

The great and peaceful ones live regenerating the world like the coming of the spring; having crossed the ocean of embodied existence themselves, they freely aid all others who seek to cross it. The very essence and inherent will of Mahatmas is to remove the suffering of others, just as the ambrosia-rayed moon of itself cools the earth heated by the intense rays of the sun.

SHANKARACHARYA

UNIVERSALITY AND SECTARIANISM

Universality and sectarianism are of fundamental significance to all of us. They are interlinked with an intractable problem in relation to nature, in relation to knowledge, and in relation to what we call Theosophia—the Wisdom of the Ages. They are also reflected in the enigmatic relationships between past, present and future, between all three and the Eternal, between the abstract and the concrete, the manifest and the unmanifest. In the Vedic hymns we have a supreme statement of affirmation combined simultaneously with a note of agnosticism. We find this tradition in all the great Teachers of Wisdom who truly came to formulate and also to intimate, knowing that formulation could become the enemy of the unformulated. They knew that, while in a Platonic sense Time is the moving image of Eternity, there is another sense in which there is an unavoidable war between the dreams, the ideas, the potentialities that lie within Eternity and the cycles that work themselves out with highs and lows, ups and downs, through all the vicissitudes of historical time.

The problem is cosmological and metaphysical. Philosophically it becomes a problem of epistemology, of the relation between the knower and the known. Ethically it becomes a problem of action, of the relation between the individual as an actor or agent and the world that is external to him, a problem of inner and outer. And, of course, if the Theosophical Movement in time is an integral part of a vaster history that extends far beyond the recorded annals of time, then the Theosophical Movement, in our historical sense, will participate in the age-old problem. This was a distinction that H.P. Blavatsky was extremely concerned to make. She made it in the very first article that she wrote, stating what Theosophy is, and she maintained this distinction till the end. Mystically, it is present in *The Voice of the Silence*, sometimes illuminated in the footnotes that she prepared. She was asked by the Brotherhood to hint at the distinction between the *psyche* and the *nous*, the psychic and the noetic in man and in nature. At the very end of her life she wrote her article on psychic and noetic action. All of this is deeply worth pondering upon, but it is something that each of us must do for himself, something on which there can be no formulated consensus among those who call themselves either Theosophists or students of Theosophy, least of all among formal organizations.

In a way the problem is acutely present on the political scene. It arises in the relation of world order to its materialization on the visible plane—the connection between the cosmopolis which is metaphysical and mystic, existing already for some though utterly irrelevant for others, and some kind of megalopolis which we would like to see emerge in the realm of political institutions. It is bound up with the problem of identity for individuals in all cultures and nations, of all races, of both sexes, of different age groups. It is involved in all the feuds of our time —those tensions which cannot be resolved merely by words, by gestures or symbols, and which cannot be resolved vicariously for the many by a few, however gifted or generous they may be as leaders of thought and opinion. It cannot be resolved for the laity by popes or bishops, swamis or lamas, self-styled or otherwise. It is a problem that is at the very core of every human being. We face the problem collectively, in all walks of life, as a problem of organizations.

Historically, it is the problem of why, at the very times and in the very places where the most ardent movements emerged in the name of the very greatest ideals, we find in those very places and springing therefrom in a subsequent period the most hideous nightmares—long shadows cast by large causes. We find this in all the syncretist movements in the nineteenth century, often succeeded by the most terrible forms of separatism. It is almost as if to speak of unity and universality, and to speak more often than it is possible to mean it, is to tempt the satan or the devil in every man and in collective humanity, and to invite more disorder, more division. This is an age-old story. This may well be the reason why some of the greatest students of even the recorded and over-written history of the West came to dismal, grim and pessimistic conclusions. This could be the reason why Gibbon said that history is a story of crimes, follies and misfortunes. This could be why Hegel, among philosophers, could assert that the only lesson men seem to learn from history is that they learn nothing from it.

In this larger context students of Theosophy cannot but be truly humble. There never was a suggestion, and there never could be, that by any act of association with any Theosophical organization, even by long years of study and involvement with Theosophical texts, even by long years of ethical and mystical training along Theosophical lines, that a person somehow has a privileged access to the Wisdom-Religion. No man can speak as its sole custodian or its ultimate authority. No man can claim that he is any different from other men. The very thought of separation becomes for him a wall, a barrier that will divide him both from other men and also, alas, sometimes unknown to him but often painfully so, separate him from the Great Custodians of the Wisdom-Religion. It is only appropriate, recognizing these limitations and the immensity of the fundamental problem of unravelling and using Theosophia in our lives, that we should turn beyond the nineteenth century, beyond the centenary cycle that began in 1875, to the Mahatmas of whom H.P. Blavatsky spoke and to the wider vision we can discern in the scriptures and the teachers of world history.

