

Human regeneration

N. Sri Ram

Everything that is good, enlightening, that is calculated to alleviate another's trouble and inspire him with courage, every improvement of social, political and other conditions, is part of evolution. But we must discover what is most worth doing by us, what we should specially aim at, because the needs of humanity are so very various.

The Masters of the Wisdom, who aid evolution, although they are interested in all changes that make for human progress, are especially concerned with the spiritual regeneration of mankind, which is of fundamental importance. Because, when that takes place, all else follows. The forces that are brought into play in the regeneration will themselves have their effect on the external conditions. But if the changes are merely external, after a time they may all be lost or undone. There have been various golden ages in the history of mankind, epochs when life was tranquil, when people were happy and kind and good; but all of them have vanished, and we have come into this strife, the present confusion and misery.

We can see, therefore, that merely to produce an outer change is not enough. It is like teaching good manners. There has to be a change in man fundamentally. This is precisely what Krishnamurti speaks of and aims at, a certain fundamental change as a consequence of which all the necessary changes in organization and behaviour will come about automatically and with the greatest possible ease. When you see for yourself what is the truth, you will act in accordance with that truth. You do not then need any direction, except that truth. What the Masters want, in addition to anything useful that we may be doing or may be able to do, is this regeneration, beginning with ourselves. The possibility of such regeneration, even the pre-destination of it, is perhaps the most inspiring truth of Theosophy.

In the regions where there is a change of seasons, such as Europe, a tree of the deciduous type grows old each autumn and sheds its leaves. It looks as though it is dead in winter, but then it is reborn in spring with fresh foliage and flowers. This is a phenomenon that repeats itself. Now the same thing happens with regard to every human being; for we die and are reborn as physical and psychic entities, and with each death the collection of previous memories belonging to the past life completely falls away and we come back fresh and pure with a new nature. But we are unable to retain this nature; we do not remain clean or fresh or tender as we were when we were born. Very quickly we are overlaid with impressions, we become distorted and coloured in various ways and cease to be what we were in the innocence and charm of our childhood.

Though the past is dead, the tendencies of the past come to life again; they are so deep-rooted that they do not die for a very long time; they remain buried

in the soil of our nature. Even when everything on the surface has died, they persist and grow again. They become active as soon as there are conditions favourable to their activity. You may see a child that is most charming with beautiful possibilities, but after a few years somehow all that charm is gone. Look at the same individual grown into a man or woman, or later still when the meridian has been reached and passed. He or she is so hard and set, the beauty of the early years a mere memory, perhaps dissipated, with the phenomenon of decay writ large on the person. But if the environment is favourable, the undesirable tendencies may remain latent, even for a whole lifetime. This is understandable from our own experience of people. A person may have certain inward cravings or propensities, but without opportunities for these to be indulged they seem non-existent. In the absence of temptation many of us can surely be virtuous. The tendencies rest like mud at the bottom of a river. The water flows over the mud, it is clean and usable, but when there is a gale, flood or some other disturbance, it becomes muddy at once, charged with all the impurities that till then had lain quiet on the river bed.

In our modern life, where everything is being stirred up to a degree, there is no lack of opportunity for any latent tendency to be awakened. The merest breath of an influence seems enough sometimes to start it into action, just as a faint odour of liquor is sufficient to revive the craving of a drunkard. In these days because of so much taking place, that affects people in different ways, so many thoughts, activities and distractions, the influences are very much more mixed than they were ever before. Therefore deterioration sets in all the more quickly; the charm, freshness and innocence which could last longer under more natural conditions tend soon to wear away.

But there comes a time in the long series of lives — it does not come by itself, because the human intelligence and will are involved in the process — when the soul is able to rid itself completely of the effects of the past, it sheds its accumulation once for all and stands out in its own pure nature.

It may be asked: what about the capacities that have been developed? The capacities remain because they belong not to the outer nature but to the soul. The mere accumulation of experience is not an unmixed blessing. When people say that they must have experience, is the experience they seek in itself a good thing? The seeking of experience can mean dissipation, it generally hardens an individual, and produces complexities. But in the very process of accumulating experience, of making money, for instance, certain capacities are developed. We learn how to deal with the differences of the material world with a mind which becomes gradually rapier-like and all-round in its movements. These capacities, in themselves, belong to the pure nature of the soul.

