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***Editor***

**PRADEEP H. GOHIL**

## A STEP FORWARD

The Notion of mysticism has confounded and bewildered humanity for the entirety of religion's existence. Mysticism is simply the insistence upon direct inward and present religious experience. It is the honouring and the study of God's mysteries and truths beyond the physical world. What is interesting about mysticism is that it is not a religion. It is someone's personal path to help develop one's pure self. Mysticism is the awareness of one's divine nature which helps us human beings to become one with the universe. It is the process of searching for spiritual truth or the real truth and wisdom through the unification with the divine. It is the art of union of the soul with the super soul.

A mystic is a person who has attained that union in greater or less degree. The transformative power of mystical experiences is that they can convey to us, in a way that our rational faculties never grasp, that no matter what happens to our bodies and personalities in the world of time and space, mysteriously, something unexplainable can happen at some other level, in another dimension of our own being, which is beyond the mind. So mysticism is a belief that union with or absorption into the absolute, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge, inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender.

It is through the study of Theosophical literature that we can learn about the method of living a mystic or spiritual life. Many people believe that we can find God by austerities alone and by renouncing one's home and the world together with its responsibilities or by meditating in caves or in Ashrams or mountain-tops. In fact, this is often termed as negative mysticism. For

one who has read and learnt about positive mysticism would know that we can find God within ourselves, while fulfilling all our obligations to the family, community, city, state, country, the world and life - or in short our obligations to the universal brotherhood. We live in the world of the senses.

If we put our attention to our third or single eye and repeat any name of God with love, we experience our own spirit and realize that God is spirit, God is love. God cannot be experienced by the intellect, for where the intellect ends, spirituality begins. Jesus Christ beckoned us to peep within, for the kingdom of God is within. The study of theosophical literature will take us forward in the route of the spirit unlike others that follow the way or course of the world.

Unfortunately, we have divided ourselves in different compartments of religion, nationalities, communities, but the fact is that we are children of the same eternal light of love. Instead, if we act like a true missionary, we would work selflessly with the hands and share with those who needed it. The beauty of meaningful existence is in caring and sharing because the real joy is in 'live and let live'. One's life should flow like a stream, seeking water from other streams and providing it to those in need, until it reaches the ocean despite the curves and bends. So let life flow uninterrupted, seeking the ultimate, irrespective of ups and downs. To live and let live determines the bliss of living. Embracing each and every thing defines the totality of existence.

The universal prayer penned by Dr. Annie Besant is a ceaseless inspiration to millions around the globe. Mysticism inspires us to look towards the healing, soothing and enlightening words of the prayer and telling us that life, light and love exist in the tiniest creation of supreme. So let us all embrace each and every aspect of the oneness of life irrespective of temporal boundaries and I am sure it will be a step forward in the right direction in our life.

## **THE OLD MAN AND THEOSOPHY: THE LIFE AND WORK OF BILL LAWRENCE - I**

I WOULD like to share some stories connected with the life of someone very influential in my life, and in the life of a number of young people in the Chicago area. His name was Bill Lawrence. Later in life he became a member of the Theosophical Society (TS). To the many young people who gathered around him he was known as “the Old Man”. He was an exceptional man who chose to utilize his gifts as a great service at a very needful time in many people’s lives.

There is an old wives’ tale that talks about certain children who are born with a flap of skin covering their eyes like a veil. It is called a cowl and it is believed to indicate the possession of a profound clairvoyance. The only other person I heard speak about this was Dora Kunz, a former President of the TS in America, founder of the Therapeutic Touch healing method, and medical clairvoyant. She said that she was born with this cowl and was aware of the old wives’ tale surrounding it. The physician/astrologer/prophet Nostradamus (c. 1503 – 1566) was also believed to have been born with a cowl.

Bill’s family was non-theosophically oriented, living in a Central Illinois coal mining town called Georgetown. To this day there are only 3,000 people in the whole town. Early in life he became aware that the way he was seeing the world was very different from that of his friends and the people around him. At a time when children were supposed to be “seen and not heard” he was continually speaking up about the things he was seeing, things that were invisible to others.

