

C. JINARAJADASA &  
RADHA BURNIER ON  
THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM





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# THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM

## **The Purpose of the School of the Wisdom**<sup>1</sup>

C. Jinarajadasa,

The aim of the School of the Wisdom is to enable the individual to cease from being one who gives intellectual adherence to a particular school of philosophy, and become one who learns to survey the problem of life directly by himself or herself. The essential search is to discover life as it is, life being inseparable from consciousness.

The School of the Wisdom aims at bringing each student to survey things “from the centre” which is intuitive awareness. An intense sense of Life must always accompany every true student. There can be no Wisdom without an ever-increasing sense of Wonder.

The aim of all studies in the School of the Wisdom is not the perfection of the individual but to enable the individual to use every faculty of his or her being for “lifting a little of the heavy Karma of the world”.

Essential in the progress towards Wisdom is a growing intimacy with all aspects of Nature. The message which each tree, flower, animal, meadow, sea, sky and cloud has, must be listened to and understood. The student needs to learn to study the Book of Nature.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Inaugural Address of the School of the Wisdom by C. Jinarajadasa, 17 November 1949.

## **Ancient Wisdom<sup>2</sup>**

Radha Burnier

"The School of the Wisdom is one of the important activities at Adyar, important not only for this place, but for the work of the Theosophical Society as a whole, because it seeks to deepen the level of the participants' consciousness.

"Members of the Society who remain at a superficial level, with superficial interests, cannot be effective in carrying out the Society's objectives."

" People speak of various aspects of Theosophy, yet the truths of the Ancient Wisdom do not penetrate into their hearts and transform them."

"at the beginning of each session of the School of the Wisdom, it is worthwhile for students to reflect on the nature of wisdom and the way to it."

"Niels Böhr is reputed to have begun his lectures by saying to his students, 'Every sentence that I utter should be regarded by you not as an assertion, but as question.' For the spiritual aspirant too this is the way to proceed."

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*2 The School of the Wisdom & Adyar, Radha Burnier.*

“The School of the Wisdom aims to create an atmosphere in which the student draws upon his own inner resources. Immense re-sources lie within each, his own consciousness being the bed of truth. But he must go deep enough into his own consciousness to reach the source of truth. The Director and the speakers are there only to help the student to draw upon himself, discover the meanings for himself. That is the basis of wisdom.”

“Fellow students must be like the fingers of one hand, like the strings of a harp finely tuned together. This mutual harmony is a means to discover conjointly more than what each can discover individually. When a group of students are attuned to each other, the mind of each one widens itself, and the unified mind of the group is a purer channel for truth than the individual minds. So, aspirants to wisdom must endeavour to preserve harmony at all times with each other and with their surroundings”





# THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM

Inaugural Address Delivered on November 17, 1949

by

C. Jinarajadasa<sup>3</sup>

President of the Theosophical Society

THERE is an important distinction between Wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom will embrace within her field of operations every form of knowledge; but all knowledge in its entirety does not constitute Wisdom. Wherein lies the difference?

All manifestation at all times consists of two aspects of the Unknowable, which are the Life and the Form. Knowledge gathered in every department of the knowable will map out the form-aspects of evolutionary processes and of being. Now, it is one function of the Wisdom-aspect in an individual to be in intimate touch with the form-side of everything; yet the universe in its aspect of form cannot be understood merely by mental processes, however high they are. Bergson has pointed out how intelligence, when it attempts to understand the manifestations of life, goes astray, since intelligence tends to treat all things as if they were made of lifeless matter. It needs a faculty higher than the mind, which is Buddhi [1] or Intuition, in order to come into a direct relation with all form, by identifying each form with itself. Wisdom arises when there is this identification of the knower with the thing to be known; unless there is this identification, there is only knowledge. To use a simile of today, Wisdom takes an aeroplane view of all things, constantly flying over the field of facts which are on the plane of the mind, as it were photographing them till no fact is omitted from its survey. Wisdom may thus be described as the essence of fact, surcharged with the spirit of Life.

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<sup>3</sup> Curuppumullage Jinarajadasa (1875-1953) was the fourth president of the Theosophical Society.

This conception of the Wisdom was known both in ancient India and in Greece. In India, in the various philosophical schools gathered round individuals who were the heads of these schools, there was an attempt, within the limitation of what was considered worth knowing, to understand the multiplicity of things as one Whole. In every one of the Upanishadic schools the theme was to know life as the Unity. It was realized that this could not be achieved by mere mental processes; an essential element of the problem of acquiring Wisdom was a life of purification and dedication, with the mind and the emotions directed to high ideals through prayers and meditations. In ancient India, the search throughout was to discover, less the thing-as-it-is, and more the *life-as-it-is*. Of course the word "life" was inseparable from the word "consciousness". There was very little science in those days, and the knowledge regarding the world was very much circumscribed, going scarcely beyond the boundaries of India. Nevertheless, the aim, starting from India as a centre, was to reach upwards to contact the universe as a Totality.

In Greece, which had much more of art, history, drama, political development and other aspects of Greek culture, the Greek inquirer into the problem of Truth started by accepting the world-as-it-is, but he tried to see that world as from "on high". The aim was to penetrate behind appearance, and to sense the innermost Reality which is the background of all appearance.

Typical of this process is the attempt of Plato and his followers to see every form as reflecting the Idea or the Archetype. While a man might be a great knower of many things, he became truly wise only when his imagination and aspiration led him to sense the Archetypal World. It was this way of seeking which is fully described by the word coined by Pythagoras, "philosophos," the lover of Wisdom. All Greeks knew that this conception of *loving* the wisdom was the contribution of Pythagoras. When we say today that a man is a philosopher, we little realize that if he were *really* that, he would not be merely a mental possessor of knowledge, but that his emotional nature would be so intense and pure that he would be all the time a lover as well, seeking to find through the objects of his study the Principle of Virtue, which once seen evokes at once in the beholder the profoundest love.

The Wisdom, therefore, is not a matter of accumulating all the facts concerning Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis. The Wisdom has the task of understanding the innermost *meaning* underlying Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis. It is to help in the search for Wisdom that the individual has at his service a faculty greater than the higher mind, which is Buddhi. This faculty of Buddhi has as its instrument the *kosha* or vehicle which is called in the Hindu system Anandamaya-kosha, "the sheath composed of Bliss". Bliss is the Indian equivalent of the love that accompanies Wisdom, which manifests through Buddhi, the Intuition.

It is the purpose of a School of the Wisdom to bring each student to survey things "from the centre". This means, first, that every possible event or experience in the universe, not merely in the mechanical evolutionary processes but specially concerning every revelation of mankind, has to be brought into the circumference. All these aspects have then to be surveyed as from the centre, so that each aspect is seen in relation to all other aspects. When so surveyed, the aim is to go beyond the mental survey to a realization of the meaning both of the centre and of the circumference.

