from past worlds, Intelligences more highly evolved than his own, Great Teachers who come to help on his evolution, to train his growth, to tell him of a law that will bring about his more rapid evolution.

Instead of man being left to the slow teaching of experience, revelation from the mouth of a Teacher quickens evolution. Announcement of the law that misery follows on that which the law forbids, and happiness on that which the law commands, stimulates the dawning intelligence. Disregarding the law, the penalty follows — suffering. Memory of a command proved by experience make an impression on the consciousness far more quickly and more strongly than does experience alone without revealed law. By this declaration of what the learned may call the fundamental principles of morality, namely, that certain classes of actions retard evolution and other classes of action quicken evolution — by this declaration, intelligence is immensely stimulated.

FOUR SUCCESSIVE STEPS IN LATER HUMAN GROWTH: The orderly evolution that follows the earlier stages is the law of four successive steps in later human growth.

It is found in every nation at a certain stage of evolution, but was proclaimed in ancient India as the definite law of evolving life, as the sequential order of the growth of a soul, as the underlying principle by which dharma may be understood and followed. Dharma, as pointed out, includes two things — the inner nature at the point it has reached, and the law of its growth for the next stage.<sup>15</sup>

The first dharma is that of *service*. No matter in what land the souls may be born, when they have passed through the earlier stages, then their inner nature demands the discipline of service. The law of growth

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for that stage is obedience, devotion, fidelity. Obedience because the judgement is not developed. He whose dharma is service has to blindly obey the one to whom he renders service.

Through this discipline he will be able to learn. The example given to illustrate this forcibly is that of a private soldier under the command of his captain. If every private soldier were to use his judgement and question the orders that came from the general, what would become of the army? If a servant shows fidelity and obedience, the dharma is perfectly performed. Faults should not be punished, but should be gently pointed out by the master, for by so doing he is training the younger soul; for a 'child' soul should be gently led along the path, and its growth should not be stunted by harsh treatment.<sup>16</sup>

The next stage is by taking up some occupation where it is a merit to acquire wealth. For the dharma of the merchant or farmer, the so-called providers, all over the world, is to evolve certain definite faculties, e.g., the faculties of justice, fair payment in fair exchange, acuteness of insight, frugality, absence of waste and extravagance, the payment of just wages, and so on. These are the characteristics which fit the person for higher growth.

The third stage, that of rulers and warriors, of battles and struggles, is where the inner nature is combative, aggressive, quarrelsome, standing on its own ground and ready to protect everyone in the enjoyment of what is right. Courage, fearlessness, splendid generosity, throwing away life in the defence of the weak and

in the discharging of one's duties — that is the dharma of this stage. You cannot get strength without courage, and firmness and courage cannot be got without the facing of danger, and the readiness to throw away life when duty demands the sacrifice. By throwing away the bodily life, the soul gains the power of self-sacrifice, learns endurance, fortitude, courage, resource, devotion to an ideal, loyalty to a cause. Paying with the body gladly as the price for these, the immortal soul rises triumphant and prepares for a nobler life.<sup>17</sup>

The dharma of the fourth and last stage is to teach. But the soul must have assimilated all lower experiences before it can teach. The law of growth at this stage is knowledge, piety, forgiveness, and, being the friend of every creature. How the dharma is changed! But the soul could not be the friend of every creature if it had not learned to throw life away when duty called.

What is the law of growth now? He must never take offence. He must never lose self-control. He must never be hasty. He must always be gentle: otherwise he falls from his dharma. He must be all purity. He must never lead an evil life. He must detach himself from worldly things, if they have a hold on him. 'Do I hold up an impossible standard?' says Annie Besant. 'I but speak the law as the Great Ones have spoken it, and I but feebly re-echo their words.'<sup>18</sup>

She goes on to say:

Place your own ideal as high as you can set it. But do not impose your ideal upon

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your brother, the law of whose growth may be entirely different from yours. . . . Learn that tolerance which is repelled by none, however sinful, which sees in every man a divinity working, and stands beside him to help him. Instead of standing off on some high peak of spirituality and preaching a doctrine of self-sacrifice which is utterly beyond his comprehension, in teaching his young soul, use his higher selfishness to destroy the lower. Do not tell the peasant that when he is not industrious he is falling from the ideal; but tell that man: 'There is your wife; you love that woman; she is starving. Set to work and feed her.' By that . . . you do more to raise that man than if you preach to him about Brahman, the unconditioned and unmanifest. Learn what dharma means, and you will be of service to the world.<sup>19</sup>

Speaking in 1898, Annie Besant said: there are three recognized schools of morality existing among Western people. By understanding them we can learn to avoid their limitations and to take from them whatever good they may have to offer.<sup>20</sup>

One school says that revelation from God is the basis of morality. As there are many religions in the world and each religion regards its own revelation as supreme, how can the student decide which revelation is based on supreme authority? Besides, it is argued that many precepts once useful to a nation in its infancy are no longer useful today.

Another school of morality has arisen, which bases morality on intuition, which

says that God speaks to every person through the voice of conscience; conscience is the final arbiter. But if your conscience differs from that of another, then who may decide between one conscience and another, between the conscience of the ignorant rustic and the conscience of an illumined mystic? Conscience is the voice of the inner person and this so-called intuition is the result of countless incarnations, the quality of the conscience depending on the number of incarnations. So, can such intuition be taken as a sufficient guide in morality?