From time to time the Old Man would share stories from his life. Many of them were so alien to my experience that often they were hard for me to believe. Having grown up in New York City, I was accustomed to hearing a lot of tall tales. So in my early years around the Old Man I had doubts about the accuracy of some of these tales. Over the years of being with him I met many of the people who were actually involved in these stories. Gradually I discovered that as fantastic as they seemed, the stories were not only true, but usually even more remarkable.

For instance, he said that when he was a child there was a woman in their town who came to visit his family’s home, and, when she walked in, all he could see was blackness surrounding her. There was nothing visibly wrong with the lady, but he saw that this woman was going to die. She went home and died that night of a heart attack. Another time Bill’s sister told me the story of a lady in their town that none of the children liked. When she would come to the house for a visit she was mean to the kids. Back in those days they would do the laundry with washboards and then the water would be pressed out with a wringer that was cranked. So Bill said: “This mean old lady is going to get her breast caught in the wringer.” Sure enough, she went back home and the prediction came true. The lady told Bill’s mother: “Your son cursed me!” Those kinds of things were happening all the time. It got to be problematic for his family because in this conservative town the boy was talking about things regarded as “wild”, or “strange”.

To add to the problems, from time to time when he was angry with his parents he would say: “You’re not my parents! I’m from Tibet!” As a child he could see that Tibet was his former home. Of course, in Georgetown, Illinois, few, if any, knew anything about Tibet. He said that one of the outcomes of his unusual behaviour was that it drove his father to try to learn more about this “problem child”. Later in life his father became a profound student of metaphysics as a result of his son. Over

time Bill came to the point where he became aware that the way he was seeing things was not what his friends were seeing, and he tried to suppress it. It became a problem, not a blessing for him.

To look at the Old Man one might have thought he was from Southern Europe, or Native American, or Middle Eastern — a real American hybrid. His mother was half African American and half Native American, his father was half Native American and half English. The son came out with jet-black straight hair and sharp aquiline features. But if you would ask him, in keeping with the racialized American approach to caste, he would say: “I’m black.” Today the word would be African American, but his appearance could have been many things.

Although he was of age at the time of World War II, he was not anxious to go to war. He did not enlist in the army, but was drafted. Because the US military was racially segregated at that time, he was assigned to one of the all-black units. He quickly rose to the position of first sergeant. Many years later he hosted a get-together of all of the men in his unit. Although they were all around the same age, even now that they were in their 60s, they looked at him as if he was a father figure. All of them said that they had gotten into some very difficult situations during the war, but that they would always watch Bill, and one way or another, they would come through.

Having participated in campaigns in northern Africa, southern Italy, and France, he returned from the war, and everything was supposed to be alright. He left his family home in Georgetown, and moved to Chicago. For a while he thought everything was fine, but, he, like so many other returning soldiers, discovered he suffered from Post Traumatic Stress from the war. For a time any sudden loud noise in Chicago’s downtown would find him diving into a doorway for safety. He recognized there was some work for him to do.

When he got back from the war it seemed that anything he would touch would turn to gold. He would start a business and it would thrive. His business would flourish, money would be flowing in, then, almost as predictably as it would thrive, something absolutely unexpected would come along and it would be lost. Soon he would start a new venture and it would make another fortune.

The way he described it, at that particular point in his life, he began to feel an inward pull, and recognized that there was something more for him to do than make money. He was a very strong willed person, and he was focused on willing his way through this dawning awareness and denying the spiritual calling of his youth. Things kept happening to him. The American architect, inventor, and visionary R. Buckminster Fuller is said to have made the statement that: “For some of us all it takes is the touch of a feather, and we get the message. For others it takes being struck by a Mack truck.” The old man was of the Mack truck variety.

I remember his sister telling a story from this time in his life, when he had yet another successful business going. This time he owned and operated a number of grocery stores just outside of Chicago. He found that the clairvoyance he had tried to suppress, somehow kept bubbling up to the surface, becoming more and more pronounced. He had made a huge apartment above one of his stores. During that time his sister was living with him, and he would come home in the middle of the day so tired that he would have to lay down and rest.