If we think of the soul as pure being, active with a pure consciousness, what eclipses its nature, suppresses it, is the distortion which that consciousness undergoes. There is some distortion in each one of us but we become so accustomed to it that we are not conscious that it exists. We think we are natural when we are unnatural; we even believe in being artificial. It is this distorted

consciousness, which assumes a certain shape, acts in a certain specific way, in each case, which we call our minds.

It is only by attaining a knowledge of whatever distortions exist, whatever illusions, that we can become free of them. Then the consciousness regains its natural state because of an extraordinary elasticity innate in its nature. It then attains an expertness and ease, of which we do not have any idea at present.

Reverting to the analogy of a plant, the spiritual man is a plant which has freshly sprung from its root, but without any deteriorating elements. Everything of the outer nature except the developed capacities has fallen away. He is a new man reborn in spirit. He is a plant whose whole nature is now irradiated with the essence of its incorruptible roots. The roots of our being are always undecaying. They are in that deepest spiritual part of ourselves which is untouched by the experience that we undergo on the superficial side of ourselves. But if we think of the mind or the consciousness which springs from those roots, that can be both spiritual and material.

The mind has a dual nature. In Sanskrit the mind which deals with the differences of matter (and is affected by them) is termed Manas. It is that mind which thinks in terms of differences and establishes the relations of thought. But the mind which knows the unity and experiences it, is termed Buddhi. These are two terms kept separate in Sanskrit philosophy. There is a part of Manas which is one with Buddhi and that is the more spiritual part, as distinguished from its material complement. They are essentially one, but separate in manifestation and even opposed to each other when the latter is under the dominance of matter, that is, under the dominance of sensations of matter and the desires which those sensations breed through memory. It is really desire in every form which causes our troubles. If I desire something and am bent on getting it, and someone hinders me, I flare up into resentment. From desire anger is born, as says the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is the desire for position or power or enjoyment of any sort which makes us egotistic and indifferent to others. Absorbed in its pursuit we have no attention or consideration to give to any body or anything else.

It is only when a particular weakness shows itself in an exaggerated form that we generally realize its true nature. So long as it is of small magnitude and does not show itself forcibly, we excuse ourselves by saying it is a trifle, a common failing, it is human to be so. We do not treat poison as poison until it becomes dangerous. It is the influence of our wishes and hopes on our way of looking at things which is the cause of so many illusions, because if you desire something very much you become willing to accept the conditions for its satisfaction.

Fundamentally the trouble lies in our attachment to the experiences we have had in the past. When this attachment becomes active we call it desire, but even when it is not active the attachment remains. If I have been addicted to drink, and even if at the present moment I do not feel the craving, the craving is still

there. It will raise its head very soon, because there is a period of activation which has to alternate with a period of rest due to bodily changes. This has to be deeply understood and realized. The understanding which is needed is not just a mental understanding, which is superficial. Such an understanding does not change the will because it is full of mental reservations. When we realize a truth for ourselves completely and freely, the truth then frees us from the errors and superstitions which flourish in its absence. We are not any one of us as free as we imagine ourselves to be, we think we are free when we have a kind of superficial outward freedom. But from the inner standpoint we have only freedom to lose our freedom, which we do quickly.

When there is freedom at last for Manas, which is the intelligence that deals with the differences of matter, it becomes united with Buddhi in which resides a knowledge of the unity, and which is its true counterpart. The higher spiritual nature which belongs to Buddhi manifests itself then in the field of Manas and it is for the latter a rebirth out of matter into Spirit. This is a change of vast significance, which has to take place in every individual. The mind, having freed itself completely from the influences to which it was previously subject, attains a state in which it is unaffected by the changing conditions of matter. It is unaffected, yet at the same time extraordinarily quick in its perceptions and movements. It does not lose its sensitiveness, on the other hand it becomes a thousand times more impressionable than before. It is alive to every change, feels every impact, is able to give itself completely to each phenomenon of life that arises. Normally when we do something, listen to music, for instance, we do not listen with the whole of our capacity, making ourselves completely empty and negative, so as to drink in every note and perceive the significance of that note in the relationship of notes. We meet life, almost every phenomenon of life, with only a little portion of ourselves. If we imagine an individual as a sphere of being, which is both capacity and sensibility, it is just a segment of it with which we meet the world in which we live and move.