The third school of morality is that of utilitarianism, the maxim of which is: 'that is *right* which conduces to the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. The illuminated intelligence must surely reject such a limitation. All humanity has the *one* root. This theory of utilitarianism does not recognize the irrefutable fundamental unity of the human race. You cannot break this up by giving happiness to the majority only, disregarding the minority. Consequently this maxim fails as a basis of morality.

The idea of dharma gives us the thought of an inner nature unfolding itself in further growth, however low, or however high the stage of evolution occupied by the individual may be. The world, as a whole, is evolving from the imperfect to the perfect, from the germ to the divine human, stage by stage, in every grade of manifested life. *That* evolution is by the divine will — the guiding spirit of the whole. Does not that very statement hint at a law? *That* is right, which works



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with the divine purpose in the evolution of the universe and forwards that evolution from the imperfect to the perfect. *That* is wrong which delays or frustrates that divine purpose.<sup>21</sup>

There is yet a higher note: there is a supreme goal, and on the last steps on the path to it, dharma can no longer guide us. The great Teacher, Śri Kṛṣṇa speaking his final instruction in the *Bhagavadgītā* says:

Listen thou again to my supreme word, most secret of all; beloved art thou of Me, and steadfast of heart, therefore will I speak for thy benefit. . . . Abandoning all dharma-s, come unto me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins.<sup>22</sup>

So Annie Besant's last words in that speech of years ago were addressed to the souls who lead a life of supreme longing

to sacrifice themselves to Lord Śri Kṛṣṇa:

Then the end of dharma is reached. Then the man desires no longer anything save the Lord. When the soul has reached that stage of evolution, where it asks nothing of the world, but gives itself wholly to God, when it has outgrown all the promptings of desire, when the heart has gained freedom by love, when the whole being throws itself forward at the feet of the Lord, they are no longer for us — then we abandon all dharma-s; no longer for us the law of growth, that balancing of duty, no longer for us that scrutiny of conduct.

We have given ourselves to the Lord. There is nothing left in us that is not divine. . . . We are no longer a separated self . . . and dharma has no longer any claim on us.<sup>23</sup> ✧

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**The true saint goes in and out amongst the people and eats and sleeps with them and buys and sells in the market and marries and takes part in social intercourse, and never forgets God for a single moment.**

Abu Sa'id ibn Abi 'l-Khayr

# The Ethics of Compassion

WIES KUIPER

THE two words in the title appear to be an obvious combination, as if compassion is always good and ethical, but is this actually the case?

Compassion usually emerges — as an emotional reaction — in man's astral or lower mental bodies and is usually followed by action, even though this action may only consist of putting an arm around someone's shoulder.

What makes compassion good — or not good — is the thought behind the action, or even the non-action taken in compassion. Even if no action results from compassion, it is still important to know where the compassion comes from, where it originates.

Let me give two examples, both rather well known: Two boys came home after a scouts' meeting. Their mother asks, 'Have you done your good deed yet today?' She probably had something in mind she wanted them to do. The boys answer, 'Yes, we helped an old lady cross the street.' Mother says, 'Oh well, that is not too difficult.' 'Oh yes, it was, Mother, because she did not want to cross the street!'

The other example is from the Bible:

'A man went out early in the morning

to hire labourers for his vineyard and agreed to pay them a penny a day. About the third hour he sent other labourers into his vineyard; and also in the sixth and ninth and eleventh hour, he did likewise. In the evening the lord of the vineyard gave them their pay beginning from the last unto the first; so every man received a penny. But when the first ones came, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." But he answered one of them, and said, "Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"' (Matt. 20:1–15)

You will agree with me that these two good acts are rather disputable. Now where do we find a good guideline to bring us to genuine compassion in order to lead an altruistic life? The best touchstone can probably be found in our own heart, and in the expression 'Do as you would be done by'.

The first condition mentioned in *At*

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*the Feet of the Master* is developing discrimination, which could apply to understanding compassion also. Examine yourself: where does the compassion you feel come from, and why the desire to be helpful? Does this originate in the ego, the mask personality, so that others can see what you are doing, as a result of which you get some kind of respect? Or are you doing an act to reap gratefulness, causing some sense of dependence in the person you have benefited? If you are doing it for yourself, in order to reap respect and gratefulness, is it then still a good deed or act? Does this action spring from pure, egoless compassion? These kinds of acts can seriously block the deeper notion of oneness, but provide you with a good feeling. They can thus lead to the desire to continue in that way. Maintaining that pleasant state of being 'good' can become a motivational anchor for the rest of your life. Gradually this becomes a subconscious pattern. Time and again you must use 'discrimination' to pinpoint this tendency, otherwise it controls your life and you keep on doing this sort of thing.

Another point is the feeling of pity. We all recognize the thought: how unpleasant for him, fortunately this did not happen to me! Who knows in the long term whether what is so unpleasant for that other person might not turn out to be a blessing? We are often too quick in our judgement, because we have no knowledge of the Plan which is the basis of our existence.

The permanent principle in man, in which he is one with all that lives, also

animals, plants and minerals, may instil in you a deeply felt need to bear a part of the karma. *This may lead to simply 'being there for one another', a sort of good behaviour which emanates from love.*

The second chapter of *At the Feet of the Master* is about desirelessness, and can be viewed in the sense that we should not desire gratitude, recognition or respect by doing good acts in the world. This is easier said than done, for people want to put you on a pedestal, and the only thing which can happen then is that you fall off!

Desirelessness, however, goes beyond that. We should reach a level in which the very thought of the desire for personal liberation or a 'higher place in heaven' does not occur to us.