The way she told the story, when he would come home to rest there was a particular music that he liked, a recording of organ music. As soon as it would start to play he would fall asleep, or so he thought. One day his sister was wandering through the house. She had a habit of talking to herself, this time she had misplaced her ring, and was saying “I wonder where did I put that ring?” She said she was walking by the open door

to Bill's room, muttering about it, when she heard him say: "Look behind the dresser." She turned and asked: "What did you say, Bill?" but he was fast asleep. So just to give it a try she goes over to the dresser, looks behind it, and sure enough, there was the ring! The way I visualize this moment is almost like in a comic book: She finds the ring and a light bulb goes on above her head. An Idea is born!

What happened next was that he would continue to come home tired, and as soon as he arrived, his sister would say: "Bill, you look so tired, lay down and rest. Let me put that music on for you." She would go straight to the phonograph, put the record on, and then, without his knowledge, she would ply him with questions, to which, unknown to him, he gave accurate answers. It got so good to her that she started to call up her friends and say: "Look, Bill should be home soon, give it about ten minutes, and then you can come in. You can ask him anything you want."

Bill described how one day he had come home, tired as usual, and his loving sister put the music on for him. For some reason he said that he suddenly woke up. Looking up, all he could see was a ring of faces intently staring down at him, and one woman was shouting at him saying: "Bill, don't stop, don't stop. You were telling me about my husband and that other woman!" After running everybody out of the house, what followed next was what he called one of the most important moments in his life. He said he went over to the record player, picked up the record of organ music and broke it into as many pieces as he could. That day he said that he made a vow to himself: "From this day forward, this capacity is going to come under my controls." This began a different phase in his life.

The process that was going on in his life at that time was something probably many of us are familiar with. The poet Francis Thompson described it as "The Hound of Heaven", nipping at us, trying to move us to a new level of functioning. He

was having an experience of divine discontent. To the eyes of others there was no reason to be dissatisfied with his life, all the trappings were there, but for him there was something very deep and urgent that was missing. He found that his capacity to "see" and a deeper meditation were coming to him more and more frequently. He started to become acutely aware of an inward guidance, a presence seeking to guide his way. More and more he made it part of his process to become open to that.

But the open invitation to change can be a dangerous thing. It is something that most of us invite with our words, but often recoil from when it actually comes upon us. He reached a certain point where, although on the surface all was well, he realized that he had to leave this life and begin something completely new. What that something was, he did not know, but he had become secure in the certainty of his guidance.

Likely most of us would have approached this crisis moment differently than he did. The logical approach would be to think of an exit strategy, draw down the assets from our business, invest it, and so on. But his approach was different. One day, it became clear that the end of this path had come. He walked away from his business, made no arrangements for selling it. He left everything as it was. The one thing he took away was the cash register, which he then donated to a nearby orphanage.

He began a completely new phase, an internal one, much like an extended retreat. Family and friends thought that he had lost his mind. He started to deeply explore his inner life, and the gifts that had awakened and become active in his life. This happened in the 1960s in Chicago.

(To be continued)

(Courtesy: *The Theosophist*, March 2021)

## **CORONA PANDEMIC: THE CHALLENGE AND LESSONS**

IT was a beautiful Sunday morning. The sky was unusually clear and blue. I was taking a stroll in my garden listening to the chirping birds, watching the magnificent movements of the multi-coloured butterflies and enjoying the beauty of the roses and marigolds. For a while I felt myself as an intrinsic part of Nature. But suddenly the ghastly picture of the unprecedented disaster caused by the corona pandemic came to mind and I was caught in the paradox of beauty and suffering.

It seems there is a serious incompatibility between the beautiful state of Nature in itself and the world which we have created by manipulating Nature for our own pleasures. I clearly remember the prophetic words from the essay “Only One Earth”: “Today, in early 21st century, the two worlds of man — the biosphere of his inheritance, the technosphere of his creation — are out of balance, indeed potentially in deep conflict. Man is in the middle.

This is the hinge of history at which we stand, the door of the future opening on to a crisis more sudden, more bewildering than any ever encountered by the human species. . . .” This unprecedented disaster was expected, though not as the Covid - 19 pandemic. Humanity is now faced with one of the most difficult and critical situations causing trouble and despair. Covid-19 has spread like wild fire across the world. It has collaterally affected the health and hygiene of people, the economy and com-

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\*International Vice-President of the Theosophical Society and President of the Theosophical Order of Service, Odisha Region, India.

merce, education and employment, religion and culture, as well as relationships and friendships.