But when the consciousness becomes free from the fixed images with which it is clogged, from the fixed patterns of its thought and feeling, it becomes completely elastic, then it is able at each moment of time to give itself totally to the experience of that moment. It is mobile and responsive in every way, yet along with this mobility and responsiveness, it is able to remain unaffected by fluctuations of external conditions, by "heat and cold, honour and dishonour, success and failure," to use the language of the *Bhagavad Gita*. These things just come and go, like ripples on a sheet of water. The consciousness merely reflects the changes, registers them, understands them, and they pass. It is sensitive and tranquil at the same time, a beautiful state to be in. It would not be correct to think that because a Yogi is sensitive he must be easily disturbed; because he is open, he must be affected by every influence. He is open, but not disturbed. His consciousness is like an ocean of sensitive calm, which enfolds everything but mixes with nothing.

What we are learning is merely the alphabet of spiritual living. We must learn, for instance, to be conscious of how we are living. Then there comes a time when the moment we think something, say something or form a judgement based on our personal reactions contrary to the whole purpose of our life as we understand it, we are aware that the wrong note has been struck. The state at which we should aim is an awareness of all that we are doing; which does not mean we should become highly self-conscious, absorbed in our own thoughts and feelings. For that would also become a hindrance. But the moment the wrong note is struck there must be a feeling that that note does not belong to the music of our being. That would be really the perfection of self-knowledge.

But we have to begin somewhere, we cannot immediately reach that perfection. I do not think that any one of us can do it, unless of course he has already prepared himself. Therefore we make a certain beginning with discipline in daily life, including some meditation, study and so on. When there is self-awareness, we do not imagine that we do anything more than just begin a new kind of life. But to know the path along which we should go and be humble is a great thing. A fundamental mental contradiction in ourselves is between the self and the ideal with which it seeks to clothe itself. We have to be aware of that contradiction.

When we really understand the problem, how complete is the nature of the change that is required, we cease to be impatient. It does not matter how long it takes, we know the direction and we should follow it; there will be many problems and we can tackle them. Our impatience is really born out of ambition; it is a condition of feverishness, which arises because we want to "get there", instead of understanding the problems that we should deal with. The attitude that we should adopt is that of taking things as they are and doing the best with them, dealing with the situation that exists, which is both a situation in the outside world and the situation in ourselves. We should do what we can each moment and pass on quietly to the next.

Even short of the fundamental change that has to be brought about, there can be a regenerated humanity, in the sense of a humanity redeemed by its better nature. There is good and there is evil in all of us, and as mentioned already, under favourable conditions the better nature will prevail. Mankind can be helped to see what is right and what is true; that is part of our work. It may be that we cannot yet do all that it might be possible for us to do some day but then we can help our fellowmen to the extent of our capacity. We can do this through the teachings of Theosophy and by our own example. If we begin in a small way we will find that we are able to do more and more. That is an extraordinary thing to find out and discover for oneself. You begin to give of your affection to those around you, you will find there is more affection to give; you begin serving in some way, you will find that there are ways in which you can serve better. There is an infinity in each one of us out of which to give and we have to discover that infinity for ourselves by the giving, and there is no

other way. If you sit in a chair and say, now I am going to discover the infinity within myself, you will never discover it. It is only by making the current flow that more can be made to flow.

It was said by one of the Great Ones: Forget yourself only to remember the good of other people. We cannot have better advice than that. But how to forget ourselves? All of us are so preoccupied with ourselves, with what we want, what we aim at, the position which we should hold, the estimation which other people should have of ourselves, what we may lose, so many things, so many thoughts and interests, centred in what we call "ourselves". If we can forget ourselves, we will find that our progress will become easy, it will take place swiftly and naturally, because it then becomes a process of unfoldment from within. Then we will be able to realize the truth of that saying in *Light on the Path*, "Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously," but open to all that is good and true and beautiful. We can have the most perfect assurance as to our goal and progress. Why should we be concerned with our progress? It takes place by itself. Our only concern is with how we should live and what we should do now.

Concentrate on anything in life except yourself and your wants, on Truth, on the Master, on the help to be given, on understanding those about you, you will find that what you concentrate on, without bringing yourself into it, acquires a certain deep significance. It is the obsession with oneself which is the greatest impediment. The whole problem of the spiritual life consists in this abolition of self, in living our life without thinking too much of ourselves, in doing what we can to help others.