Five thousand years ago Krishna, the enigmatic and mysterious Teacher who came at the beginning of Kali Yuga, both ended a cycle and struck a keynote for the long Dark Age into which humanity would be plunged. On the battlefield of Duty, *Kurukshetra*, which was *Dharmakshetra*, he made a beautiful and puzzling statement to Arjuna—who went through all the many vagaries and ambivalences of friendship and discipleship, and indeed at the end proved himself to have been a worthy friend and pupil of Krishna though not ready for initiation. After giving Arjuna the universal vision of “the Divine Eye,” Krishna said to Arjuna: “But what O Arjuna, hast thou to do with so much knowledge as this? I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself, and remain separate.” This statement partakes of that deeply puzzling relation between the transcendent and the immanent in all subsequent theologies and concepts of the Godhead. It is dramatically put forward here in a manner that seems to be personified and yet has the curious obscurity of an impersonal cosmic enigma. There is a world and yet there is no world. The world has a mind and a Logos, and yet it does not. There is meaning to the world and yet there is absurdity to it. There is a supreme concern and compassion in the world flowing from whatever preceded it, whatever sustains and nourishes it, whatever destroys and recreates it. At the same time there is a supreme detachment that may sound to us almost like cold indifference.

While it is a classical stance, the importance of the statement is not merely what it says about Krishna. Like everything else that a great Teacher does, it is meant to release in Arjuna authentic representations of an archetypal stance. Whatever part he chose or course of action he took, it was possible for Arjuna to have unconditional help from Krishna. It was also possible for him—in relation to his world—both to be involved and to stand outside it. This central message of that Great Teacher became a clue for ancient Brahmins who were torn between deploring the end of what looked like a Golden Age in comparison to what was emerging, and a deep concern to preserve and maintain something in the new age. It became a keynote pointing to a new modulus of growth, a principle of self-reliance not merely grounded in individual human nature but also serving as a basic pattern for social structures.

It was a very difficult lesson, hardly capable of being absorbed and assimilated by those who conservatively became attached to the existing and subsequent representations of an ideal, classical social order. At the same time, there was an awareness that the lesson could be grasped in principle by any man, especially when he had really got into a series of messes, when he had been betrayed on the basis of the trust he had put in fathers and teachers who failed him, when he was involved in all those acts of betrayal that are a part of the human inheritance. It would still be possible for him to say, “I am not abandoned,” or “I do not have to insult the integrity of the universe, because if there is meaning, divinity and dignity to the world and in my life, it is always possible for me to claim it. This is my privilege. In order to be a man by self-assertion in the deepest sense, by self-definition, I shall declare my destiny as one

who is proud to inhabit a human form.” Hence in art, in literature and in traditions of mystical training, the celebration of the privilege of birth in a human form. It became part of the recognition that every man is given in trust that which he did not make—a potential temple in which there is an indwelling god—where Krishna is closer to each one of us than anyone else outside.

The way to that Krishna within requires a transformation and a humbling of the insecure, weak and personal self, representative of all the conflicting doubts of Arjuna. This self that wants to be loved, that wants guarantees of salvation, has got to be abandoned, to yield. Arjuna is ready for the universal vision only when he reaches that point where he ceases fault-finding and Krishna is able to say to him: “Unto thee who findeth no fault, I shall now make known this most mysterious knowledge.” In all human relationships there must be a certain magical quality of trust—between mother and child, between teacher and pupil—though this is more easily seen in areas that appear mystically or morally neutral, like music, than in our ordinary encounters in society and the system. Unless there is that spontaneous ceasing of a sense of difference there will not be the possibility of the magic, the magic of pregnancy which will be fruitful, which would culminate in the birth of something meaningful and joyous—the birth of Wisdom.

We have, then, five thousand years ago, an archetypal statement of the relation between the whole and the part, the unmanifest and the manifest, the transcendent and the immanent. Krishna is both. He is the cosmic Krishna—more a force than a person, not to be understood in ordinary terms—and he is also a historical personage. The same tradition, but in another mode, is enunciated again two thousand five hundred years ago, in the coming of the Buddha. While he ridiculed the claims of any men to be the exclusive heirs, to be the custodians, the trustees in Time, of the eternal revelation, the *Sanatana Dharma*, he at the same time redefined the very notion of the Eternal Religion. The *Sanatana Dharma*, he said, is the religion which teaches that hatred ceaseth not by hatred, but by love. It is only the person exercising extraordinarily and increasingly elusive skill of being able to draw the larger circle, of resolving and reconciling by going beyond, without getting caught in confrontations and dichotomies, who can speak authentically about the Eternal Religion.