Ultimately we may hope that this form of ethics leads to good behaviour. To this end, a number of very significant points of interest are suggested, such as:

1. Self-control as to the mind
2. Self-control in action
3. Tolerance
4. Cheerfulness
5. One-pointedness
6. Confidence

The first two have been touched upon above. Cheerfulness is very important — a cheerfulness which emanates from our deepest being and which ensures that we are no longer vulnerable. That is very liberating. It means knowing we can be a servant or an instrument in the Plan called evolution.

One-pointedness means that nothing can deter you from the way to the goal before you. You identify with that path,

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and follow it implicitly. This will only work when the three conditions mentioned above — self-control as to the mind, self-control in action and tolerance — are complied with. Each qualification has its place and its use, even if you may have outgrown that stage or are not yet ready for it. (It is especially hard to acknowledge the latter phase to oneself.)

The next point is confidence. We can have confidence in ourselves, in our higher bodies, in the Monad, the Divine within us. Once you have confidence in that, you will see the Divine in everything and everyone.

This brings us naturally to the next chapter in the little book, which is about Love. We are told that all the previous qualifications would not be sufficient without love. Love, however, is a difficult notion for us; it has to do with the creative powers which unfold when the highest power, the Monad, Ātmā wants to reveal itself in us so we may serve as an instrument of this Will.

He who is on the Path exists not for himself, but for others; he has forgotten himself, in order that he may serve them. He is as a pen in the hand of God, through which His thought may flow, and find for itself an expression down here, which

without a pen it could not have. Yet at the same time he is also a living plume of fire, raying out upon the world the Divine Love which fills his heart.

The wisdom which enables you to help, the will which directs the wisdom, the love which inspires the will — these are your qualifications. Will, Wisdom and Love are the three aspects of the Logos; and you, who wish to enrol yourselves to serve Him, must show forth these aspects in the world.

If we were all capable of having compassion in this way, then the question of ethics would not be there.

However, let us realize that we are all on our way to perfection, and are working from the stage in which we find ourselves. This training is necessary and we will make mistakes. Making mistakes comes with the learning process — even in the field of compassion, or perhaps especially in the field of compassion. As long as we are conscious of this, and are prepared to look at ourselves time and again, to develop both discrimination and desirelessness, and being tolerant towards ourselves and others, and also to develop perseverance in practising good behaviour, we will ultimately be able to base our actions on love. ✧

**Compassion is the Buddha nature of all beings.**

Mahāparinirvāna Sutra

# The Idea of a Personal God

DINESH SINGH

EVERY human being has a tendency to have a God of his own creation. He tries to embellish Him with the choicest attributes his fancy is capable of. Some of the qualities so attributed to God are supreme power, matchless beauty, benevolence, love, kindness, mercy, etc. There is an old saying that man creates God in the image of his father who is often seen as possessing all these qualities and it is not merely a coincidence that in many religions God is addressed as 'Father'.

If it is so, are we going to conclude that there is a multiplicity of gods, which goes against the basic tenets of every religion? How are we going to reconcile this common practice with the fundamental truths of religions which are one in their declaration that God is One and One only? The fact of the matter is that the God of all religions, whether *Brahma* of the Hindus, *Ahura Mazda* of the Zoroastrians, *Yehova* of Judaism, the Holy Trinity of Christianity, *Allah* of Islam or *Vahiguru* of Sikhism, is an abstract idea which the intelligence of the masses cannot grasp and hence it is apt to give a concrete shape or form to this abstract idea in order to hold on to it. So, howsoever

hard the religions of the world may try, the masses will continue to have their own conception of personal gods. This is the religion of the masses — one God with multiple forms.

One God with multiple forms seems to have been the truth of the most ancient religions and civilizations in the history of mankind. In the Vedic religion or religion of the early Aryans, we find traces of worship, adoration, and attempts at seeking the favours of multiple nature-gods. This practice of the early Aryans has been termed by some Western philosophers as polytheism, which amounts to taking a lop-sided view of the Vedic philosophy. Max Müller later tried to correct this view by calling this practice as Henotheism, which means elevating one god being worshipped to the level of the Supreme. The philosophical truth underlying this practice was that all these nature-gods were nothing but reflections of the One Absolute Reality in which the Vedic Aryan believed. We find confirmation of this assertion in the R̥gveda (I.164): *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti* (Reality is one; the wise say it variously).

The pantheon of ancient Greece is full

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of multiple gods which were personified and so is it the case with the pagan and Semitic religions before the advent of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abraham, the grand patriarch of all these religions, is credited with the establishment of monotheism but before him, polytheism was in vogue among all the people who later became followers of these religions. According to *Genesis Rabba*, a religious text of Judaism, Abraham's father, Terah, was both an idol manufacturer and worshipper. It is recounted in both traditional Jewish texts and the Qur'an how Abraham, after discovering the true God, destroyed his father's idols.

Before the advent of Prophet Mohammed, Kaaba, the most sacred site of Islam, contained hundreds of idols representing Arabian tribal gods and other religious figures including those of Jesus and Mary. At that time the Kaaba was in charge of the powerful Quraysh tribe in which Mohammed was born. He is said to have earned the enmity of his tribe by claiming the shrine for the new religion he preached. He was persecuted and harrassed, so much so that in AD 622 he migrated to Medina. In AD 630 he and his followers returned to Mecca as conquerors and destroyed all the idols in and around the shrine. This episode is narrated here just to show how strong was the practice of polytheism or worship of a personal God at that time.