It goes without saying that into the circumference must be brought all knowledge that exists concerning Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis. But we must bring into Anthropogenesis, the study of the origins of man, not merely the understanding of races and sub-races and their characteristics, but also a careful study of the cultures which have been produced at all periods of history. The word "culture" covers religion, philosophy, every form of art-creation, such as poetry, song, music, architecture, drama, sculpture, painting, dance, etc.; all achievements of mankind in organizing human life to express itself more fully through ways of development and expansion not excluding political growth; economic schemes for betterment; educational methods and ideals - *all* have to be brought into the circumference.

The aim, of a true School of the Wisdom, then is to enable the individual to cease from being one who gives his intellectual adherence to a particular school of philosophy, and becomes by himself one who little by little surveys the problem of life directly from his own standpoint. It is the School's purpose to equip its students to become, each according to his temperament and aptitude, philosophers, scientists, ethical teachers, artists, givers of economic law, statesmen, educators, town planners and every other possible type of server of humanity. Some day each student may start a School of the Wisdom of his own.

In the attempt of the School towards this objective, there is knowledge of two types to be used as the material of study. There is what may be called Ancient Theosophy, that is, all truths in past ages in the religions and philosophies of India, Greece, Egypt and China. This vast body of knowledge is scattered in many books and traditions, but they all combine to give a definite conception of the world as having for its basis a mental and spiritual structure. We have in addition what can well be termed Modern Theosophy, commencing with the teachings, both old and new, given by the Adept Brotherhood, the Guardians of Humanity, through H. P. Blavatsky and several of her disciples. But in addition, we have to take specially into account all of the knowledge that modern Science has gathered in her many departments of research. While scientific theories may often be challenged, it is not so with the facts discovered in scientific research. Every such fact is an inseparable part of all the other facts; they have been taken into account in the teachings of Ancient and Modern Theosophy.

There are two lines of Milton which describe clearly what is the conception which I have of the individual who has achieved the object of the School of the Wisdom. They are:

“He that has light within his own clear breast,  
May sit i' th' centre and enjoy bright day.”

In these two lines we have four thoughts. First, that of “light”; second, that it must be within a man's “own clear breast”; third, to “sit in the centre”; and fourth, to “enjoy bright day”.

To sit in the centre is the objective I have in mind for each student, so that he stands in what Carlyle has termed the “centre of immensities and the conflux of eternities”. In other words, all the past is joined to what is the present, and there is no field of collective human activity nor individual action in the processes of the universe that is not within his purview. But this sitting in the centre can only happen when within his own breast there is *clearness*. This necessitates a perfect peace; not a negative quiescent peace, but one that broods over all things in a spirit of tenderness. When the light has been so born and is reflected in his own clear breast, then the seeker of Truth not only sits in the centre, but he comes to that ideal state of being which is to “enjoy bright day”.

This intense sense of Life must always accompany the true student. There can be no Wisdom which is unaccompanied by an ever-increasing sense of Wonder. It is this Sense that has well been described by Newton regarding himself:

“I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”

Finally, there cannot be any Wisdom in a man’s nature until he has fully understood the relation which he bears to all his fellowmen. All Wisdom fails in its endeavour unless it finds, in part, at least, a solution of the “infinite passion and the pain of finite hearts that yearn”.

The Latin poet Terence said what has been a beacon light in European culture: *Homo sum, humani nil alienum me puto*: “I am a man; I count nothing human indifferent to me.” The aim of all studies in a true School of Wisdom is not the perfection of the individual as such, but only in order that the individual may use every faculty of his being towards “lifting a little of the heavy Karma of the world”. Until the seeker for Wisdom seeks not only for himself, but also for all men, what he acquires is not worth name of Wisdom. That is why as long ago as 1921 I said: “Loving action is Divine Wisdom at work, and whoso acts lovingly will inevitably

come to the Wisdom.” This can be achieved swiftest with the aid of Theosophy. But when all is said and done, the Wisdom has to be *lived*. It is only in the process of living that the individual comes to his own centre, and lives surrounded by that Light which is indeed “bright day”.

Essential in the progress towards acquiring Wisdom is a man’s growing intimacy with all aspects of Nature. *The Voice of the Silence* teaches: “Help Nature and work with her.” The first step towards helping Nature is to know what Nature is. The message which each tree, flower, meadow, lake, rock, mountain range, sea, sky and cloud has, must be listened to and understood. Equally, too, can a man find a message in the beauty of bird and beast. Nature must not only be admired; she must also be *loved*. Nature is one volume of the innumerable volumes of the Secret Doctrine of the Wisdom.

One proof which the student finds in himself that he has achieved Wisdom is an irresistible urge in him to create. What Shakespeare describes about the state of mind of the poet is not less true of every man who, having become in a measure one with Wisdom, feels the urge to “make,” *i.e.*, to *re-make*, the world of thought and feeling which surrounds him. The Greek word “poet” means one who “makes”. Shakespeare describes the poet’s eye:

“ ... in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from  
earth to heaven;  
And, as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.”

Every student of the School of the Wisdom, as he comes towards finishing his course of study, will feel in himself that he must body forth those new aspects of himself which he has discovered, in essay, poem, song, sonata, symphony, painting, sculpture, dance, drama, and in all other forms of creation which have within them the nature of Art. The true nature of Art has been described by Carlyle: "In all true works of Art wilt thou discern Eternity looking through Time, the Godlike rendered visible." Thus it follows, that every thought, feeling and action of the man who has acquired Wisdom is all the time revealing the Eternal and Godlike.

This is the summation of all possible human achievement, and it is towards this that a true School of the Wisdom leads its followers. Wisdom liberates; he who has acquired Wisdom is free of dogmas and creeds, rites and ceremonies; nor does he any longer feel the need to be guided by any kind of a Guru or Guide, Philosopher and Friend. He comes to a realization of the true relation which he has towards Infinite Being, which has been described by Plotinus in the last words of his great work:

"This, therefore, is the life of the Gods and of divine and happy men, a liberation from all terrene concerns, a life unaccompanied with human pleasure, and a flight of the alone to the ALONE."

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Buddhi in Indian philosophy is a high form of the intellect; Buddhi in Theosophical terminology is a form of consciousness distinct even from the "higher mind"; it means the Intuition, that faculty which is "the unperceived fore-known," as Lawrence of Arabia described it.





# THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM

Address Delivered on October 1st, 1950

by

C. Jinarajadasa

President of the Theosophical Society

In this first address for the second year's session of the School of the Wisdom, I have first of all to reiterate what I said when the School was inaugurated last year. In that address I laid down what to me should be the principles that should regulate the studies of any organization that calls itself a "School of the Wisdom". Today I have to draw special attention to certain, of the ideas which I then enunciated:

I stated, using a modern simile, that the attitude of mind which might be described as Wisdom is one that takes "an aeroplane view of things, constantly flying over the field of facts which are on the plane of the mind, as it were photographing them, till no fact is omitted from its survey. Wisdom may thus be described as the essence of fact, surcharged with the spirit of Life."

Following from this conception, the search for Wisdom is not like the aim of modern Science, but rather that of ancient India. In modern Science we may say the attempt is to see "the thing as it is"; in ancient Indian philosophy the aim is far more to see "*the life as it is*," and I pointed out that the word "life" included every form of consciousness.