There is an Eternal Religion written in the very hearts of men that is reinforced by the most natural modes of transmission from the old to young, from teacher to pupil, from mother to child. There are these intimations in the hearts of all human beings. There are certain things that no one can be told or need be told, because if he does not know them already, telling will never be able to instruct. These fundamental truths are not merely felt. They can also be known, but this involves conceptions of knowing and of knowledge that are remote from our time because they presuppose the dissolution of the very separation between the knower and the known. You can truly know these fundamental truths only when they cease to be external and become

the very breath of your life and basis of your being. Then they set the context or perspective in which everything else may be known and identified in a more specific sense. Unless we could know something—and this would require a particular kind of meditation—about abstract, absolute, unmanifest Space, all statements that are spatial in context would have a disproportionate significance. In affirming they would also be denying. In the truth they tell they would also be lying. As with Space, so too with Time. Unless we could recover a sense of an unconditioned reality reflected in an eternal and perpetual process that far transcends all limited conceptions of times that have a beginning and an end, there would be no way by which we could emancipate ourselves from the tyranny of beginnings and endings, no way by which immortality could become not merely a right or an ideal but a fact for human beings.

Similarly with Consciousness and Motion. Unless we could visualize unconditioned consciousness we would always be liable to be caught in the conditionalities of manifested consciousness. We would be involved in illusions. How would we know this? Because every time we were involved in that which is conditioned, we would pretend that it is not and exaggerate its value. This becomes the root of what we call the problem of the ego—the problem of the shadowy self that pretends to be that which it can never be. Growing from childhood like a spoiled child, it becomes terrible tyrant who displaces from the central throne the inner ruler, the unknown god, the Krishna within, and actually becomes the enemy, the satan. Until a person could recognize this within himself, there would be no solution to the human problem. But metaphysically he could never recognize it unless there were in that shadow a vulnerable point, a connection between that lower self and the unconditioned.

Hence the enormous significance of the assertion by the Buddha:

Ho! ye who suffer! know
Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels,
None other holds you that ye live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss
Its spokes of agony,
Its tire of tears, its nave of nothingness.

You are free, but you can only assert that freedom by exercising it, and you could only exercise that freedom authentically by becoming and behaving like a man who is in awe of no one, afraid of nothing. Any other conception of human dignity or of human equality has a compensatory value. It strikes a false note. It cannot carry the certification of the absolute assurance with which Krishna speaks of immortality in the second chapter of the *Gita*, the absolute assurance with which Buddha speaks of the possibility for every man of becoming a Buddha, or the like assurance he displays at the end of his life in making light of all distinctions—between Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and hierarchies—that people try to impose upon One Universal Life.

We find the same principle in subsequent teachings. We find it in the elusive magic of the relationship of Pythagoras to his own School. He insisted upon a certain kind of acceptance by all, of their individual unimportance in relation to the collective, while at the same time he found the need for taking upon himself responsibility. In his life this meant his assumption of all ascriptions of credit. This was done to disallow anyone from corrupting the common cure. He also tried to make men see it mathematically, to make men understand the supreme sovereign importance of limit, which they would better understand in the architecture of the world and of all creativity when they already had some sense of the unlimited, the illimitable. Zero must be seen and understood before we can appreciate the number series and the distinction between odd and even numbers.

Similarly, it is found in the life of Jesus, the most dramatic and tragic of incarnations in the recorded history that we have so over-celebrated and are now trying to get away from in what we call the Christian era. This extraordinary Initiate, in his own direct relations with those around him, was able to carry conviction about the indwelling Christos in every man. He made each feel much better and, indeed, a participant in the glorification of the Kingdom of God on earth. At the same time he made each one aware that nobody, not even himself, could be any more than merely a pointer to That which does not come into the world, which is not in the realm of appearances, That which will come again but which in one sense never began and never can be seen or shown in time. Understanding of this enigma underwent a complex subsequent development, which came to a certain culmination crucial to history in St. Augustine, concerning the relation between the unmanifest and the manifest, the tension between the Platonic element in Christianity and the more narrowly materialistic aspects of both Hellenic and Hebraic thought, for various reasons known only to a few who were the custodians of the other and unspoken side of both.