Linked with the idea of a personal God is the concept of 'idolatry', a much-hated word in many religions, particularly the Semitic ones. Idolatry is usually defined

as worship of any cult image, idea or object, as opposed to the worship of a monotheistic God. All the religions of the world, except Buddhism, which is agnostic, and Jainism, which is atheistic, believe in the cardinal truth of one and only one God. Yet, as has been discussed above, the idea of God being abstract cannot be ordinarily grasped by the human intellect. Hence, forms come into play and along with them various symbols. History has witnessed man constantly trying to grasp the abstract through thought-forms, or symbols. Anything that helps man to form a concrete image of the abstract, is taken hold of and worshipped.

The holy name of God is supposed to be the most sacred in all theistic religions but is it possible to have a name without a form? Modern psychologists will testify that by the law of association of memory, name and form are inseparable. As soon as you utter a name, a form representing that name will emerge in your mind.

The Semitic religions have been the most vehement in their criticism of all sorts of idolatry — idols, images, forms and symbols. But a moot point arises here as to whether they have purged their own religions of all ritualistic forms and symbols. If bowing reverentially before an image or form makes one an infidel, how is it that a faithful Muslim does the same thing when he comes face to face with the Kaaba and competes with millions of others to kiss the Black Stone embedded on one of the walls of the shrine? The reason behind this innocuous practice is that despite great attempts by

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the religious leaders of the world to do away with all forms of rituals and symbols, these cannot be totally kept out. The masses simply change one symbol for another. So, a faithful Muslim should not call his Hindu brother names when he is eager to take a holy dip in the Ganga with the intention of washing off his sins because he, on his Hajj pilgrimage, seems to be consumed with the same desire when he draws a little water out of the 'Well of Zamzam'. Both these acts represent the same ritualistic symbolism.

Christianity appears to be a little soft so far as ritualistic symbolism and image worship are concerned. Though God and the Holy Spirit are supposed to be beyond the contemplation of the human intellect, images of Mary and Jesus (part of the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit) adorn the churches and the 'Cross' is supposed to be its most sacred symbol.

Even the non-theistic religions like Buddhism and Jainism are not free from the overpowering weight of rituals and symbols. The Lord Buddha did not preach the existence of God, yet in less than a thousand years after his death, his followers raised his idols to worship him like God through the length and breadth of Asia. Jainism, which is purely an atheistic religion, was the first Indian religion to engage in the idol-making and idol-worship of its twenty-four Tirthankara-s. Many Hindu scholars like Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, believe that the practice of idol-worship came to Hinduism through Jainism. It is noteworthy in this regard

that no ancient religious scripture of the Hindus prescribes or promotes idol-worship.

In Zoroastrianism, the most non-controversial of all religions, we find the practice of fire-worship representing the Supreme Deity, Ahura Mazda, and his constant duel with the embodiment of evil, Ahriman. Reverence for nature and ancestor spirits is common in Taoism, practised in East Asia for over two thousand years. A genuine researcher may find several examples of such ritualistic symbolism in other faiths and religions of the world.

A pertinent question may be raised here: Are rituals, forms and symbols indispensable for man to realize God? Absolutely not. They are just helpful tools for our spiritual development. In the soul's journey to the Infinite, they form important landmarks and thresholds on the slippery path to the Absolute. The human mind is fickle by nature and needs a threshold to catch the abstract idea of God. Spiritual evolution and its consummation is a long drawn process that comes in several stages. The first stage is religion with all its rituals, forms and symbols. As it progresses further and further on the arduous path of spirituality, it can afford to shed these tools one by one. Ultimately, all forms and names are dropped because the one who has reached the summit no longer needs any further support. Great saints, reformers and religious teachers of all religions, who have appeared on the world stage from time to time, have testified to this truth which is the essence of all religions. ✧

# Exploring Our Third Object

C. W. LEADBEATER

**QUESTION:** Have we not as a Society rather neglected our Third Object? We can count on the fingers of one hand practically those who have investigated the 'powers latent in man' at first hand. Is the time coming when the Third Object will receive attention?

**CWL:** Well, you are members of the Society; have you attended to it? Perhaps not very assiduously. You see, of course, there are two ways of investigating it. People may make experiments for themselves or they may study the experiments made by others. The latter method is that which people usually employ in the study of most sciences, etc. It is only a few of us who take up any science and actually experimentalize in it. You, all of you, at school long ago learned something of astronomy. I doubt if many of you bought a telescope and went into it at first hand. I did; therefore I may say that I have a little firsthand knowledge of astronomy. Most of it, however, comes from books. I can't pretend to have made investigations in the science of trying to discover anything new; but I have confirmed what I have read in books —

most people don't even do that. I suppose that it is the same with many sciences. A person may know a great deal about any subject without having actually tackled it himself. So you would be doing something in order to learn of the 'powers latent in man' if you read what had been written about them and tried to understand what these powers are. Of course, you can do a good deal more if you take the thing in hand and try for yourself. We have a number of people who have been encouraged to do this. You have to remember that investigation at first hand into the development of psychic powers has its dangers, and the tradition of our Society all the way through has been to discourage people from rash experiments — I think, quite rightly.

A number of you may have seen the books of William Walker Atkinson, who calls himself Yogi Ramacharaka. He is a nice, little, fat, apple-faced man, who lives in Chicago. I have found it rather a pity that he calls himself a Yogi; it savours just a little of charlatanry. I certainly would not have dared to do it.

**CJ:** In the United States of America he is

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Roof talk given at Adyar on 10 January 1930. From the Adyar Archives.



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taken to be one of the great Indian Yogis.