I draw your attention to the importance, as you study Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis, of realizing that the aim should not be merely to accumulate all the facts which are given concerning the Cosmic process, but rather to try to understand the *meaning* of that process. This meaning underlying the events of the evolutionary process can only be arrived at by the use of a faculty beyond the mind, which I called the Intuition. I asked you to note that one special purpose of a School of the Wisdom is to help each student to survey all things "from the centre."

After mentioning all possible types of knowledge in the domain of religion, ethnology, art, science, etc., I mentioned that all these have to be brought into the circumference of a circle, while the student aims to see all in the circumference as from the centre of the circle.

One special element in this process of seeking and finding the Wisdom I tried to illustrate by the two lines from Milton:

He that has light within his own clear breast,  
May sit in thy centre and enjoy bright day."

The first requisite is that a man should understand the meaning of "light," that inner quality of vision which is a faculty added to that of mind. Then I pointed out that this light must not be one received from another, but developed from a man's "own clear breast," and how this light may be obtained. There must be in the light of the breast a *clearness*, that is to say, no vague and foggy conceptions concerning the knowable, but whatever has been gathered of knowledge is made clear not only to the mind but also realized in some measure by the heart.

Then lastly, using Milton's phrase, I pointed out that he who comes to the centre along the line of clearness in his heart and mind, and directly, for himself, does then indeed "enjoy bright day".

I emphasize once again that in any attempt to understand the Wisdom the student must aim at contacting or intuiting the "sense of life," for until there is this intense feeling of life, accompanied by "an ever-increasing sense of Wonder," the student fails to come to that attitude of heart and mind which may be called the Wisdom.

I laid special stress on the fact that there can be no achievement of any true Wisdom at all unless the student keeps continually in mind his relation to all his fellow-men. No man can save his life to himself alone; he is inseparably bound to all the millions of humanity of which he is a part. If the student rises in his nature, he must in some measure raise the nature of the millions with him. It is this intense continual survey of the tragedy of humanity that is necessary for the student to prevent his mind from becoming rigid and insensitive to the streams of life around him. It is because of this need that I quoted the well-known lines of Browning

“infinite passion and the pain  
of finite hearts that yearn.”

I desire to dwell upon a factor in spiritual understanding which is not usually recognized, and it is that there is an intimate relation between what is called social service and the growth into Wisdom. Were it possible I would ask each student of the School to undertake some kind of service for the villagers in Adyar, and also in the slums in the city. But the work has to be done in the language of the people, which is Tamil, and it is not possible to achieve any results through an interpreter. It is the personal contact between the helper and the helped that is necessary, and it is this connection that particularly unfolds hidden aspects in the nature of the helper.

I can here illustrate my thought by what happened in 1874 in the life of the great John Ruskin. He was at the time the professor of Fine Art in the University of Oxford, and had a great influence over a large number of students. He had especially emphasized the need of an ethical conception with regard to all phases of life, even that of economics, and particularly in every aspect of art. One day when he was walking outside Oxford and passing the village of Ferry Hincksey, just after some rain, he saw that the children of the cottagers on either side of the road were playing in the muddy road; because they had no other place in which to play. Ruskin pondered over this, and when he returned he determined that at least the children who were forced to play in the road should have a road without puddles. He then called upon his gardener to help him and asked which of his students would come with him to mend that road. They went with picks and shovels, and under his supervision and the guidance of the gardener granite was collected, and one by one the puddles were covered up. At last there was a dry road where the children could play.

In the meantime, there was a sensation in England because a professor of Fine Art should do such a work, and many parents objected, saying that they had not sent their sons for an expensive education at Oxford to be taught to mend roads. Soon after, Ruskin pointed out in an address the inner psychological meaning of what he had achieved for the students. He said:

“Will, then, none of you out of your abundance, the abundance of your strength and of your leisure, do anything for the poor? The poor ye always have with you. Drain a single cottage; repair a single village by-way, make good a single garden wall; make pleasant with flowers one widow’s plot, and your muscles will be more strong and your hearts more light than had all your leisure hours been spent in costly games, or yet more hurtful amusements.”

Many years after, this same thought was taken up by a group of University men at Oxford and Cambridge, who established in the East End of London (the poorest part) what are known as University Settlements. During the summer vacation a certain number of students volunteer to go and live for a few weeks in their Settlement and there help in whatever ways to which they are directed, such as teaching, holding services, playing indoor games, and going on picnics, etc., with those who come to the Settlement, in other words, to try to lift a little of the deep gloom which covers the East End of London.

The principle is exactly the same, that a young man aiming to begin his life with a degree from the University should have a new aspect of his character released by social service, which would in after life profoundly influence his whole attitude toward his fellow-men.

There is an intimate relation between one’s unfoldment into Wisdom and loving one’s neighbour, as was the phrase used by Jesus Christ. At all costs a student of the School of the Wisdom should never forget how his growth into Wisdom depends upon his growth in the understanding of the problem of the handicaps and sufferings of his fellow-men.

I laid special emphasis on an idea not recognized in the philosophic schools, which is that each man understands only in so far as he acts so as to create. This action must be “re-make” the Cosmic process in various forms of art which I mentioned. In many ways the easiest form of “re-creation” of the world of heart and mind around us is through poetry. One of these days every student of the School of the Wisdom must be taught to create poetry, painting, sculpture, etc. It is only in so far as he re-creates the objective world received by his mind that he not only understands the meaning of that world, but he also takes part in that mysterious re-making of the universal process, which is one purpose of the Maker of the Process.

I quoted the significant words of Carlyle as to the true nature of Art: “In all true works of Art wilt thou discern Eternity looking through Time, the Godlike rendered visible.” Thus it follows that every thought, feeling and action of the man who has acquired. Wisdom is all the time revealing the Eternal and Godlike.

I want especially to lay emphasis upon the fact that there must be no kind of acceptance of any teacher or of his writings as the standard of truth which must never be challenged. There was a time when after Pythagoras had done his work, his disciples erected his teachings into an unchallengeable authority. When there was any argument on which there were differences of opinion, all disputes as to differences were suppressed with the words “*ipse dixit*,” the Latin form of the Greek, meaning “The Master has said it”. That form of orthodoxy with regard to Wisdom leads very quickly to rigidity and the loss of the true sense of Wisdom. This is well illustrated by what happened in the case of the teachings of Aristotle. After his school had been established by his disciples, certain aspects of his teachings were incorporated, into the speculations of the Christian Fathers of the early centuries. From them the ideas of Aristotle were made into a rigid form of truth, and over the gate of one Christian Theological Seminary were inscribed these two lines:

*Omnis hinc excluditur, omnis est abiectus,  
Qui non Aristotelis venit armis tectus.*

“Everyone from here is barred, everyone rejected, Who comes not with Aristotle’s armour protected.”