It is reported that Covid-19 originated in bats or pangolins at an animal market in Wuhan, China, where wild animals, dead and alive were sold and slaughtered for consumption. Since then, the virus has mostly spread through person-to-person contact. But till today it has not been established whether it is an organic virus or a synthetic one as opined by some. Since 31 December 2019 and as of 21 June 2020 the virus infected over 8.5 million people worldwide. The number of deaths had totaled more than 467,579 while those who had recovered numbered 4,768,283.

Out of 188 countries which had been affected, ten of them had been very badly affected: Italy, Spain, US, Germany, France, China, Iran, UK, Turkey, and Belgium. To prevent the spread of Covid-19, lockdowns and shutdowns have been imposed in countries affected depending upon the severity of the condition. Many people are working from home.

This pandemic has greatly affected societies and economies around the globe. In India and other developing countries, daily labourers and migrants have suffered the worst. During the lockdown domestic violence directed at women and children, rape and femicide has increased in India. There are many reported cases of suicide out of frustration and depression.

This crisis has its genesis not in the outer world as much as in the human psyche. It is of our own making. It can be largely traced to the erroneous vision we have of ourselves and the world around us. The arrogance of the individual as the most developed creature on the planet, our greed to exploit the plants and animals for our own comfort and luxury, and our selfish interest regardless of the interests of others, traps us in our own net. Arrogant humans always think too highly of themselves.

But here is a tiny microorganism called SARS-CoV-2 that came as a countermovement of the present time against human centrism and turned the human kingdom upside down. The Earth is an ecosystem that rules and maintains itself. If we change things unilaterally, things must change on the other side of the scale because that is what an ecosystem actually is — a kind of scale.

We human beings have lost our connection with Nature. We have been treating Nature only as a resource, but it is also our *source*. Nature has been discovered to be the womb in which we are generated. This in fact is the original meaning of Nature. It is derived from the Latin word *natura* “birth, Nature, quality”.

Nature is a fountain of life, and the whole fountain is of value. Inger Andersen, the UN’s chief environmentalist, is of the view that Nature is sending us a message with the pandemic and the ongoing climate crisis. Humanity was placing too much pressure on the natural world with damaging consequences and failing to take care of the planet meant not taking care of ourselves.

To prevent further outbreaks, experts are of the view that both global warming and the destruction of the natural world — for farming, mining, and housing — have to end, as both drive wild animals into contact with people. Markets butchering live wild animals need to be banned globally and the billion-dollar, illegal, wildlife trade should be stopped.

Religions of the world are explicitly articulate about the relationship between humanity and the non-human beings. They not only propound the creed of love between individuals, but underline the role of humans in protecting creatures who are less evolved. We have been assigned the role of guardians.

According to Dr David Frawley, “No religion, perhaps,

lays as much emphasis on environmental ethics as does Hinduism. It believes in ecological responsibility . . . It champions protection of animals, which it considers also have souls. . .” He views Hinduism to be a religion of the Earth. Manu, the ancient Indian seer, is explicit in spelling out natural punishment for those who kill animals, whom he terms as murderers. He states: “All involved in the act — slaughterer, butcher, cook and the one who eats the meat — are liable to Nature’s punishment.” The karmic effect of mass slaughter is not to be taken lightly. It results in tragic disaster and wars.

*Charaka Samhita* forbids destruction of fauna purely on pragmatic grounds: “The destruction of forests is most dangerous for the nation and human beings. *Vanaspati* (the plant kingdom) has a direct relationship with the well-being of society. Due to pollution of the natural environment and destruction of forests, many diseases crop up to ruin the nation. Only then *vanaspati* with medicinal qualities may enhance the nature and cure diseases of human beings.” (“Vimanasthana”, 3.11)

In Islam there are explicit injunctions to preserve forests and wildlife: “We will create a true Islamic alternative, a caring and practical way of being, doing, and knowing, to the environmentally destructive thought and action which dominate the world today.” In Buddhism, there is “wholesale condemnation of violence and intense cultivation of love and compassion for plants and animals”.

