



DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

128th INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, ADYAR

Price Rs.3

29 December 2003

Number 4

VALUES NEEDED FOR TRUE PROGRESS

N. Vittal

(Summary of the Besant Lecture on 28.12.03)

Annie Besant made valuable contributions to society in England, and also played a very effective role in India's freedom struggle. She always stood for freedom and liberalization. She represented the eternal values of human dignity and symbolized progress. By exploring the values needed for true progress, we are paying tribute to the basic message of her life.

What is the progress we are talking about? Are we talking about the progress of individuals, of a section of a community, or of the whole of society? As I see it, we are talking about the progress of all people in society.

But then, what does progress really mean? God has blessed each one of us with the same talent — a divine spark. Realizing one's full potential is the essence of progress. Thus if we conceive of the individual's progress in terms of realizing his full potential, ensuring that the entire society progresses along with him, we would be coming near the concept of the progress which is the topic of this lecture.

In a way, the essence of Vedanta represents the true concept of progress: *Atmanam mokshartham jagat-hitaya-cha*. The individual should realize his liberation while benefiting society as a whole. I would interpret *moksha* as also meaning a person realizing his full potential, not merely in the traditional sense of getting liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

And what do we mean by values? Behind our every action there is a certain principle. Although we may not be aware of it, we take every action based on certain values that we cherish. This framework of values gets crystallized as our individual value. The *Bhagavad-gita* divides human nature into three *guna-s*, or categories: *rajas*, or the dominant nature; *sattva*, or those who are spiritual and practise good values; and *tamas*, the most inactive and passive. The *Gita* also teaches that no person can avoid actions according to his nature or, in other words, according to his values. In Chapter 3, Lord Krishna says that every person's nature

Symposium: 'Altruism First and Last'

Participants in the symposium which took place in the morning of 28 December were Mr Paul Zwollo, the Netherlands, Mr. Robert S. Corrington, USA, and Mr Abraham Oron, Israel.

Mr Paul Zwollo

Altruism, derived from the Latin *alter*, meaning 'other', means in general the care which we should take for the interests of others. It is a synonym for unselfishness and leads to self-forgetfulness and a sacrificing of oneself for the good of mankind.

Universal brotherhood and philanthropy can be regarded as equivalents of altruism, and for that reason have been frequently used by the Mahatmas and HPB.

Altruism, universal brotherhood, and philanthropy are all facets of the Oneness of life, on which Theosophy is grounded. According to one of the first Mahatma Letters, the chief object of the Theosophical Society is 'to serve our fellow man', certainly not to form 'a college for the special study of occultism', which was the view of Mr A. P. Sinnett. The Mahachohan paraphrased the word 'altruism' as follows: 'The self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour.' That constitutes the true Theosophist, according to the Chohan, urging us 'to stretch out the hand of Fellowship'. Altruism refers to benevolence and kindness, affection and good-will, charity and philanthropy, sympathy and appreciation.

Egoism is exactly the opposite of altruism, thinking that the good is based on the pursuit of one's own welfare and profit. The spiritual instructors of Madame Blavatsky, the Mahatmas, were exponents of altruism and philanthropy, lovers of mankind in the true sense. They show a practical benevolence towards men in general, and call themselves 'devoted followers of that spirit incarnate of absolute self-sacrifice, of philanthropy and divine kindness, Gautama Buddha'.

Every spiritual movement that deserves the name 'religion' can be called altruistic, having in mind the good and well-being of all those to whom it tries to pass on its teachings. Only the methods of presentation have to change from time to time. Altruism, however, does not exclude using our common sense. The secret of a balanced and real spiritual life lies in treading the middle way and avoiding the extremes.

Altruism could be described by quoting a sentence of one of the Masters: 'You have to leave your world and come into ours.' A sentence to meditate upon! Let us be courageous and become discoverers of new directions of thought!