The result was that when Francis Bacon as a youth of sixteen went to Cambridge he saw with his clear mind that Aristotle’s ideas regarding the nature of the world were holding back mankind’s progress. Blended with these ideas of Aristotle were the conceptions of Ptolemy of the earth being the centre round which the sun and the planets revolved. It was this idea which was declared as the one and only truth by the Catholic hierarchy at Rome, so that when Copernicus gave the proof that the sun was the centre of the Solar System, his ideas were proclaimed heretical and his works placed on the *Index* of heretical works. Bacon, surveying already as a youth the rigidity of thought in Europe, determined that his aim in life should be to wean thinkers away from the Aristotelian system, and start the search for knowledge afresh by gathering all possible facts in Nature, in order that from these facts a new synthesis might be made. It was only as the result of Bacon’s impulse that the new wave in thought and in science began, and when the Royal Society of England was founded in 1662 there began the era of modern Science which has been so fruitful in giving mankind new worlds of knowledge.

If a School of the Wisdom in which the students are Theosophists erects any dictum, of even the greatest Teachers, into an unchallengeable metron or standard, within a generation or two the School will have lost its true purpose. To erect any kind of a “ring pass-not” round the system of any Teacher, however great, is to transform a School of the Wisdom into a body of seekers pledged to an orthodoxy who seek merely the details of knowledge.

That “true purpose” is, for each individual student to come directly “to the centre” and create his own synthesis of knowledge. Truly and with deep gratitude he cannot help being under profound obligation to all Teachers who have gone before him. They mark out the path for him to tread, but he must not ask them to allow him to hold their hands as he journeys. He must journey alone. When he journeys alone, except for the mysterious fact that all mankind travels with him, then he deserves the name of being a man of Wisdom.

When in 1921 I wrote the final chapter of all that I had propounded in the many chapters of my *First Principles of Theosophy*, I summed up the *meaning* of all the teachings, in terms of *Life*, in one sentence: “Loving action is Divine Wisdom at work, and whoso sots lovingly will inevitably come to the Wisdom.” In that sentence is, for me the Fact of facts.





# THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM & ADYAR

Radha Burnier<sup>4</sup>  
International President

## **1. THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM (Feb. 1990)**

The School of the Wisdom is one of the important activities at Adyar, important not only for this place but for the work of the Theosophical Society as a whole, because it seeks to deepen the level of the participants' consciousness. Members of the Society who remain at a superficial level, with superficial interests, cannot be effective in carrying out the Society's objectives hence the School of the Wisdom seeks to assist students to reach the depth in themselves. It is not intended to offer mere personal satisfaction, helping students to progress in their study, but has a larger purpose. Adyar, our International Headquarters, being a unique place, by virtue of its beauty, its history, tradition, and atmosphere, offers an exalting experience for those who come with the right purpose and an open heart. The school of the Wisdom cannot have a better situation for its work than Adyar.

Although the subject might have been discussed previously, at the beginning of each session of the School of the Wisdom, it is worthwhile for students to reflect on the nature of wisdom and the way to it. Knowledge is rather easy to have, for there are many books to provide information to anyone who is fairly intelligent. People speak of various aspects of Theosophy, yet the truths of the Ancient Wisdom do not penetrate into their hearts and transform them and wisdom is transformation.

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<sup>4</sup> Radha Burnier (1923 – 2013) was the seventh international President of the Theosophical Society.

Niels Böhr is reputed to have begun his lectures by saying to his students, 'Every sentence that I utter should be regarded by you not as an assertion, but as question.' For the spiritual aspirant too this is the way to proceed. When Madam Blavatsky started the Esoteric School of Theosophy, she told her students that they must not come to her to answer their questions. They were advised to find answers as far as possible for themselves before approaching her. This was also Krishnamurti's recommendation; he said that one who knows how to ask the right questions will find the answers for himself. To ask a sensible question, a question which has deep implications, one must have listened very carefully and then thought over the matter still more carefully. Indian tradition says that you cannot meditate without learning to listen, and to think deeply over what has been listened to. That thinking deeply implies questioning—Why is that so? What is the full meaning? What underlying aspect have I missed? Many such probings must take place. It is like digging a well, deeper and deeper, removing all that is irrelevant, all the useless stuff from the mind, till you come to the life-giving point, that state of clarity from which the right questions emanate and which releases the right answers.

The School of the Wisdom aims to create an atmosphere in which the student draws upon his own inner resources. Immense resources lie within each, his own consciousness being the bed of truth. But he must go deep enough into his own consciousness to reach the source of truth. The Director and the speakers are there only to help the student to draw upon himself, discover the meanings for himself. That is the basis of wisdom. Knowledge only amounts to remembering what has been said where, or putting information together and making a patchwork.

Knowledge can leave one stagnating, sterile, or even be productive of various forms of folly. But wisdom is synonymous to transformation.

The Bible says Wisdom is more precious than rubies.

Wisdom reacheth from one end of the world to the other; mightily and sweetly doth she order all things.

Wisdom is the rose of Sharon; and the life of the valley.

She is the mother of fair love; and of patience and perseverance, and of holy hope.”

With wisdom, our whole life becomes different, we bring a healing, saving touch to everything we contact. The wise do not have to find disciples. Those who do, who make great efforts and advertise, in order to attract disciples are not wise. The wise are those to whom people come naturally, as bees come to honey. Wisdom is transformation into a realm of dignity, beauty and illumination, and it naturally draws others into its light.

Finding wisdom involves also harmony. The atmosphere of a place like Adyar, the beauty and peace of this *āśrama*, enhances and strengthens the harmony innate in the student. Harmony means not merely being comradely at the external level, but experiencing peace deep within. Madame Blavatsky says in *Practical Occultism*:

Unless the greatest harmony reigns among the learners, *no* success is possible!..... It is known that chelas otherwise promising and fit for the reception of truth, had to wait for years on account of their temper and the impossibility they felt to put themselves in *tune* with their companions.

Fellow students must be like the fingers of one hand, like the strings of a harp finely tuned together. This mutual harmony is a means to discover conjointly more than what each can discover individually. When a group of students are attuned to each other, the mind of each one widens itself, and the unified mind of the group is a purer channel for truth than the individual minds. So, aspirants to wisdom must endeavour to preserve harmony at all times with each other and with their surroundings.

*Experiences such as harmony and happiness, love and peace, are known at different levels. The realization in depth of harmony, peace and love is tantamount to discovery of the deeper nature in all people and things. Where there is a soul relationship, not a mind relationship, or a physical relationship, there is a profound sense of harmony or śānti. A mother and a child sometimes know that kind of relationship by instinct. A mother's love has been much praised because of the element of unselfishness in it. She knows real concern even when the child does not feel it, for she contacts something of the soul of the child. Therefore she can gently overlook even what the child might do to her. Soul relationship, that is not at the mental level, nor at the emotional level of attachment or sentimentality, must be what links students who learn and work together. In Eastern tradition, students of a spiritual teacher are said to be nearer to each other than blood-brothers or sisters. So, in the School of the Wisdom we grow in an atmosphere of listening, thinking deeply, questioning, bound by the law of harmony.*

## **02. THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM (Nov. 1991)**

The School of the Wisdom is one of the most important activities at our International Headquarters. For to be a real Theosophist, and not just a registered member of the Society, means engaging oneself in the quest for Wisdom. Wisdom is not found merely through words, concepts or much reading. Speaking about brotherhood and discussing it in intellectual terms is quite different from living it; only the latter leads to Wisdom. Wisdom implies many things such as not doing harm to any living creature, and being of active help to others in the best possible manner, not in a foolish way. Much is implied by brotherhood also. Sometimes we tend to take the first Object of the Theosophical Society casually, but actually it has a very profound meaning. It implies a great change of heart which makes all the difference between the wise person and an ordinary one. Wisdom enable one to practice brotherhood which springs from the realization of the indivisibility of life; while the serious effort to live brotherhood leads to Wisdom. The two are complementary aspects of Theosophical work.