**CWL:** He is much like Alan Leo in appearance. You would never think he was a Yogi. I daresay his motive may have been quite good. He has written many books rather on the Tantric methods.

**CJ:** Not quite so bad as that.

**I. Cooper:** I have not read all the books — only half of them. Some are good; some of them contain some dangerous breathing practices.

**CWL:** The Eastern training is given under the eyes of the Yogi; he can check any dangerous thing; but if books are published on Yoga there is no way to check people who are trying experiments and they may do themselves serious harm. There are quite a number of people in the US who have injured themselves in that way. I came across a number who came to try to have things put right, and found it was impossible.

Nothing of that sort has ever been done in our Society, so far as I know. The President has been most careful not to give people any dangerous advice, and has explained that they should at once stop all meditation if any dangerous symptoms came on, such as a headache. So you see people have hardly been given a fair opportunity of doing much of this particular thing. Those to whom it comes fairly naturally, and therefore would be in very little danger, have of course made progress along this line. But no one wants to be responsible for people risking their lives, and consequently those who know

something about it have been exceedingly careful as to what they said. I personally made no move in that direction at all until it was suggested to me by my Master that I might with advantage make certain experiments. I took that to mean that He would watch, and I made the experiments, and the thing worked out. I dare not advise any other person to do the same thing. I suppose the Master satisfied Himself that it could be done safely; but it would be a terrible responsibility to advise anyone else to do it.

Still there are certain things that we can all try quite safely. The Theosophical teaching on meditation is quite harmless, but remember that you must not overstrain. These operations do involve strain, whatever line you adopt; but they should not involve direct pain of any sort. But in all such cases, you are working either with the higher vehicles altogether, or if with the physical brain, you are trying to make it do a little more than it is intended to do; and that is always a dangerous thing to do. It must be done with the greatest care, and very gradually.

You say, 'Have we neglected the Third Object?' We have always been told that the development of psychic faculty was not a necessity till a certain rather advanced stage is reached. What we have to do first of all is to work at our character. Most of us find there is still something to do along that line. My own plan was to wait until I was told. That is absolutely safe, of course. Many of us might be willing to run a small risk for the sake of making some definite attempt in that

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direction. That is, of course, a man's own responsibility.

It is an uncertain undertaking for one thing because no one can tell the result. Some people with slight effort obtain at least indications that psychic powers may open; others try for a long time without any result. That proves nothing. At any time the man steadily working may break through. But on the other hand, we are bound to tell you we do not know how long or how different it would be. No person undertaking to train another could promise anything. Even if he could see the past karma of the applicant, it would still be impossible to say anything with certainty.

At least one thing might be done — study it. Remember, there is a sort of intermediate course. Study the case of bush people in whom such powers are developed. I myself learned quite a good deal about such things before I made any attempt to do it. I went into Scotland to examine second sight. Second sight is a very bad name — it is foresight. I examined 182 or 183 cases, and absolutely satisfied myself that the thing was possible, and that without trying any experiments of my own. I think that might be called study of the powers latent in man and might be open to anyone.

Then, of course, there are experiments in telepathy; almost anyone can do a little in that way; or in psychometry or spiritualism, although part of the latter is concerned with trying to prove the return of the dead to earth. But a great deal in mediumship indicates latent powers in man. They preach from another side.

They wish man to be absolutely passive and lay himself open to influences of all sorts.

But the line recommended to us has always been, try to develop your own powers; be active, not passive in the thing. It is true that the Spiritualist tries first of all to engage a 'spirit guide' — some dead person who will act as a sort of guardian and shoo off the robbers while leaving him open to the good Samaritans among spirits. I have seen one case at least in which such a spirit guide was absolutely overpowered by an evil power; and if your President had not been at that seance, there would certainly have been physical death for one or two people. So the Spiritualistic method of investigation is not to be entirely recommended.

I am not attacking Spiritualism. I know that a vast amount of good has been done by it. I was told many years ago that there were over twenty million people in the United States alone convinced of the life after death by Spiritualism. It would take a good deal of evil to counterbalance that. I am not attacking it, but I have seen cases where things went very badly wrong, by people dabbling in Spiritualism; so I cannot recommend that as a method, though you can obtain a certain amount of proof. I satisfied myself. I attended more than one hundred seances. Some were actually fraudulent; many had no evidential value to my mind, but others absolutely did prove their case.

Having proved the phenomena to be real, we had to come to the next point — if they could be attributed to the return of

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the dead. Their hypotheses are sadly used by the Society for Psychic Research; but the ones they offer are so much more complicated that they are difficult to accept. Now, I know the dead survive, but by a different method than either of these.

**Cooper:** What of the cord connecting the astral to the physical body, referred to in the Atkinson's book?

**CWL:** The experience does not agree with mine. I suppose I was pulled out of the physical body by those other schemes which the Master suggested. I think that cord belongs to the etheric double. I have not done that myself, and I certainly should not try.

**Cooper:** He has gone long distances apparently.

**CWL:** I should think that was quite honest, as he described it. But if that is one of the ways in which it is done, it is a way of which I know nothing; and I should not recommend it as very satisfactory, because he would always have something of the etheric with him, which would cloud the astral. If the cord were actually snapped, I take it the physical body would die. Then there would be repercussion. Repercussion takes place even with a medium at a seance.

I have had a spook come and shake hands. I asked him whether I might rub some red powder (a lady blushing produced it) on his palms. I rubbed it on the palms of the materialized figure; and when the medium came out of trance, his hands were red, yet he was locked in a

cage. A clear form of repercussion. I have had several cases I could hardly venture to describe before ladies. In some cases, the materialized spirit will partake of refreshments, and there seems evidence that the refreshments are transferred to the body of the medium.