It is a very complex story, but knowing its subtle details is not relevant here. We do know it writ large in history in the name of the Prince of Peace. Untold bloodshed and violence have been dropped upon the human sea in the name of the meekest of men, that paradigm of saintly Initiates and Teachers who went to preach the gospel of universal love and goodwill. There emerged the most monstrously narrow and shallow claims to a historic and physical uniqueness, which people are now trying somehow to rationalize. There is something in the human mind that is insulted, the subtler the apologetics. There is also something which makes one feel “I’ve been that way before.” Is there, then, a sense in which all of us—from wherever we come, whatever tradition we inherit in this life, whatever memories we bear from our possible previous lives—come into the Theosophical Movement in the hope of a transubstantiation that will make us free? But only as we grow older do we see the scars and the wounds in our *psyche*. We can see in each other, and more painfully in ourselves, mirror images of the fundamentalist, of the latitudinarian, of every kind of heretical denomination to be found in the Christian tradition or in all of the religious schools.

We find them even in that most crucial of arenas, the very relationship of a man, who calls himself a student of Theosophy, to Theosophy itself; the relationship of the seeker to the wisdom he seeks; the relationship of a man, who is a potential disciple of a Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas, to that Brotherhood itself. Perhaps more caricature, more ridicule, more martyrdom was psychologically experienced in the modern age by the great Teachers of Theosophy than in past ages, even though endured at a level of humorous compassion. Those Beings took the extraordinarily bold and unprecedented decision to make known publicly what was always guarded secretly—their very existence and accessibility in time to any man. Yet They themselves came to be appropriated both by individuals who tried to claim special relationships and treated Them like personal gods or household idols, and by those who transcendentalized Them out of existence.

We are dealing with a fact of human consciousness. In love, in family life, in scholarship, in the quest for truth, in the pursuit of skills in music or art—anyone may understand the profound importance of continuity of consciousness, of being true to an ideal despite one's forgetfulness and one's limitations. Surely in this realm too, it is evident that the world of the future which Theosophists wish to frame will be determined by what dominates their consciousness twenty-four hours a day and seven days of the week, as much as by the wisdom and the compassion, the energy and the ideation of Adepts. Now, when all earlier judgments which at first appeared so Olympian have subsequently proven absurd in regard to great Teachers—small men trying to size up greater Beings and put them in a Pantheon—are we going to try to have a true assessment, a correct scholarly estimate of H.P. Blavatsky? We are liable to the same error on which a whole tragic novel was written by Hermann Hesse—*The Journey to the East*. Is it not like asking, “How do I know that the Fraternity exists?” when in the very asking of the question one is defining oneself: “Because my life is meaningless, I may think the universe is meaningless. Scriptures are empty and do not speak, but let me be careful.” We may fall into the trap but how long do we stay in it? Do we give ourselves a chance to come out of it? Or do we box the compass and become unwitting partners in our own self-destruction? This is a fateful question bound up with the problem of survival—psychological survival for men and women today at all levels of the contemporary revolution.

The only persons who can psychologically accommodate themselves to the kind of world we live in and which is emerging are those who can authentically inherit the whole of human history, even though most of it is unknown to us. Which of us can say: “Everything human is deeply relevant and meaningful to me, and where I cannot know, at least I will not condemn. Even if I cannot understand the myths of particular peoples, the scriptures of other times, the languages, the cultures, the folkways of other men which may be strange to me, let me not mock, let me not make a great thing of my pathetic ignorance. Let me be silent. Let me be open. Let me in some

way that is natural to me show that I too can acclimatize myself to the more rarefied altitudes of world citizenship that are authentic, that are more than mere assertions of goodwill, but are filled with a positive enjoyment and exaltation at every kind of human endeavour, every form of excellence as well as positive appreciation for every kind of struggle and compassion for every kind of failure.”

Unless a man can do this, can he even survive into the future? There are those who are afraid they cannot, who therefore want to write about the end of history, but only find themselves unable to communicate with others who, though young, weak-willed, lazy, lonely, spoilt and everything else, still know something else—that they are not going to play that game. They do not want sophistication at that price. They do not want a packaged Great Books from whichever university. They can see through that. They at least want to be able to feel that inwardly they can extend a hand to the wretched of the earth, that they can understand what it means to take one’s place in the great galaxy of mankind’s history. Minimally, they are willing to stand in the backstage of the theatre on which world history is being played.