The School of the Wisdom is important because it seeks to bring together people who care about Wisdom. Without it, imagining that one is working for the Theosophical Society is not meaningful. Such work lacks power. This is one of the weaknesses in lodges where brotherhood exists only as a superficial aim. On the other hand, in every lodge which is a vibrant centre of brotherhood, with members earnestly seeking truth, there is a dynamic power for the good. The classes of the School of the Wisdom are not meant merely to gather ideas, which can as well be done through books. In this School, students should not be just accumulating information or remembering what somebody else says. Nobody, not even the wisest of persons can instill Wisdom into another. All that he can do is to encourage others who are ready and eager to unearth the precious jewel of Wisdom by their own endeavour.

As we gain Wisdom, we create a different world. The word 'creativity' is commonly associated with the making of objects, producing music and so on. True creativity, however, is indescribable. Some philosophers have pointed out that beauty does not lie in form or words, but is a wordless awareness that is creative, and which may express itself in words, songs or just silence. That quality of consciousness is also the quality of Wisdom. It is this which can create a noble world, a world without strife and pain, a world of real harmony, one in which the true evolution of humanity will begin.

At the point where we are, it can hardly be said that human evolution has started, because the animal nature has not come to an end. Human activity is now largely animal nature instigated by an unenlightened mind. Human beings, except for those living in slums and on streets, do not have to 'preserve' themselves. Yet they are blindly driven by the urge to be better than others, get ahead, possess, fight and dominate. The world we know is predominated by animal activity mad worse by the human brain. Human evolution starts when we begin to realize that such blind, uncontrolled urges must not drive us; and this is the beginning of wisdom.

Theosophy teaches how every ordinary human being can perfect himself and become free of passions and compulsions. Wisdom lies in proceeding in this direction, that is human evolution. Otherwise it is only mental evolution, a development of the thinking capacity which even animals have in a rudimentary form. If we do not explore all this, and let the truth saturate our consciousness, we remain with empty theory, and there is no change in us or society. Work in the School of the Wisdom must be 'path-breaking' for each student, opening up his mind to ever-widening vistas.

### **03. THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM (June 2005)**

In 1922, a proposal was made to establish a School at Adyar whose programmes would attempt to develop a dynamic synthesis of all the aspects of philosophy, religion, science, literature and art. Annie Besant directed that the work should be based on the central principle that all human activity is an evolving expression of the One Life. Students coming from different countries were to have the opportunity to listen to experts on these subjects, study in the Adyar Library, contribute papers and take part in discussions. The school was called Brahmavidyā Āśrama, a name meaning practically the same as 'School of the Wisdom', with the word *āśrama* suggesting that the students as a rule would be resident at Adyar. It was opened in 1926 with the expectation that educated young men and women, eager for knowledge and prepared to lead a simple life, would come from all the Sections of the TS in the world. The programmes went on successfully for some time and then subsided.

In 1926 a report was also published in *The Theosophist* from the General Secretary of the German Section, Mr Axel von Fielitz-Coniar, about a School of the Wisdom conducted in Darmstadt, Germany, in 1921, in the presence of Rabindranath Tagore, and interpreted by Count Hermann Keyserling. It said that so great was the effect of the lectures that many who saw each other for the first time immediately discovered kinship of soul; and that it was impossible to realize what the School of the Wisdom signified for the spiritual life of Germany. Count Keyserling declared: 'I do no intent to educate a body of disciples for myself, but on the contrary, my desire is to train each one to be his own leader and guide.'

Today's School of the Wisdom at Adyar succeeded the above-mentioned efforts, and was resuscitated under the guidance of the then President of the TS, Mr C. Jinarājadāsa. The English nomenclature was preferred, but the aims and ideals were the same as before. When speaking on this subject of the School of 1926, Annie Besant made various points which are still relevant today. First of all, she clarified the purpose of the studies to be undertaken. What would the students be seeking? The answer is suggested by the name of the School itself. Wisdom comes to those who seek the Eternal and catch a glimpse of the Divine Plan, for it 'illuminates the whole field of the unfoldment of Divinity' through the processes of manifestation. As we are told in *At the Feet of the Master*: 'When once a man has seen that and really knows it, he cannot help working for it and making himself one with it, because it is so glorious, so beautiful.'

In the light of the Eternal alone, seemingly unconnected and fragmented phenomena and events can be truly understood. But as the Divine Plan cannot be analyzed and assessed by the finite mind, it has to break out of its own periphery. Dr Besant drew attention to the ancient teaching that all knowledge that can be taught is the lesser knowledge or *aparā vidyā*, learnt through the mediation of the mind and intellect. A teacher may have a role at this level. The higher knowledge or *parā vidyā* is the light that illuminates the lower field of knowledge. It cannot be taught and is acquired only when knowledge is wedded to the abandonment of separate self, implied in the virtue of devotion. Then the light radiates from within.

The student who aspires to Wisdom need to cultivate the talent to look from within, and not as an outsider. This means developing a higher faculty which sees from inside and is therefore called intuition, insight or *buddhi*. The ordinary mind looks from outside at the whole movement of life as 'objects', and hence lacks the understanding necessary for synthesis and reconciliation of apparently discordant elements in a Unity. Theosophy proclaims that the life-force works from within outwards, at the individual as well as higher levels. All outer action has its root in an inner condition. Studies in the School of the Wisdom should aim at stimulating the latent faculty of intuitive awareness than perceives the deep relationship of the inner with the outer, of the many with the One.

The School of the Wisdom is meant to be a nursery from which generations of Theosophical communicators would arise, combining in themselves the best qualities of mind and heart. They would then gain the respect, or at least the attention, of the world. Such messengers, being endowed with an open mind, would refrain from any controversy, merely presenting what they understand as the basis for further discourse by intelligent men and women.