The werewolf certainly has a great deal of etheric matter in it. I have personally dealt with two werewolves, and in neither case had I time enough to make scientific experiments. The thing dissolved itself so quickly I could not do much. Probably repercussion could take place only when there was some kind of materialization. You or I could go and materialize when in sleep, but we would not draw matter from the etheric double. But the spook draws from the medium etheric and even physical matter. Col. Olcott tested this by weighing the spook, but I have weighed the medium, and found him 40 or 44 pounds less in weight, which was restored when the materialization disappeared. A doctor would not like to undertake an operation to remove 40 pounds of flesh.

This is studying the phenomena of the powers latent in man. You cannot get away from the phenomena. They happen, but how they happen we do not know. I cannot materialize a man and take away that much matter from him! But it is done constantly.

'Has the Society neglected the Third Object?' Well, it is open to you to remove this reproach from the Society. Go ahead; only please be careful, or our Society will have a bad reputation in another way — its members going mad, etc. The one safe

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way is to wait till the Master tells you how.

**QUESTION:** Have your clairvoyant investigations brought you in touch with Śreerāma (one of the earliest of the Solar Dynasty to which the Chohan Morya belongs)? It would be very interesting to have some information about this, bearing as it does on the great national epic of the *Rāmāyana*.

**CWL:** I am afraid they have not; at least not under that name. I am afraid I should not know him if I saw him. People do not go about in the astral plane labelled, as you were in the Convention, you know. They generally take it for granted that you know them. Anyway I do not know your King Rāma.

[Goes on reading the last part of the question — ‘Of the *Rāmāyana*’.] Oh, it is *that* Śri Rāma. Well, I do not know that I could undertake to find out for you how much of that is history and how much legend. If you have made any study of ancient history and comparative mythology, it will not hurt your feelings to be told that facts have been considerably distorted and magnified as the centuries have rolled on. You in India are probably free of the line taken in Christianity, that the sacred books are true to the very letter. Some even now believe it of the Bible. The Bible is really a great mass of documents brought together, and one is probably safe in saying that they were not dictated by any deity. If so, he must have been very ignorant of physical laws, and other things. Nobody who wrote these books thought he was writing sacred

books at all, but only meant to write history. There is the story of the sun standing still while the more unfortunate Malachites could be murdered by Joshua. A great deal of harm has been done in Christianity by the idea of the verbal inspiration of these books. We are not so far gone as that here, I think. Are there any such who think your sacred books are absolutely correct? [‘There are many,’ said someone in the audience.]

I do not know your books well enough to say there is anything unscientific or impossible in them, but I would have thought the Hindu intellect too keen to accept these things literally. Christian writers have explained this. St Paul himself says, ‘which things are an allegory’. Origen said the Crucifixion was an allegory. That makes things simpler. We must not accept anything because it is said or because it is written. You must make up your own mind.

I never investigated the *Rāmāyana* clairvoyantly. It is probably the story of something that happened a long time ago, modified and twisted. In an English ballad there is a story of a fight on the Scottish border. It reads as though the entire population of the two countries had been involved; but only one baron fought with another, with perhaps forty or fifty people on each side.

You must, with your Western education, know something of early Roman history; how they carried off some Sabine women. It reads as though whole regiments of Romans had carried off the whole female Sabine population. In reality

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there are two hills, about the size of St Thomas's Mount. They must have carried these girls for 100 yards — perhaps even 200! I should say that about twenty Roman soldiers captured brides. It was really on a very small scale.

Your Aryan forefathers magnified their deeds. If you could see the *Rāmāyana* acted over again, you would be a little surprised.

[Someone in the audience said it was supposed to be re-enacted in every Yuga.]

Unfortunately we are only at the commencement of the Kali Yuga. It is to last 432,000 years, and has only run 5000 years. It appears to me we are going to have a rather rough time for several lives yet. I hope we will all attain Adeptship long before the end of this Yuga. ✧

Theosophy has a considerable literature, but it has no inspired Scriptures. We who write books on the various branches of the subject, put before our friends the results of our investigations, and we take every care that what we state shall be scrupulously accurate as far as our knowledge goes; but the model which we set before us when we write is not the sacred Scripture but the scientific manual. . . . Our plan in verifying the information originally given to us has been just what was adopted in the beginning of the sciences of chemistry or astronomy — a careful observation of all the phenomena within reach, their tabulation, and the endeavour to deduce from the general laws which govern them.

C. W. Leadbeater

# Adyar Beach, One Hundred Years Ago

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

FOLLOWING the General Council's decision, at its meeting in December 1908, to invite him to resume his membership in the Theosophical Society if he so wished, C. W. Leadbeater arrived in Madras on 10 February 1909, accompanied by the Dutch scholar Johan van Manen. Among his several assistants at that time was Ernest Wood, a young member from England who had joined the TS in 1902 and had come to Adyar in 1908 to help Annie Besant in her educational work. He became CWL's private secretary. Another of CWL's assistants was Russell Balfour-Clarke who arrived at Adyar in 1909, having met Annie Besant in London in 1908. Wood reminisces about CWL's daily schedule at Adyar:

He would be up at half past six ready for work. Then we would take a little coffee or a couple of bananas just to begin the day, and then begin his work with correspondence or letters or a book that he was writing, or something of the kind, and generally he would sit there at his table or desk until about five o'clock in the afternoon. We used to clear the papers

away in order to bring him his lunch in the middle of the day and he would stay there and eat his simple food and then go on with his work.<sup>1</sup>