Robert S. Corrington

True altruism means, among other things, entering into and assuming the perspective of another self and in that process fully realizing the pain and isolation of that self. Yet altruism as thus defined is not a human possibility. We are all buffeted by the instincts of aggression and sexual competition. Further, the unconscious, that most uncanny of guests, thwarts us on all sides, especially when we try our hardest to attain even a momentary respite from our imperial ego. A call for altruism seems like a cruel mockery in the face of our self-centred instincts and our trickster-like unconscious mind.

However, the genius of Theosophy lies in the fact that it too recognizes that the current self-structure cannot become altruistic. But instead of stopping here in despair, Theosophy makes the bold leap into the Higher Self, which can envelop and electrify the self of instincts and unconscious psychopathology.

However — and for me this is important — it is very dangerous to think that we can leap into, say, *buddhi-manas*, without doing the often

Abraham Oron

In many ways, each person is like a stream that makes his way to the ocean. During this long journey, a person may get lost again and again in the desert or in the swamps of ignorance, separation and illusion. This may go on until the person will

distasteful work of phychoanalysis. To ignore the work of thinkers like Freud, Jung, and Reich, is to run the serious risk of a psychic inflation that mistakes its own imperial narcissism for genuine altruism. If altruism is just a slogan for us, we run the risk of becoming blind to our own demons. But if we are serious about the prospect of 'entering into and assuming the perspective of another self', then we must first grasp and deal with the astonishing power of aggression, sexuality, and an always elusive and cunning unconscious. Put more simply, we cannot truly attain the higher and altruistic self if we fail to honour what comes from below.

Our history as a movement has many examples of success and failures in this correlation of the powerful depths and light-filled heights. I am persuaded that the people who were most eager to avoid looking below were the most prone to a self-worshipping narcissism that deluded itself into thinking it had attained enlightenment and compassion. But for those who looked below and above, the grace of loving altruism filled their lives. And we here can do the same.

awaken to find his river, with which he can unite and flow towards the sea.

In *Light on the Path* it is said that 'Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth and the life'. I think that the meaning of this phrase is that the path and the pace of advancement

of each individual are exclusively his own responsibility. The greatest cause for slowing-down the pace, according to *Light on the Path*, is when the man 'allows the idea of separateness to grow up within him'.

The source of all human suffering is the illusion of separation, which causes the person to see himself as separated from others and from the whole. As long as the person is lured and bewitched by the external world, and creates the self-image he calls 'I', he will continue to experience separation, fear and suffering.

In the words of the Indian sage Shankaracharia, from his book *Vivekachudamani*, as long as man — and even one with great perception — sees even the slightest difference

between himself and the infinite Bhahman, fear will rise in his heart. The notion of such a difference is the fruit of ignorance.

The foundation of all true altruism is the intuitive recognition of the divine, which is the self in all beings. When this recognition awakens in us, the service of others happens naturally, without the thought that we are doing something special, or that we deserve a reward for that service. Because, when we identify the One Self with its shining love in our heart, the internal knowledge that we all are but drops from the same ocean — which is the Self — awakens within ourselves, and then we do not see others any more, because all are One.

Percussion Concert

This year's concert was masterfully led by Karaikudi Mani, a well-known Mridangam artist. He has branches of his teaching school, 'Srutilaya Kendra', in London, Australia and Germany, besides cities in India, where more than 1,500 students are being trained. The others who performed with him, to the delight of all present, on the 28 evening percussion concert were B. V. Balasai (flute), A. Durgaprasad (gottuvadyam), B. Sunderkumar (kanjeera), A. S. Shankarr (ghatam), and Srirangam Kannan (morsing). The concert is entitled 'Truth-Victory' ('Satyam-Jayam').

THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

Latin America

Several of the reports from Latin America mention that economic conditions have made their work harder. The Inter-American Federation met in October 2002 in Mexico to elect new officers and make plans for strengthening and developing the work. The

President of the Federation, Mrs Terezinha Franca Kind, accompanied by the Vice-President of the Federation, Mrs Magaly Polanco, lectured in ten countries, as a result of which some study groups were formed and a few members joined the Society. The former General Secretary of the Mexican