This is a crucial question. For some it may seem that the world ‘outside’ has very little relevance to the Theosophical Movement as it was constituted in 1875. To others it might seem exactly the opposite. It may be that the world outside more has been gained and more is at stake that involves Theosophical issues than we shall ever be able to recognize within the narrower groups and organizations that are called Theosophical. Stranger things have happened in the history of man. Today there are men outside the countries where Krishna taught and the Buddha preached to whom Krishna and the Buddha are more meaningful than they are to those who might claim a kind of inherited relationship to them purely because of race or pride of birth, but who cannot sustain that relationship or be credible in it. Equally, there may be those who do not call themselves Theosophists but who may better understand what is at the core, what is at stake, in the great drama of coming events.

H.P. Blavatsky, of course, wrote about this. In her letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury she pointed out that there were many people calling themselves Christian who simply did not find it convenient or possible to speak frankly but who knew more than the subtlest and even seemingly generous liberal flights of the theologians. Something more was at stake which has now increasingly come to the fore. The man in the pew might for many reasons have gone along with what came from the pulpit, but inwardly he was asking himself questions and making distinctions. There are people all over the world, of whatever race or religion, or totally uprooted in every feasible cultural and social sense, who understand intuitively authentic affirmations of universal needs, of universal propositions that are fundamental, of universal compassion and charity. A Yevtushenko could understand and celebrate a Martin Luther King more than his own compatriots. It is possible for men in far places to identify with those forerunners, few and far between, of the authentic language of

the human race. To take a magnificent phrase of Stringfellow Barr, “Let us join the human race.” Anyone can join the human race. There are many young people who are afraid to be joiners, no doubt for a variety of reasons, some of whom are seekers, and seekers who perhaps need more help than they know. But there is also a sense in which whatever one joins that is universal will not limit one’s capacity to communicate with or reach out to anything outside.

These are curious, inchoate, compelling and sometimes contradictory demands upon the human sea. Does Theosophy, in its primordial statement by H.P. Blavatsky, show an awareness of all of this? Surely the only way to know is by reading what she said. In her articles she gave many definitions, and that was always typical of her. She constantly varied, like an Indian musician, the manner in which she expressed herself. She was a dialectician. She did not want people to get fixated on particular formulations, and she varied them so much that only years of commitment allow one to recognize the immense inner consistency of her work, the pointing to That which is beyond, to which all forms of music point—That which is the Soundless, the music of the spheres. We find this in her writings, archetypally, again and again. One has to read every word carefully, which is difficult, because most of us have lost that habit, and some of us have never learnt it. But if we are going to value the privilege of reading her, then surely we should assume she meant the words that she used. It takes years before one comes to see, given the limitations of language, the multi-dimensional nature of what she is saying.

In the article “What is Theosophy?” she declares: “With every man that is earnestly searching in his own way after a knowledge of the Divine Principle, of man’s relation to it”— not his own, but *man’s* relation to it— “and Nature’s manifestation of it, Theosophy is allied.” If Theosophy is allied with this, then it is less so with any man who is not earnestly searching but merely claiming second-hand knowledge of that symbol or token of the Divine Principle to which he wishes to pay allegiance or by which he wishes to be saved. It is less allied with those men who are more concerned with being left out, or with their own relationship to the universe than they are with the relationship of all men or of man as a species to the universe. It is less allied to those men who think that Theosophy is only to be found in the written word or in so-called great examples of art and music, but who cannot read it in the heavens every night, read it in their dawn meditation—in that which is so profound and yet so unmanifest—who cannot read it in what can be seen in every aspect of nature’s infinite library —superb and supreme teaching where everything is covered and hidden, but everything is expressed. Everything is a veil upon that which is yet to be found.

Growth is invisible. It is under the soil. Yet the visible is an immense representation of the diversity and the variety sustained by a central unity in growth, the one in the many. The relation between the abstract and the concrete can be seen and shown in any child or in any tree. People refuse to recognize, however, that there is any

connection between all of that and themselves, and are more concerned to come to a correct judgment in regard to which book will help them or how they should regard H.P. Blavatsky. They are fortunate whose innocence and ignorance protect them from childhood and make them feel that with Teachers of Wisdom, whoever they be, there is no such thing as half-hearted commitment. You either commit yourself a hundred percent, or you do not bother about it.

This is built into the Indian tradition. If an Indian boy wants to go and make claims on behalf of religious teachers, a wise mother may often tell him, “No, choose another profession.” Religion does not have to do with making claims or with reconciling them, but with transcending everything that divides men. All of us must come to know for ourselves—and each one can only speak for himself—that if we are going to be serious about committing ourselves to the study, the practice and above all, the service, of the wisdom in *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Voice of the Silence*, then that commitment must be complete at some level. It must be unconditional at the very core, even though we may participate as fallible and personal beings in ups and downs, the vagaries of the implications of that commitment. Each must choose a particular way, and each one must choose his own, but let there be no doubt that we can ever come any closer to the Wisdom without an immense gratitude, a profound unqualified reverence for the Teachers.