At five o'clock it was his custom to take his physical exercise, a bath in the sea generally, and then have a little soup, which was his evening meal, and then we had our meeting from 7.15 to 8.15 and then a quarter of an hour more for meditation. I used to be with Mr Leadbeater all this time and he would do a great deal of answering of letters and looking up things for people who wanted to know about the dead or about obsession, a great variety of things. And then at night he would begin again after the meditation was over at half-past eight and go on with some work until 11, 12, 1 or 2, or whatever time it was finished. Every moment was filled up with work. I have not met a more energetic man.<sup>2</sup>

Annie Besant, who had been elected President of the TS in 1907, left Adyar for an extensive lecture tour of Europe and America on 22 April 1909. She would not return to Adyar until November of that year. Some time after her departure an

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### Adyar Beach, One Hundred Years Ago

event took place on the Adyar beach that would have a long-term effect not only on Annie Besant's life but also on the TS as a whole. Ernest Wood describes the momentous encounter:

One evening, Mr Leadbeater, on our return to his room after our swim, told me that one of the boys had a remarkable aura. I asked which one, and he said it was the boy named Krishnamurti. I was surprised, for I already knew the boys, as they had been coming to me and to Subrahmanyam in the evenings to help in connection with their school home work, and it was evident that Krishnamurti was not one of the bright students. Then Mr Leadbeater told me that Krishnamurti would become a great spiritual teacher and a great speaker. I asked, 'How great? As great as Mrs Besant?' He replied, 'Much greater.' And shortly after that he said that Krishnamurti would be the vehicle for the Lord Maitreya, the coming Teacher, who had inspired Jesus. He was directed to help in training the boy for that purpose, which would be fulfilled, he told me, 'unless something goes wrong'. This I want to emphasize, in justice to Mr Leadbeater.<sup>3</sup>

When CWL became aware of the squalor prevailing in the house in which the young Krishnamurti lived with his father and brothers he wrote to Mrs Besant suggesting that the family should move into another house at Adyar which had become vacant at that time. Also, on knowing about the daily physical violence the boy was subject to at school he did not hesitate to instruct the boy's father that

he should be taken out of that school while he informed the President. Wood describes the care and attention that both Krishnamurti and his younger brother, Nityananda, received from CWL and his assistants:

I was there when Krishnamurti appeared with his father at Adyar and I knew him before Mr Leadbeater did. He was a school boy. When we first knew Krishnamurti he was a very frail little boy, extremely weak, all his bones sticking out, and his father said more than once that he thought probably he would die, and he was having a bad time at school because he did not pay any attention to what his teachers said. He was bullied and beaten to such an extent that it seemed the boy might fade away from this life and die, and the father came to Leadbeater and said: 'What shall we do?' Mr Leadbeater said, 'Take him from school and I will inform Mrs Besant.' Mrs Besant had done much for Hindu boys. She had the Central Indian College, in which many of the boys were entirely maintained by her — food, shelter, education, everything. So it was nothing unusual for her to look after boys. Mrs Besant was in America at the time. She replied that she would be very pleased to see to their welfare, so the two boys were taken from the school. Krishnamurti's younger brother was all right, but they didn't want to be separated; and some of us agreed to teach them a little each day so that they might be prepared to go to England for their further education. Seven or eight of us taught them a little each day.<sup>4</sup>

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In a letter written on 2 September 1909, CWL informed Mrs Besant about the deeper dimension of his discovery on the Adyar beach:

Naraniah's children are very well behaved, and would cause us no trouble; van Manen and I have taught some of them to swim, and have also helped the elder with English composition and reading, so we have come to know a little of them. Also (but this is not generally known) I have used one as a case to investigate for past lives, and have found him to have a past of very great importance, indicating far greater advancement than his father, or indeed than any of the people at present at Headquarters — a better set of lives even than Hubert's, though I think not so sensational. I am sure he is not in this compound by accident, but for the sake of its influence.

The young Krishnamurti first met Annie Besant on 27 November 1909, the day she arrived back from her long overseas tour. It is difficult to describe the depth of the link between the two. Her love for him remained unaltered, even through the difficult years between 1929 and her passing in 1933. And, according to a number of testimonies by those who knew him closely, Krishnamurti's profound affection for 'Amma' continued to be strong for the rest of his life.

Their letters from that period express the beauty of a spiritual relationship:

My dear Mother,

Will you let me call you mother when I write to you? I have no other mother now

to love, and I feel as if you were our mother because you have been so kind to us. We both thank you so much for taking us away from home and letting us sleep in your room; we are so happy there, but we would rather have you here, even if we had to sleep at home. They are so kind to us, they have given us beautiful bicycles, and I have learned to ride mine, and I go out on it each day. I have ridden 31½ miles, and I shall add some more this evening. I have seen you sometimes in the shrine room, and I often feel you at night and see your light. I send you very much love.

Your loving son,  
Krishna<sup>5</sup>

My loved Krishna,

... There was such a big meeting in Calcutta for the animals: and I told the people about the robin who tried to pull the nail out of the hand of Christ on the Cross; that is not a story of a fact but of a real truth, like the story of Shri Rama stroking the squirrel who wanted to help Him, so that all Indian squirrels have pretty stripes \_\_\_\_ at Sarnath where the Buddha preached His first sermon, I looked back to see it; and a little fawn came up and put her nose into his hands. The Lord was all love, so the animals were not afraid of Him.