An inner revolution

I cannot sum up the purpose of the Society better than by using the words: "HUMAN REGENERATION", the inner revolution which cleanses the mind. When this is not understood, the pursuit of the three objects of the Society can become wayward and misleading. In fact, with regret one has to observe that there are too many lodges and groups of members in the Society whose interpretation of the work of the Society indicates a loss of direction. To be theosophical means to be concerned with the movement from the present limitations and folly of the mind to the wisdom from which alone right action emerges. Preoccupation with subsidiary aims, study of methods to improve physical health, research into psychic phenomena and so forth, do not help humanity to a wiser way of life, although they have their uses.

Recasting old ideas, collating knowledge from different sources and academic pursuits are also not synonymous with doing theosophical work. As we said earlier, mere concepts do not help to solve problems or liberate man from his conflicts and unhappiness. The learning of others may at times serve as an aid to activate one's own perceptions. But without clear awareness and inward apprehension for oneself of what is true and what is not in the experiences of life, Theosophy ceases to be a light.

Radha Burnier, Presidential Address to the 111th Annual Convention, Adyar.
December 26, 1986

Searching for Truth

There is a well-known saying: "You would not search for me if you had not already found me." The Truth is there, just as the mirror is there, and we have already found it... When we stop denying this obvious fact, and when we learn to look at nature, at every person, at every living creature, without thought or prejudice, without mental excitement, then a profound inner change will be realized, and then we shall begin to see something of the beauty and the Light of Truth.

Danielle Audoin, Summer School of the Dutch Section. August 1989

The essential work of the Theosophical Society

Radha Burnier

It is easier to say what the Theosophical Society is not, rather than what it is, because the Society has a character which is a synthesis of a number of different elements. Its aim is to bring about the uplift of the human being at all levels — physical, cultural, moral, intellectual and spiritual — and its work has to do with many aspects of life. But it is not limited to any one aspect or level of human existence and activity.

The Theosophical Society is not for example a philosophical society in the ordinary sense of the term. There is a deep philosophy which we call Theosophy, which is in some measure presented through the literature published by the Society and is at the basis of its work. But that philosophy is not meant to be a speculative or theoretical exercise. There are learned men all over the world, capable of discussing subtle metaphysical points or delivering erudite lectures, but whose behaviour is exactly like that of ordinary people in daily life. When there is a problem, if a wife or son were to die, they are as likely to be unphilosophical about it as all other people. But the Theosophical Society is concerned with a philosophy which probes into the nature of man and the universe in order to bring about a change in man and society.

Similarly, although there is a deep religious side to the work of the Theosophical Society, it cannot be called a religious society in the ordinary sense. H.P.B. declared that Theosophy is not a religion, but religion itself because it is not concerned with mere tradition and belief. In the Theosophical Society there is no church, priests or scriptures, and like conventional religion it does not build a cult which separates people from others. The Society is religious only in the sense that its work is concerned with lifting the human spirit to the highest level.

The first Object of the Society is to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood without any distinctions. Some interpret this object to mean that members of the Society must work for relieving distress, run orphanages, save the derelict, and so forth. The Theosophical Society is not however a welfare organization in that sense, although it supports all work which benefits mankind. As H.P.B. wrote:

Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the condition of mankind. ... We are the friends of those who exercise practical charity, who seek to lift a little of the tremendous weight that is crushing down the poor. But, in our quality of Theosophists we cannot engage in any one of these great works in particular. As individuals we may do so, but as Theosophists we have a larger, more important

and much more difficult work to do. The function of Theosophists is to open men's hearts and understandings to charity and justice, attributes which belong specifically to the human kingdom and are natural to man when he has developed the qualities of a human being. Theosophy teaches the animal-man to be a human-man; and when people have learned to think and feel as truly human beings should feel and think, they will act humanely, and works of charity, justice and generosity will be done spontaneously by all. (Message to American Convention).

We can also say that though the theosophical approach to the questions of life is scientific, that is to say based on a rational, investigative spirit, it is not a scientific society with a sphere of interest limited to the world of sense perception. Similarly, though cultural development is within the purview of the Society's aims, it cannot be equated with organizations which promote culture.