“From the Teachings to the Teacher” can have meaning as a motto only if we understand that with the Teachers there is no dilly-dallying, no game-playing. This is as old as the wisdom of mankind, as old as all the Orders and goes beyond the Orders in the East. Whenever H.P. Blavatsky speaks of her Teachers, it is with a reverence that exalts her with a beauty, a feeling, an *eros* that is magical. When she spoke at the end of her life about herself, the only claim she made, and was rightfully insistent upon making, was that “Never for one moment have I denied or doubted Him, my Teacher.” She invoked—and there is a lot of complicated paradox and irony in that—the servant in *As You Like It*, to illustrate her point. She quoted the statement: “Master, go on; and I will follow thee to the last gasp, with truth and loyalty.” Anyone reading this should know that it is real, that it is a hallmark of the true Teacher. You can tell it at any time. But he should also know that he is in no position to make any assessments of her, but simply to desire to learn at her feet, and to look where she pointed to Those beyond her, to the Path of which she spoke. Whoever is able to take such a decision with a natural simplicity will find that it makes all the difference to their own particular life. What some few do as naturally as breathing they will also find, in their lives, has been possible for other rare individuals in every part of the world. These men do not happen, like Topsy. They are not *lusus naturae* or accidents. These men can never be explained empirically. They are souls, incarnating the vested wisdom of the maturity of the past in the context of the present, pointing to the future. They are the true Theosophists of whom H.P. Blavatsky spoke—Theosophists who are the friends of all living beings.

This is not to deny that any one of us can self-consciously recover an authentic universality, remain within and yet refuse to be enclosed within the sectarianism of every single person, whether on the religious, the political, the social or even the Theosophical plane. Of course *something* can be done about it. That was why H.P. Blavatsky came. To do *everything* about it is to prepare oneself for the Path, for discipleship, for initiation. She pointed out that it was the Buddha who decided—for no one else could take that decision—that in a humanity that was old in the Dark Ages, the rules could not be relaxed, but the access to the Mysteries could be increased for all. Hence many new and subtle guises of the age-old relationship most connected with the sacred—that between the esoteric and the exoteric—will be available. Anyone may wish to become a companion of the Brotherhood of Initiates. Everyone in life may go through many initiations on many planes in many forms. But if he is sensitive and delicate, and in this is authentic and concerned with the sacred, he is going to be suspicious of people who talk about it out of season, people who call attention to it. He is going to be as embarrassed as any man would be in speaking too openly about parents he loves or about those closest to him, to those for whom it may mean nothing. He knows better than that. Of course this has been done in the name of religion. It is the standard compensatory device offered, but it never worked. It did not work for the Brahmins, nor did it work in any single religion, whether for the Jews, the Egyptians, or Christians; and it is not going to work for Theosophists today. But that does not mean that men should be caught in the dichotomy between saying, “Oh, the sacred doesn’t exist,” and on the other hand, becoming insanely anxious about it.

There is always a middle way. It is always possible for a person to gain access into the most exalted chambers of initiation, to take his place in various sanctuaries, even in this day and age, anywhere in this world. But whoever he be, he can only do that by taking vows, assuming trials with a certain courage, with a certain detachment, with an authentic compassion to do it only for the sake of the whole, and with a deliberate decision to be utterly uninvolved in worry, let alone waste of energy, on behalf of his own salvation. This requires a break with the salvationism that may have been part and parcel of the Piscean Age, but will have no place in the future. W.Q. Judge wrote of that future moment when “powers will be needed and pretensions will go for naught.” That was perhaps true even in his own day for a few. Today it is true at all levels. Above all, no one can make or unmake the invisible degrees to which souls belong, nor can they easily be known because those who know will never tell, and those who tell, by definition, do not know. In regard to the invisible, spiritual stature of any human being, those who truly know are pledged to eternal secrecy, and those who are outside can never know by definition. This is analogous to the Wittgensteinian affirmation in regard to immortality, as well as to the Shavian aphorism comparing marriage and freemasonry.