Students leaving the school were encouraged to form similar mini school in their own areas and even Lodges. Such an expansion has taken place to a certain extent. The European Federation conducts a School of the Wisdom in Holland, at the Theosophical Centre in Naarden. The West African Section has also been conducting a mini School of the Wisdom in Accra, Ghana. In Krotona, California and in the Springbrook Centre in Australia there are Schools of Theosophy, which is another word for Wisdom. Although geographically they may be remote from each other, their shared aims and approach to studies can integrate them in spirit. Stimulation of intuitive perception that relates the inner and the outer; a point of view embracing the happenings in the temporal world in a synthesis that draws sustenance from openness to the sphere of the Eternal; and communicating energy which blends knowledge with devotion and seeks not to raise controversy, but to engender enquiry and the capacity to find illumination from within—*these are the shared aims.*



#### **04. OUR ADYAR ESTATE (Mar. 2002)**

The Paradise that H.P. Blavatsky and H.S. Olcott discovered and described when they came to Adyar was not then a part of the city of Madras (now called Chennai). The centre of Chennai, the crowded area which was named 'George Town' by the British, is about seven miles north of Adyar. In between, there was not too large a population and the town had the feel of a very spacious, pleasant village consisting of houses interspersed with open spaces, small lakes, groves of fruit trees and gardens, all of which lay north of the quiet Adyar River, opening out onto the Bay of Bengal in a large estuary. The Founders bought a property of about twenty-seven acres on the southern bank of the Adyar Rive, with a wonderful view of the sea and estuary, over which sun and moon rose and set in splendor in the quiet of the morning and evening. There were no cars, telephones, electricity or other modern conveniences to attract people, create bustle, and make the human presence too insistent to let Paradise to remain pure.

*When Annie Besant became President after HSO in 1907, she acquired for the Society all the land east and south of the original estate that forms part of the present headquarters campus of Adyar, comprising the Banyan tree and other natural treasures. This extension gave the T.S. a seafront and the space to protect its calm atmosphere and magnetic quality from intrusion. Event today, enveloped by the growing metropolis that is Chennai, often scattered by traffic noise and the blare of loudspeakers, that Paradise is in reasonable possession of its inscrutable attractions.*

The campus plays a vital role in maintaining the health and cultural heritage of Chennai citizens. It serves as a precious green lung of great environmental significance; its natural, shady wooded areas help to maintain and recharge the water table, which is at risk of being depleted by indiscriminate pumping and poor city planning. Atmospheric pollution outside our oasis has reached dangerous levels, and is converting charming old Madras into the poisonous likeness of many other uncontrollable urban accretions that are producing disastrous changes in temperature patterns and rainfall, and marring the beauty of the earth.

Researchers have documented more than four hundred species of plants in our campus, including many exotic ones, as well a diversity of mammals, reptiles, birds and insects living in peace and harmony with the residents and members who come from all over the world to experience the sanctity of their headquarters. The compound is a haven for birds. About two hundred species have been sighted in and around the grounds, where they feed, nest or visit, if they happen to be migratory. Decades ago, the Adyar estuary and the islands adjacent to the T.S. estate were declared by the government to be a sanctuary where no trapping, snaring, shooting or even removal of eggs is permitted. The Government of Madras conferred on the T.S. the privilege of protecting animal life and around our estate from proachers and other ignorant, destructive groups such as gypsies. We are happy to fulfil this responsibility as far as possible, for it harmonizes with our philosophy of regarding all life as one, all equally sacred and worthy of reverence.

On the cover of *The Theosophist*, we have been displaying some of the exquisite plants and blossoms that beautify the campus. More recently, a few lovely birds, which contribute their own share of song, colour and charm to the estate, have been photographed and shown. These, we hope will give readers a taste of beauties at the physical level that reflect the spiritual effable of Nature, so palpable here, and of the Power sustaining Nature. Nature is said to be the garment of God, the outermost vesture of the Ineffable, which the Upanishad-s called 'That', and Krishnamurti named the 'Other'. When we turn to that, as the sunflower does to the rays of the sun, perchance illusions will begin to disperse and light will dawn in our hearts. Our Adyar estate has that peculiar uplifting atmosphere of a place to which thousands of people have been coming in a spirit of surrender and reverence.

## 05. CONVENTION AT ADYAR (Feb. 2005)

International Conventions at Adyar have been historic events and were presided over in the early days by our President-Founder, Col. Olcott, and later on by succeeding Presidents. They continue to bring together a much larger number of members from all parts of the world than any other Congress or Convention to the Theosophical Society. In 1925 and 1975 the number exceeded 2,000.

*Members are drawn to Adyar for this event, year after year in many cases, even though they have to suffer the inconveniences of travel, of sharing rooms, queuing for meals and so on. The unique atmosphere pervading the beautiful campus of our International Headquarters is like a strong magnet whose power people feel, even if they themselves are unconscious of the nature of the attraction of the Adyar Convention. That attraction is not merely in the lectures and events, in the worldwide contacts made, in the beauty of the trees and shrubs; something intangible moves and uplifts the participants. A greater degree of understanding is experienced; and, as former President N. Sri Ram said: 'more of the essence of Theosophy' is realized, along with a deeper sense of universal brotherhood and commitment to altruistic living.*

Writing his diary in 1882, Col. Olcott said: 'We were driven to Adyar, and at the first glance knew that our future home was found.' Rapidly some alterations were made to the main building and HPB occupied the one large room on the first floor, next to which they often sat under the open terraced 'roof', as they called it, where fine breezes made even the summer seem pleasant to them. The Colonel eloquently expressed his feelings thus: 'I have visited many lands, but recall no more beautiful view than that upon which the eye rests from that terrace, whether by daylight, starlight, or moonlight.' The beauty of Adyar reveals itself now with changed aspect, but casts the same spell on members and visitors alike as when the Founders knew at first glance that this would be their home.

In *Old Diary Leaves* and other accounts we read of occasions when the Mahatmas who were behind the founding of the Society blessed Adyar with their presence. Many dedicated members continue to find that they can think nobler thoughts and gain deeper insights at Adyar than elsewhere. Their love, devotion and spirit of sacrifice and service constantly strengthen the intangible atmosphere here, nourishing the spiritual instincts of those who are receptive.

This year's Convention began while the tsunami swept over the east coast of South India and the water flowed up the Adyar River, leaving debris but not destruction. Calm and peace reigned over our proceedings, even while plans were made to give relief to the neighbouring communities. Several members voiced their feeling that our Adyar headquarters is protected and will remain safe, so long as the spirit of dedication to the promotion of universal brotherhood and a selfless quest for wisdom remain central to the life and work of members.

The Lord Buddha's advice translated as 'Be a lamp unto yourself' contains a Pāli word which could mean either lamp (*dipa*) or island (*dvīpa*). In the latter case, the reference is to a deep inner stability, unshaken by outer events, metaphorically depicted as the condition of an island in the midst of the ocean. Spiritual consciousness is ever unshaken, because it is rooted in universally loving relationship with all; in fact, in the immortal element or *ātmā* within. Then the mind is undisturbed by pulls of worldliness or the impact of outer 'calamities'. Such an island in the midst of fluctuations waters of the lamp that never flickers are symbols of the 'mind beyond mind' which knows that the phenomenal world and its happenings are only as real as shadows. Members who come to the Adyar Convention receive at times a touch of this inner sense of peace and security, and experience the deep joy of contact with a world which is beyond time.

Each time the consciousness reaches a higher level of peace, goodness and harmony, some transformation takes place which the individual may be aware of or not. The consciousness begins to respond to finer vibrations, offering no resistance, until at last the cruder vibrations cannot enter it any longer. As an ancient Sanskrit verse says: He who contacts the Divine becomes purer within and without whatever his present condition may be.