Philosophy, religion, science, philanthropic work, culture, research and enquiry — all these elements form part of the work of the Society. They must be blended together in such a balance, without stressing any one element or concentrating on any one level of human existence, so that the Society's work brings about the good of humanity in a total sense. If it does not do so, the Society would lose its essential character.

It is important to recognize that universality of approach is fundamental to the work of the Society at any level whether it is the work of a Lodge, Federation, Section or the Society as a whole. It has been organized in such a way that it is not meant merely to preach brotherhood but to consist of a worldwide body of people who feel close to each other and who learn to co-operate and work together for the common weal. Men and women the world over live in a diversity of conditions, which modify their outer comportment in a variety of ways so that the central fact of their having a shared destiny is completely lost sight of, and relationships are full of tensions and conflicts. Contact with the Theosophical Society must help people to recognize that when they harm others they harm themselves, and when they love others, they create happiness for the world as a whole. The Society must be an example of how humanity can be united in affection and mutual care.

To bring this about, an atmosphere of universality must be maintained wherever there are members. The work of the Society must help people to drop their old habits and patterns of thought. The most pernicious habit of the mind is to divide everything. This divisiveness is the basis of the conflict and suffering which has been the bane of human society throughout the centuries. People have been conditioned to think of themselves in terms of tribe, race, nation, religion, family, the high and the low, and so on. Therefore one of the Mahatmas described humanity as "poor, poor humanity" and as "the orphan humanity". He wrote:

It reminds me of the old fable of the war between the Body and its members; here too, each limb of this huge "Orphan" — fatherless and motherless — selfishly cares but for itself. The body uncared for suffers eternally, whether the limbs are at war or at rest.

The fragmentation which we have spoken of has been created by the mind. Unless the mind abandons its habit of thinking in terms of difference instead of endeavouring to realize the unity of life, there cannot be a fundamental change in human society nor can relationship be established in truth and goodness. The shift from old patterns of thought to which the mind is accustomed to a recognition of unity as *the* truth of life is a radical change and brings a creative quality and vitality to the mind which can be described as regeneration. Therefore from the early days of the Society, universal brotherhood which is the purpose of the Society, was described as "regenerative brotherhood".

There are many ruts into which the mind falls without knowing why it is doing so. People unconsciously repeat ideas and adopt the attitudes, prejudices and animosities which surround them. The evils which exist in the atmosphere of a particular society are unknowingly absorbed by everyone who is not aware. Therefore H.P.B. pointed out that anyone who seeks wisdom must endeavour to free his mind of all the ideas he may have derived from heredity, education, environment or other people. This implies that there must be a different quality of mind as a result of theosophical study and understanding, a quality which finds natural expression in action and relationship.

Many people may accept theoretically that although there are physical differences among human beings — some are tall, others short, the skin is black, white or yellow, etc. — these are of no importance, for all are human and experience the same joy, pain and aspirations. When there is only an intellectual acceptance of this fact, action in daily life and relationships with others contradict the concept of unity. When attitudes of difference condition everyday relationship, it is the old mind at work. Regenerative brotherhood exists only when there is a real deep sense of non-separateness.

Regeneration is the key to the work of the Society. It gives direction with regard to the nature of the work, clarifies what must be done and what programmes are not compatible or useful. All T.S. activities must have a direction, and that direction must be one of inner change towards unity, co-operation and affectionate relationship. In theosophical lodges and groups very often study is undertaken and discussions take place. What is the purpose of the study? Study can be a mere pastime or an intellectual preoccupation in which case it is empty from the theosophical point of view. Or the study and discussion can be of such a nature that they help the mind to shed its prejudices and conditioning and bring about transformation.

The three Objects of the Society do not mention the word "Theosophy". So we can ask ourselves what place Theosophy has in promoting the Objects of the Society. Theosophy is wisdom which is not mere knowledge; it is the kind of knowledge which finds expression in right action. Action includes not only

physical action but thinking, feeling, in fact every movement of consciousness within each person. Discovering wisdom is therefore not different from regenerating oneself.