Tell dear Nitya that I give him a kiss on the top of his dear head every morning, and send him thought-forms too.

You know that I love you very much, my Krishna, and am always

Your loving  
Mother<sup>6</sup>



### Adyar Beach, One Hundred Years Ago

In a letter of 18 October 1912 to Mrs Besant, the young Krishnamurti addresses a question that would become an important aspect of his later teaching:

My dearest Mother,

This is another letter this mail. I want to ask you a few questions concerning about the Order of the Star.

Don't you think that the Krotona ritual is rather long to be used at every meeting and also if we begin ceremonies there then everybody wants to have a ceremony? Do you think it is all right?

If we have ceremonies the members will spend all their time in that business instead of working in more important work. And also there are enough ceremonies in the Society.

Or do you think if they want a ritual, you can make a good ritual for all the members so that they all will have one ritual, if not they will be parties?

Yours most affectionate  
Son<sup>7</sup>

When in 1929 Krishnamurti decided to dissolve the Order of the Star in the East, many Theosophists did not understand his reason for it while others positively felt that he had failed the mission that both CWL and Dr Besant had foreseen for him. There are individuals, in different parts of the world, who have espoused the view that the expected coming of the World Teacher had 'gone wrong'. I would like to conclude by presenting the views of two

well-known Theosophists — CWL and N. Sri Ram — on the subject.

In his review of *The Initiate in the Dark Cycle*, CWL has this to say:

The point which is arousing controversy is that he has a good deal to say about Krishnamurti also, with much of which I cannot quite agree, though there is some truth in it. He seems to think that Krishnaji has failed in his mission, has been largely left to himself, and will soon be superseded by a female teacher, who is to draw the whole world into her train. I do not know anything about this lady, but I do not consider that Krishnaji is a failure. I admit that some of his statements have been inaccurate, a little fanatical, and not always tactfully put; but he is doing a difficult and important piece of work to the best of his ability.<sup>8</sup>

Writing to an Indian member of the TS, on 26 July 1953, Mr Sri Ram wrote:

Our late President, Dr Besant, hoped for certain great events to take place, but it could not be said even at that time that they would take place in the exact manner in which the expectations were framed.

I personally feel that there is an intimate connection between Krishnamurti and the Great Teacher, but also believe that the message which comes through him is put in a form which is Krishnamurti's own, so that we need not think that every word is literally 'inspired', as devout Christians think of the words in the Bible. I have a very great respect for Krishnamurti and

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have also been influenced in my thoughts by what he says.<sup>9</sup>

During her Presidency, Mrs Besant decided that an apartment for Krishnamurti would be built on the top of what is known as Russak Wing in the Headquarters complex at Adyar. He lived there for a number of years. From the window in Krishnaji's room one can see

a beautiful view of the Adyar river and, in the distance, the Bay of Bengal, along with the unique greenery on the river bank. The merging of the river and the vast sea speaks of the vastness of life and also of liberation, a journey into boundlessness, and it is a most appropriate setting for a discovery that happened one hundred years ago. ✧

## References

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2. Op. cit., p. 6.
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4. Op. cit., p. 26.
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**The greatest danger to the Society is the process of crystallization. You know how, in chemical solutions, this takes place when a liquid becomes saturated; it changes with great suddenness into a solid body. To me the greatest menace is Theosophical orthodoxy, the danger that we become crystallized in certain particular doctrines, and so become one among many sects of thought in the world.**

Annie Besant

# Theosophical Work around the World

## Argentina

Recent activities held earlier this year at the San Rafael Theosophical Centre located near Paredes included a Youth Gathering on the themes 'The Seven Great Religions of the World and Their Mysteries' and 'Life After Death', a TOS retreat on 'The Conscientious Use of Natural Resources', joint gathering of TS members from Argentina and Chile on 'An Approach to Praśna Upanishad', and the national Summer School which had as its theme 'A Journey to Immortality through the Heart'.

## India — Vellore

The members of the two Lodges in Vellore were present, along with members of other Lodges in South India, at the Golden Jubilee conference of Raja Lodge held in Vellore on 28 February and 1 March 2009. The President, Mrs Radha Burnier, the Indian Section General Secretary, Mr S. Sundaram, the Secretary of the Tamil Federation, Mr M. Natarajan, the General Manager at Adyar, Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, and about 200 members, including those from other places were present at this special occasion. The international President laid the foundation stone for a new building on the spacious grounds of the Lodge, where there was already room for members. Then the

members adjourned to the large hall where the conference was held. She gave an address and some others also spoke. Children who did well in a Theosophical essay competition were given prizes. The two-day function ended with a study class on Dr I. K. Taimni's book on the Principles of Lodge work.

## United States

The 123rd Summer National Gathering of the TS in America will take place from 24–28 July 2009 at 'Olcott', the National Headquarters in Wheaton, IL. The theme is 'Together Differently'. The programme includes, among other activities, a plenary session with Mrs Betty Bland, National President, on 'Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth', a keynote address on 'Religion, Politics, and the Global Community' by Ms Rachel Bronson, Chicago Council on Global Affairs, and an Interfaith panel with members of the Interfaith Youth Core, representing the Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths. Dr Robert Ellwood will deliver a public talk on 'Theosophy and the World Religions' and Dr John Algeo will give a talk to members on 'The Seven Rays: Being Different Together'. One of the evening programmes features 'Words of Albert Schweitzer and the Music of Bach' by Gail Archer, organist. ✧

*Love is the solvent of the little self.*

N. Sri Ram