## o6.THE CONVENTION SPIRIT (June 1985)

The following words were spoken at the end of the international Convention (31 December 1984):

I formally close our Convention this morning but in spirit we shall only adjourn it, signifying thereby that we should carry with us all times a gift which will be of benefit, not only to us, but to everyone with whom we come into contact until we meet again. A line of a hymn says: 'God be with you till we meet again.' 'God' is that which is supremely good, blessed and beneficent; may that indeed be with us till we meet again. If it does, we shall have profited immensely by being at this Convention, and we shall make our work for the Society, wherever we are, into an ennobling activity.

Life is varied and full change. A tree grows from a single seed and multiplies into many branches and countless leaves. But it is one tree, from root to crown. Its branching out does not separate it into parts and the same sap runs through every part.

Even so, the sap of life flows through all living things, nourishing them and uniting them all into a whole. He who realizes this is imbued with a spirit of respect and sympathy which is not exclusive to particular persons. His respect radiates out to everything—to *human beings, to every form of life, to the very earth and air around him. It is then that he speaks a universal language and communicates with all people even though he may not speak to them in the words of their language. Heart to heart, mind to mind, and being to being there is communion when there is respect in his mind and heart. This is the essence of Theosophy.*

In the well-known Buddhist prayer, there are the words dhamma, saranam gacchāmi. The word *dharma* or *dhamma* refers, among other things, to the 'Good Law' which invisibly binds together all that exists. At the deeper level everything is untied; at the outer level there is the appearance of separateness. When the apparently separate is seen to be rooted in the One, the Law is understood. Those who become aware of that Law and take refuge in it cannot help being filled to overflowing with sympathy and respect.

There are many forms of learning: some, pertaining *only* to the brain, make a person cold and sterile. But he who learns the truth of the universe is filled with radiance; his life is giving, not seizing and possessing.

He who gives, receives best; he who asks for little, gains most. This is true even in a worldly sense. There are persons who try to gain respect by demanding that other people should behave towards them in a particular way. But those who earn real respect are not those who demand, but those who are happy and good in themselves and who do not need to ask from outside. Our former President, N. Sri Ram, was universally loved, not because he thought highly of himself but because he embodied the spirit of humility and self-effacing wisdom. Respect came to him because he did not ask for it. Every person can receive much, provided he learns not to be insistent, aggressive or demanding, but loving, sympathetic and considerate of others.

A Convention is often physically inconvenient: rooms and bathrooms have to be shared, there is noise, and one is served food to which one is not accustomed, but what does it matter? Can we not forget for a little while at least the discomforts and be at peace, receptive and considerate of other and of the work as a whole? This is a valuable kind of training. Life offers many such opportunities for learning to 'knock off excrescences' and to give up the desire for comfort, self-importance and self-opinionatedness, and experience a new quality of mind.

To be Theosophical means to act in accordance with the great Law by which everything is related inextricably, intrinsically, to everything else. Without learning this, how can anyone teach Theosophy? We come to the Convention to learn and that learning must not end. The spirit of the Convention goes on, its inspiration remains, teaching all of us to live in a different way and help to create a new world.

## **07.THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE TS AT ADYAR (Dec. 1982)**

The headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar has been and is many things to many people. It is a place of peace; a sacred centre to shelter those who are making the pilgrimage to the 'sanctuary' within their own hearts; it is a living symbol of friendship transcending the barriers created by the mind; it is a garden and a hermitage where nature unveils secrets to those who are sensitive; a meeting ground for students of philosophy and religious lore; a paradise for children who are growing up; and much besides. Colonel Olcott wrote about Adyar in his diary, 'No large Society' could ask for a better executive headquarters than ours..... When HPB and I first saw it, it filled her with enthusiasm and her love of it endured to the last.'

The love poured into it by generations of members, and the work which has been done within its boundaries have endowed it with a quality of beauty and a power to uplift which thousands of visitors and even casual passers-by have felt. Nearly a century ago, HSO wrote that Adyar had become 'a strong nucleus of the noble aspirations of the Founders of the Society and their working colleagues'. Today, that nucleus of aspirations is stronger and larger, radiating with what the worldwide membership of the Society has given to it for a hundred years.

Adyar is primarily a place of work. Its tranquil atmosphere is 'maddening to one whose nerves have been always jangling in the hurly-burly of a western city', to quote Colonel Olcott again. But under this serene exterior, the work flows on like the strong currents of a river whose surface appears still.

To the materialistically conditioned mind, work is synonymous with outer bustle, the organizing of events, the splash of publicity and the moving about of people. Form the Theosophical point of view, work implies freeing the mind of obscurities and lifting it into a state of moral awareness and spiritual insight. Quiet moments of introspection and thoughtfulness by seashore or river bank, in the library or in a study session, may achieve more than the more spectacular forms of activity which easily attract attention but do not bring about a change in the condition of the human mind.

Adyar's function is naturally closely connected with the fundamental aim of the Theosophical Society, which is to bring about the spiritual regeneration of man. The immense problems of human relationship and human society have their origin in man's mind which is a battleground full of contradictions that are generally ignored or concealed. The Theosophical Society seeks to bring about a radical change in human society and to establish relationships of harmony and understanding instead of strife and suspicion. This can only be done if people begin to see honestly what is happening with their own minds and how the mind's condition is reflected in outer events and tensions.

The work of the Theosophical Society therefore involves a way of life which leads to self-knowledge, and knowledge of the laws of being. Only when man begins to act, think, feel and 'be' in accordance with the unchanging and unchangeable laws which pervade and regulate all things in the visible as well as the invisible worlds, does his psyche permit spiritual energy to flow through from hidden depths. Both individual regeneration and the reordering of human society in such a way that harmony, freedom and creativity flourish, depend on discovering the right way of living.

The ancient *āśrama-s* were generally guided by holy and wise men whose presence and influence, and not merely their teachings, brought the conviction that it is possible to live differently. The function of Adyar is to foster such a way of living.

The current of worldliness is generally so strong everywhere that in most people's minds there is an underlying doubt. On the one hand, they accept that a change in attitudes, thinking and relationships is necessary in order to create a peaceful and happy world; on the other hand there is the feeling that selfishness is necessary for security and that without ambition and the adoption of worldly norms and patterns one will be submerged in the struggle to forge ahead. Most people can think of no energy other than ambition to spur to activity and even to routine living. The age-long conditioning (*samskara*) out of which thought emanates equates ambition, mild or aggressive, with living and progressing. Selfishness (for ambition is essentially selfish) is the background philosophy of average human beings who are on the whole decent and kind, and even of those who are trying to live a spiritual life. *Light on the Path*



points out that such traits as ambition can 'pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple'. This background of selfishness and ambition is not eradicated as long as doubt lingers over whether there is a future for oneself without it, and the fear that all energy will ebb away along with its disappearance.

Adyar has proved to be a true *āśrama*, for within it there has always existed the presence, example and instruction to dissipate doubt and fear. Its atmosphere gives stability to those inner movements in the individual which take him nearer to the realization of peace and freedom. There is something in the atmosphere of the eternal in its tranquility. Here, it is easier than in most other places to understand what it means to live at levels of thought which wipe away selfish impulses and personal ambitions.