Since the work of the Society must be carried on in an atmosphere of universality, the atmosphere of any Lodge or group should be such that any person, Western or Eastern, Christian or Muslim, black or white, feels welcome to participate. The programmes must not be of such a nature that they appeal only to a particular group. There are members who say that the West has a wisdom tradition and so it is not necessary to turn to Eastern thought. There are others who are of the view that in Indian thought one can find all the essential teachings and therefore it is enough to study the Upanishads and the *Biagwad-gita*. In such cases, each group remains within its own enclosure and shuts the door on others. This is in contradiction to the essential purposes of the Society.

Every Section, Federation and Lodge is a representative in its own area of the Society as a whole. Therefore it must embody the essential characteristics of the Society, including universality of approach. However, universality does not mean that all kinds of misleading ideas, superstitions or frivolous activities should be encouraged or included as part of the work of the Society. The Society cannot become a forum for every kind of cult, philosophy or activity. Discrimination must be used and this means finding out what brings about the new quality of mind about which we have spoken.

The study of comparative religion which is part of the second Object of the Society does not imply that all religions and all teachings are equally good. In all religions there are superstitions and accretions which are unhelpful or positively undesirable. If the followers of different religions are asked to deliver talks in a theosophical lodge and they do it from a narrow or dogmatic point of view, how does it help the work of the Society? It is good to appreciate what is of value in all religions; it is equally necessary to be discriminating and promote only that which will help people to become wiser, more selfless and loving. Those who come into a Theosophical Lodge must be able to get new insights concerning man and his relationship to all creation. Lectures which treat a subject in such a manner that they promote division, blind belief or dogmatism are not suitable for the Theosophical Society.

Another point of importance is derived from the fact that truth can only be seen by each person for himself. The beauty of a sunset described by someone else never conveys the experience of that beauty. The description can only give an indication. Repeating other people's ideas or conforming to belief in a particular tradition is not tantamount to seeing. The instrument for seeing is one's own consciousness. There are certain things which cannot be done by anyone else on another's behalf. If one is ill it will not do if someone else takes medicine instead. Similarly no one else can impart the deeper truths to another unless he works at his own nature and prepares himself to be receptive. It is only when his consciousness is pure, clean, sensitive and capable of respond-

ing at a subtle and deep level, can he really know the truths of life. So each person must purify and prepare his own consciousness to receive the light. Purity means egolessness. Therefore H.P.B. says, "Ethics is the soul of Theosophy." The impure mind can be very clever and make a fine exposition of ideas, but that is all.

Thus self-preparation is an important aspect of theosophical work. It is important because when a person comes to the threshold of truth perception, everything in his life changes and he also has the power to influence changes around himself. There are many things in life to see and to know. The most important of all is to realize the significance of life and perceive the true relation of the many existences with each other. One who sees significance cannot be destructive. A person who perceives the loveliness of a flower — beauty is a way of seeing significance — treats the flower with care and delicacy, and his relationship with it is one of concern. But he who does not see the beauty, the glory and the meaning of the flower, throws it away. Those who realize the truth of life can never be destructive. The seers of truth are loving and compassionate individuals. The problem of the ordinary man is that he is not prepared to perceive significance. Most people give special value to some person or thing and then become attached to that. This is not a real awareness of their essential nature. Such attachment arises out of a desire to derive some benefit — physical or psychological — out of that person or thing. When the mind is sensitive and clear, that is, when it is truly capable of seeing, it sees significance in all of life, for all life is full of meaning. So the mind must learn to see, and the seeing has to come from within.

Therefore any kind of activity, programme or teaching which ignores the necessity for self-purification and true seeing, but on the other hand encourages conformity, belief, obedience and dependence, is not in tune with the spirit of the Theosophical Society. None of our activities should result in the closing of the mind, letting other people do the thinking on our behalf, telling us what the truth is. An official statement of the Society has been made to the effect that neither H.P.B. nor anyone else is an authority in the Theosophical Society whose words must be accepted by all members as the truth. What certain people have said may be of much value, but all the literature of the Theosophical Society is presented only for consideration. Every presentation must be enquired into, experimented with, and understood in relation to the situations and problems of one's own life. If through such testing it is found to be worth while and true, then it has a different meaning. Therefore an essential part of theosophical work is to maintain the spirit of free investigation, deep thinking, an open mind, and readiness to take responsibility for oneself.