There is a sense in which self-definition or self-validation becomes an authentic key towards a great universality. It opens doors and we can test it in terms of our

capacity to come closer to, communicate with, and become credible to more and more human beings wherever they be, whatever their language, their upbringing, their external labours. It does not happen automatically with a Constitution, even where that Constitution had behind it the blessing and the benediction and the deliberation of Adepts, such as that of the United States of America. Canada may be fortunate to know that while America aimed higher than any historical society, it failed so greatly too, that now the aim and the failure have both to be reckoned with. The time may yet come when Theosophia alone, in the broad and the deep sense, could provide the only metaphysical basis for the U.S.A., for Canada, or for any vast experiment that is, like the Greek *polis*, a microcosm of mankind. There is enough in Theosophy to be relevant by translation and application to every single problem.

When H.P. Blavatsky speaks of the universal solvent of Akasa and the true philosopher's stone, if one is very serious one is either going to find out something about them or one is going to say, "Well, there is something I don't know." Alas, there will be many who will never even notice the deadly earnestness with which such profound matters were spoken of in *The Secret Doctrine*. Many of the greatest minds of the age are looking for the equivalent to $E=mc^2$ which will apply to a variety of fields. They seek a philosopher's stone. Leading men in various fields of thought know enough now to realize that there is something more that could not be known by the existing methodologies and presuppositions. They are not concerned with which book you find it in. They seek to know individuals, multi-lingual in a conceptual sense, who can help. They also sense that someone who really knew would not help them unless they deserved it, unless there is a reasonable likelihood that they will not misuse the help. The universal solvent and the elixir of life are realities and not metaphorical expressions. Why, then, do we who inherit so much tend to narrow the universe and put it in a little box, instead of mirroring the universe in a grain of sand and seeing it there mirrored? Instead of doing that of which the poets and the mystics speak, why do we try to behave like those individuals who, when the Bodhisattva in the guise of an elephant came striding majestically, simply clung to their particular metaphorical planks of salvation which the compassionate elephant swept aside on its way.

Adepts, Mahatmas, and Universal Beings are not here to consolidate anyone's pet ideas, pet likes and dislikes, but watch over those who can appreciate and enjoy what is involved in the gait of a noble elephant, who will accept it like children, who will cling to nothing. Yet many people, because of fears that are understandable enough, want to save something and therefore there is sectarianism. Coleridge put the problem very well in regard to Christianity, but it is true equally in regard to Theosophy. He who loves Christianity more than every other religion will love his own sect more than every other sect, and in the end love himself best of all. There is a logical and psychological connection between egocentricity and claims on behalf of the uniqueness of institutions or of formulations. This much is by now clear in

relation to each other's orthodoxies and isms, and every man is desperately wanting to get out of the problem within himself in some way. But there is no technique. Authentic solutions involve a redefinition of self, a breakthrough—from the realm of *kama manas*, the psychic self, with its elaborate and boring history of likes and dislikes, fears and personal memories—to the sphere of the noetic with its golden moments of freedom of awareness, which every human soul has and which may be threaded together on a single strand.

So the problem again becomes one of sifting and of recovering continuity of consciousness. When a person is able to do these things, he can rise to those planes of consciousness where the great universal archetypal ideas are ever-present. He will also have a due wisdom in rendering them into the language and the form that is best suited to meet human need and to serve the circumstances of people's space and time. Since he would see every human being as a mirror of the whole of humanity, he would not think statistically about humanity, but know that each individual is infinitely important. He would, in other words, become an apprentice in the art of the dialectic so magnificently exemplified by the Buddha, who said different things to different individuals because he knew that the Teaching was multi-dimensional. Something of what he did under trees and on the great dusty pathways of a vast, teeming, and torrid country, of which we have images in fables, myths and legends that as much conceal as reveal what really happened, could well be true now in another form. In the old days wisdom was veiled by various devices—cryptic devices, codes, cyphers, glyphs, symbols—but also by saying too little. In our time wisdom is veiled by seeming to say too much. There is a luminous nature in *The Secret Doctrine* enabling an incredible concealment which the intuitive student can gradually learn to enjoy. The most ineluctable forms of priceless magic and incantatory mantram teaching reside within the foliage of references that connect at many points with the complicated and many-sided story of the soul of man.

That, then, is our heritage. It is universal not merely in an abstract sense. It has amazing diversity, and the variety is infinite, as is the wonderment of the Theosophical enterprise. But the point is not whether a person goes this far or adopts that way, but whether at any level he is able to develop the fruit of his study and meditation into an authentic capacity to draw the larger circle. We should truly try to put ourselves in a proper mental relationship—or some of us this may come naturally, for others this may be a strain, but every man could attempt it—to the Brotherhood, to the Mahatmas, to Beings like H.P. Blavatsky. We should see her in a long lineage of Teachers and do the same in regard to one or all the Teachers. We may choose any as our particular *Ishtaguru*. If we could really do this, then it would truly be possible to become capable of negating those thought-forms that become divisive sources of human suspicion. It would become possible to make that extraordinarily elusive linkage between the eternal and the momentary but timely, the appropriate and the relevant, the abstract

and the concrete—the dynamic relationship implicit in the divine dialectic.