Adyar's function as the world headquarters of the Theosophical Society is inextricably linked with its role as a centre for spiritual living. Just as words spoken and lectures given by one lacking in sincerity and depth fall flat and fail to move, so the impetus and inspiration which go out from the Society's headquarters would diminish if the centre were not charged with inner energy. Adyar is meant to be not merely an administrative complex, but the magnetic and vital heart of the Society, continually purifying and replenishing the worldwide body.

Adyar's work is accomplished not merely by the few who have the great privilege of living there, for shorter or longer periods, but by all members of the Society who have Adyar in their hearts and realize its role. For a hundred years, it has been cherished and supported by a vast number of members who have never seen it physically, but who know it and are part of it inwardly. This is as it should be, for it augurs an era when men and women in far distant places, having never met and seen each other will yet be united in heart and mind by shared interests and a common cause. Such an inward unity will overcome all seeming obstacles in relationship and be a strong foundation for the federation of the world of which Tennyson sang.

It is comparatively easy for people to be joined in a fellowship with restricted or sectarian objectives. The attachment to national, racial, religious and communal interests can be overridden by the passion for a cause which is equally harmful, because it is divisive. The appeal of the Theosophical Society and its spiritual heart lies in the fact that they pioneer the effacement of egoism and the unification of men and women in the unbreakable and constructive bonds of a divisionless universality.

### **o8.ADYAR CENTENARY (Feb 1982)**

We are at the beginning of the year 1982, when members all over the world will be thinking about Adyar because it is the hundredth anniversary of the Headquarters in this spot. The Convention at the end of the year will be a large one, since many more members from overseas are planning to come.

In his *Old Diary Leaves*, Colonel Olcott tells us how he had looked for a permanent Headquarters in a number of places. Many properties were shown to him and to HPB—*large bungalows set in beautiful surroundings—but perhaps the psychic atmosphere was not right in any of them. At last they came to Madras and someone spoke about Huddleston Gardens, as this place was called in those days. They came to see it and ‘at a single glance’, to use his own words, ‘we knew that our future home was found’.*

Unfortunately, a certain number of people outside India—and perhaps within India also—talk loosely about the Headquarters being established somewhere else. The fact that there has been a strike, or because there were some financial difficulties three or four years ago, is not a sufficient reason to think of moving. The earliest labour trouble here was in 1931, when Annie Besant was President, but there was never any thought then of abandoning Adyar. Adyar has had its share of ups and downs. In the early days when HPB was still here there were many storms including the treacherous Coulomb affair which brought calumny against HPB and the Society everywhere. There is no place on earth where there are no difficulties. Indeed, whenever a place becomes a focus for spiritual influences, counter-forces are likely to be set up.

This is the normal order of things. The existence of obstacles is not a reason for abandoning the work, nor the place in which it is carried out. So, it is only from a very superficial viewpoint that some say: there are problems in Adyar, or in the country—and which country does not have problems? — and therefore it is the end of the Headquarters there.

First of all, I do not think it is practical to move the Headquarters elsewhere. But that is a minor reason. The real reason is contained in the words of Colonel Olcott. He was a great traveller. He visited beautiful places in America, Europe and Japan, but he said there was not a single place like this one. Perhaps it is still true. No *āśrama*, I think, can compare with Adyar for its spiritual influences. It is a sacred place hallowed by the lives and labours of numerous dedicated workers. Reading the history of the Theosophical Society, which in the earliest years was confined almost entirely to India and centred around Adyar, we cannot fail to be deeply moved by the events which took place here. Adyar is still the same spiritual centre that it was then, and still stands for the same principles and ideals. For Adyar is not just the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society. There is a board outside Dr Besant's room on which is written, 'Work for Adyar, the Masters' Home.' 'The Masters' Home does not mean something material. It means that Adyar must be a home for Their influence, from which Their radiance may spread out.

Adyar is no ordinary community in which people may cooperate—or not—for a variety of ulterior purposes. *Those who live in a place like Adyar, if they really want to make it and maintain it as it should be, should have a spirit of giving, of contributing to its inner spiritual wealth rather than of receiving advantages for themselves. Every person must be there to give something of himself.*

Beauty is one of the qualities which every *āśrama* should have—the beauty of buildings no less than of nature. *We must not be satisfied with the merely passable. Everything must be of the best—not luxurious, but the best, the most beautiful. If this is indeed the Masters' Home, should it not always be like this?*

There is a statement in the Mahatma Letters to the effect that the higher influences can be channeled only through the unruffled mind. If Adyar is to be a channel of spiritual influences, those who live there must bring about a condition of peace by living peaceful lives, which is not, one might add, the same as leading dull lives.

An *āśrama* is a place of learning. In the old days in India disciples gathered around a holy person. We do not have to do that; rather we gather around a spiritual guidance, a way, a teaching, which is perhaps better than gathering around a personality.

If there is the right state within ourselves, then we can really benefit from being in an *āśrama* like this and, in turn, add to it our own strength. The peace that we experience in an *āśrama* is neither placid nor dull. Peace is not inconsistent with eagerness of intellect. So an *āśrama*, as I said, is also a place of learning; and learning requires receptivity, an alert intellect, an eagerness to find the truth. Thus, if we are concerned that Adyar should continue to be a real centre of spirituality, we must bring to it that spirit of enquiry, that concern with truth which reaches out to discover the deeper meaning of Life. I hope that our Centre of Studies will grow into a special centre of learning for the sake of those who are eager students and seekers. But this spirit of eagerness is not for the classroom alone. Not only should each one have the leisure necessary for study and meditation, for sitting quietly under a tree or by the sea and becoming inwardly aware, but each one of us should pull his weight in the work assigned to him.

India, like the rest of the world, has been invaded by 'modern knowledge'. Modern knowledge has achieved wonderful things in the eradication of disease; in making life easier. But this knowledge is outward turned, for the mind always externalizes questions. If Adyar is to be a centre of regeneration, then all of us who work here must unfold our capacity for action from our inner being. That means we must learn to go deeply within. That is part of the life of an *Āśrama*; enquiry with the intellect must be balanced with going inwards for realization. The word realization has been so much used that it has lost meaning for many people. It

means making real. The ability to talk about something, to speculate about it, does not mean that it is real to us. We may speak about affection, cooperation and brotherhood, but it is not realization for us until we begin *actually* to be affectionate, brotherly and cooperative. The realization of a quality means that it has become part of our own nature and to act from that kind of realization, to some extent to act with it, is part of living in an *āśrama*.

It is so easy to celebrate centenaries. Personally I do not like the word 'celebrate' in connection with the centenary of Adyar. But it can be a year of rededication, a year of re-strengthening our spiritual life, of renewing our own sense of inspiration—*then it will have some meaning. There is much here already. Let us make use of it in order to progress further.*

I mention these things because I feel we should be clear about what Adyar is and what it stands for. We are well aware of our sense of responsibility towards them. The few of us who are privileged to live here are increasingly conscious of our duty to maintain it as a true spiritual centre.