All work within the Society must be done in a spirit of anonymity and not with a sense of self-importance. We do not want to build up within the Society personalities on whom we throw all responsibility for our own progress. Every person is responsible for his own action. The nature of the unregenerate mind can be summarized in the word "egoism". The essence of ignorance is the

feeling of "I"-ness which exhibits itself in many different ways. It shows itself not only through aggressions and prejudices but also in the form of self-satisfaction and self-concern. Even if it exists in a mild and concealed form it can sprout forth at any time and create havoc. The desire to be known as a capable person, as a guru, as a competent lecturer or leader, and so forth is only egoism. It is egoistic action which is destroying the social fabric. Therefore in our Society a platform for egoism should never be created. A spirit of self-sacrificing, altruistic work is essential for the success of the Society's aims.

Unless the essential elements are maintained in the Society's work, no amount of propaganda can further the cause. But if the spirit behind the work is right then the adoption of suitable means can serve a purpose. Therefore the understanding of the true character of the Society is of primary importance. It is not just what we do which makes the work of the Society theosophical but the quality of our mind and the spirit of understanding and selflessness which we bring to it. When that quality exists a spiritual influence pervades the work and affects other people, helping to bring about world transformation. So the members of the Theosophical Society must be people who are working towards the liberation of the mind and who are full of the spirit of co-operation and affection in their relationship. In India there are temple structures with a thousand pillars. Each pillar is important because it bears a part of the weight. The Theosophical Society's work must be like that, with each member sharing the responsibility.

The Theosophist. August 1988

II *The necessity*

Krishnamurti says that there is individual as well as collective chaos, confusion and misery throughout the world, and there is suffering. It is a world catastrophe. All leaders, political and religious, have failed; all the religious books have lost their meaning. We are all seeking security — either of a bank account or an ideology, or we turn to our gods — which is really an escape. There is a collapse of all moral and spiritual values; society is what you and I in our relationship have created. Without radically transforming ourselves, there can be no transformation of the society. A system cannot transform man. Transformation comes through self knowledge and not through belief.

Introduction to: J. Krishnamurti, *The Book of Life*. 1980

The next 100 years

In a talk on the above subject at the Adyar Lodge on 3rd September 1986, Mrs Radha Burnier, International President, indicated in broad outline the responsibility of the T.S. to reorient its work to meet the challenges of the present day. The presentation of Theosophy in the future must be different from what it has been in the past in the sense that it should deal in greater depth with the implications in daily life of the fundamental truths which Theosophy expounds. All the main teachings of Theosophy such as the universe as a manifestation of law, the unity of life and brotherhood, reincarnation and karma, the cyclic process of life and death, have revolutionary implications when they are not understood at a superficial level but examined seriously.

In such books as *At the feet of the Master* it is stated that he who glimpses into the Divine Plan becomes a transformed person. The Divine Plan has been studied and enunciated in Theosophical literature and also in most of the religions in various ways. They mention the different planes of existence, the outpouring of forces, the hierarchies of beings, both visible and invisible, and so forth. Becoming erudite in this does not change anybody. On the other hand when a person realizes that the nature of the Reality at work behind all phenomena and processes is Divine Order (called *Rita* in ancient India), it can change his consciousness and behaviour because he recognizes that he himself has to conduct his life as part of the total order and that there is no other way. The Universal Reality is not only Order, but Beauty, Harmony, Peace and Love. So one must penetrate into such underlying meaning in the outer phenomena. Dry academic presentations of theosophical concepts and discussion of abstruse points which have no relevance to living leave people without a sense of inspiration. Theosophy must become a living reality which involves enquiry, discovery, assimilation and practice of principles such as those mentioned above.

When the Theosophical Society started its work it was important to emphasize certain points. The world was becoming very materialistic and the idea of having but a single life to live on earth gave a competitive and consumerist trend to human activities. The teachings of reincarnation and karma, and of a cycle of life and death, was very important and beneficial at that time. But at present even in the West such ideas have become commonplace. So the T.S. must go further and explain what is the meaning of life and death and not merely the process of life after death.

T.S. members should engage themselves in a search for truth through study, reflection, purity of life and devotion to high ideals such as love, service and compassion — and practice these virtues in their daily life.