This is challenging because synonymous with living. But when a person does it with the help of the knowledge that he gains from Theosophical Teachers, it is living dangerously. It is living with a new self-consciousness, living with increased pain and anguish on behalf of human beings, living with great heightening of joy that may make one manic at times with regard to the Divine Dance of the whole of life and of history. That is why people today and in the future are really going to make Theosophia important in their lives, especially the young, the lost and the rootless. It is a whole way of life. It is too late for the equivalent of going to churches on Sundays, synagogues on Saturdays, mosques on Fridays, temples on Mondays, and so on. It is too late to find the equivalent of all the elaborate complexities of human attitudes towards the Vedas or the Bible in our attitudes towards Theosophical texts. It is the all or nothing attitude that could be dangerous on the plane of the mind but is, for many, part of the historical compulsion of our time.

Therefore, as the Maha Chohan stated in his letter, unless Theosophy can be shown to be relevant to the most crucial problems that affect mankind as a whole, and involve ultimate questions in regard to the very struggle for existence and the meaning of life, Theosophy will not be relevant. The Fraternity will have nothing to do with it. Perish the thought, says He, rather than that They should have anything to do with anything that evades the crucial issue—the full demands of universal brotherhood in thought, feeling, word and deed. So They have spoken. They have spoken in terms of the immensity of the challenge. The Theosophical Movement of the nineteenth century, like the Constitution of the United States, is an educational phenomenon where the invisible Founding Fathers knew that it might take a hundred years for people both to see that it is not easy and that while it looks irrelevant, it had better be made relevant. This may take the coming hundred years for those individuals who really are alive to the problems of our time and worthy of the enormous privilege of the inheritance that they have as students of Theosophy. They must at the same time have the proper posture in regard to the Fraternity of Teachers who are invisible, but who could become more real than anything else, according to a person's degree of development. Anyone could come to see in the future a new relevance, a new magic, a new significance to the work of H.P. Blavatsky and her predecessors.

Therefore, as the 1975 cycle unfolds, we must become less apologetic in every sense on behalf of, or about, any aspect of the Teachings, and we need be less concerned with claims. But at the same time we have to be immensely and actively concerned with the effective embodiment and translation of Theosophical ideas and principles that can be seeds for meditation, because the pioneers of the future want to learn about meditation. If they cannot learn it under a banyan tree, they are willing to learn it in a cafe. But they seriously want to learn about it. Of course, there are many mistakes that they could make. How could we be of any help unless we ourselves have attempted it

enough to be humble about ourselves, while at the same time remaining proud about the undertaking. One might say that the Theosophist of the coming cycle will be the kind of person who will show himself not merely by his acts, but by the whole of his mental attitude to other beings, from the most exalted to the most wretched. He will show that it is more important to travel than to arrive; that there is a difference between perfection and perfectibility; that it is true, as Samuel Butler wrote, that everything matters more than we think it does, and at the same time nothing matters so much as we think. It is true that to become a Buddha is impossibly difficult, but it is equally true that it could be said of every man “Look inward: thou art Buddha.”

Theosophy must be both as elusive as the empyrean of the most universal kinds of space, time, motion and matter, and as close to home and as real as our daily breathing. It must be relevant to our every problem. This will be eternally enigmatic. In a Platonic sense this could never be taught, could never be learned, but could only be developed by a series of intimations—efforts at living by these ideas—so that the whole world becomes for every one of us, as it became for Arjuna, a *Kurukshetra*, a theatre of trial, a tremendous drama in which the stakes are high. But the stakes are not high for us as separate beings who are going to be individually saved or damned. They are high for us all collectively, even at a time in which there is a great deal of absurdity. We must learn to become the psychological equivalents of those who can ascend and descend into the depths like divers, adapting ourselves to different altitudes and perspectives, becoming flexible and multi-dimensional. And we must do this with a certain panache, but in every case as the result of honest striving, and with compassion, with laughter and love. This is existentially to show what it means in our time to be a true Theosophist, and anyone who wishes to do this might well reflect upon the timeless injunction of Mahatma K.H.: “If you wish to know us, study our philosophy. If you wish to serve us, serve our Humanity.”

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RAGHAVAN IYER
Presidential Address
North American Theosophical Convention