Radha Burnier, *Adyar Newsletter*. 1986

III Preparation

The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fibre of the heart that one is "ceaselessly" self-deceived. The second requisite is the still deeper conviction that such knowledge — such intuitive and certain knowledge — can be obtained by effort. The third and most important is an indomitable determination to obtain and face that knowledge. Self-knowledge of this kind is unobtainable by what men usually call "self-analysis". It is not reached by reasoning or any brain process; for it is the awakening to consciousness of the Divine Nature of man. To obtain this knowledge is a greater achievement than to command the elements or to know the future.

H.P. Blavatsky

Free and fearless investigation

It seems to me that with the entry into a second century of its life, the Theosophical Society must promote a new spirit leading to direct apprehension. The stale approach is that of turning back to the past, to recapitulate what others have said. This must yield place to the more vital and creative work of seeing for oneself through study, reflection and purity of life. To quote the words of Annie Besant: Theosophists must "regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion."

Valuable instructions have been given in theosophical books about the themes which need to be investigated and based on freedom of thought and freedom to pursue one's own line of enquiry. H.P.B. gave "free and fearless investigation" as a watchword for members and chose "There is No Religion Higher than Truth" as the motto of the Society. What is the meaning of "free and fearless investigation"? What sort of obstacles are there within the mind to such investigation? Is investigation compatible with dogmatic assertion, easy acquiescence, beliefs, attachment to denominations, to nationality, religion and so forth? How is the mind, conditioned from infancy by a variety of influences, to break out and understand in depth the nature and significance of life?

Before one can investigate with freedom and fearlessness, there must be a great deal of self-observation and thoughtful study of the hidden motives and attachments which cloud the mind. So, a short phrase like "free and fearless investigation" has profound implications and calls for sustained work to understand those implications. If the phrase is repeated because it has come from a person whom one respects, it has little value, being a lifeless piece of verbiage. But when the full depth of meaning is patiently searched for and discovered, then the phrase is the springboard from which the mind soars into the realm of a new understanding and action.

There are other important subjects of theosophical value which have been written about and whose meaning and depth have to be discovered by individual members through private and group work. What does it mean to learn to be "self-reliant", which the Mahatmas stressed? Most religions have made people dependent and afraid. The Theosophical Society does not seek to add to the number of such fear-ridden persons. It promotes an approach of self-responsibility, not seeking favours, saviours and solutions outside. Idolatry and the conventional concept of God have no place in the theosophical approach.

There are members in the Society who are unaware of these essential points and who try to advocate various cults and beliefs in their Lodges. A sufficiently large core of members must take up the task of making the right approach on

such questions as these central to the work of the Society and its branches, or else they will deteriorate. The spirit of investigation we spoke about, self-knowledge, self-responsibility, altruism, brotherhood, concern for the whole of life etc. — all these are questions of primary interest if the Society is to retain its vitality and if Theosophy is to become a living wisdom in the consciousness of the members.

Radha Burnier, 111th Presidential address. December 1986

The real work of the T.S.

Sometimes it is said that we are in a transition time and we have to move from kama-manas, the mind which is influenced by desire, to Buddhi-manas, the mind which is truly enlightened, which is able to perceive, and it is this perception which is more important than thought. One must first perceive either at the physical level or any of the inner levels, then one can build upon it a system of thought. The change that has to take place is that the intellect which merely plays with ideas has to be so changed, so enlightened, infused with a certain pure quality, that it becomes an instrument of the pure Knower and is not just the crude intellect which merely works out various sequences of facts. It has to be an intellect which knows the quality of a thing, and does not merely deal with quantities and numbers by comparison. Sometimes people quote from one of the Mahatma letters: "The crest wave of intellectual advance must be taken hold of and guided into spirituality." How can you lead an intellect which is dogmatic, neutral with regard to moral issues, incapable of any aesthetic appreciation, an intellect which is cold and hard, into spirituality? It has to be first melted, transformed and shaped into a pliable and sensitive instrument which can probe the inner truth of things. It becomes then an extension of the Spirit belonging to that nature of man which is essentially a nature of love, of openness, and sensitivity, non-egoistic and non-possessive. The intelligence of such a nature is luminous and penetrating. Also, when this nature manifests itself, life assumes an extraordinarily beautiful aspect; all quarrels, resentments and grudges come to an end. Then each man will meet all others as brothers in truth. In this way alone there can be a new era, a new world.

N. Sri Ram, *The real work of the T.S.* 1970