Pope Benedict XVI declares: “The order of creation demands that a priority be given to those human activities that do not cause irreversible damage to Nature, but which instead are woven into the social, cultural, and religious fabric of the different communities. In that way, a sober balance is achieved between consumption and the sustainability of resources.” (*The Environment*)

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, a spiritual treatise having a universal appeal, elaborate discussions are made regarding the type of relationship that should prevail between humans and the ecosystem (Nature). The concept of sacrifice (*yajña*) is laid out in the larger context of interdependence of beings in the cosmos.

Every member of the entire kingdoms of minerals, plants, animals instinctively follow the principle of *yajña* and thereby contribute to the smooth running of the cosmic wheel of action. (Chapter 3) Only human beings have been given the freedom of action and, for that reason, sometimes out of arrogance, they revolt against the eternal law. The result is what we see now, total chaos and disaster. Now is the time to seriously reflect upon this, and change.

The Covid-19 pandemic also raises our awareness of the importance of science. The international scientific community has been working hard these days by sharing and making universally available the result of research and new working methods. The present crisis demonstrates the urgency of sharing information very fast through open science. “We all depend on science to survive,” was rightly said by Marcos Pontes, Minister of Science, Technology, Innovation, and Communication in Brazil. Science should be allowed to lead the global response to this pandemic.

The Covid-19 world tragedy has thrown up challenges to be faced and taught us many lessons essential for the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual progress of human beings. There will be a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions and values. It also has many silver linings in spite of the dark cloud covering the global sky. Because of lockdown restrictions, industrial activities have slowed down, remarkably decreasing air pollution levels. This implies that less traffic can lead to clean air.

As the number of tourists has decreased drastically, the canals in Venice, Italy, are the clearest they have been in sixty years. Animals have reclaimed the land. With humans out of the way, cows, goats, and birds are freely exploring the areas peacefully. Planet Earth is healing.

The old theories of economics based on inequality, greed, and profiteering have changed, giving rise to new ones. Now many people have more than enough money, but it is of no value, as there is no scope to spend. As there is no socialization, there is no chance of showing off riches or making others envious. Small houses that can be managed by one person will tend to be preferred as people start believing in “simple living and high thinking”.

As far as religious institutions are concerned, people avoid congregations and turn towards spirituality. They realize the Truth that God is not in the temple or mosque or church, but in the heart of every human being. As somebody rightly said: “This is a new world religion. An upgrade to every world religion so far because it is the first ‘prophetless’ religion. A millennial revolution like the ‘driverless’ car.”

This pandemic teaches us a new value system that accepts cosmic connectedness as the transcendent ground of all reality. It teaches the human species to move from human centrism to biocentrism, and finally to a cosmo-centric worldview that includes living and non-living beings. It teaches us to understand the intrinsic value of all beings, whether animate or inanimate. It once again connects us to our source. Instead of domination and exploitation, it inspires love and concern for all living beings; instead of materialism people would seek spiritualism; instead of inequality and fragmentation, it can guide us to the realization of equality and the oneness of Life.



## NEWS AND NOTES

### Bombay

Adyar Day virtual meeting of Bombay Theosophical Federation with Blavatsky Lodge on 17 February 2021:

The Bombay Theosophical Federation and Blavatsky Lodge jointly organized the Adyar Day celebrations on Zoom. This year, although it was physically distanced, it attracted many stalwarts of Theosophy, which brought in an element of Nostalgia and History to a large number of participants. Sister Kashmira Khambatta, President of Blavatsky Lodge, welcomed the gathering. The programme started with Adyar Song compiled in Gujarati by Late Mrs. Mugdha Hora, mother of Dr. Ajay Hora. The song describes Adyar as a Paradise on Earth. The content of the song was presented in English by Dr. Ajay Hora. Bro Vinayak Pandya, President of BTF, spoke on the significance of Adyar Day and the genesis of the annual event celebrated all over the world.

Brother Navin Kumar, Vice-President of Blavatsky Lodge, spoke on Giordano Bruno who was a victim at the stakes for speaking the TRUTH and went up in chariot of fire. His statue at the Sorbonne University in France is an Honour bestowed upon him and a living reminder of his sacrifice. Sis. Ruby Khan spoke on Col Henry Steel Olcott and his role in establishing the Theosophical Society. He was the force behind the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. Sis. Meherangiz Baria spoke about J. Krishnamurti and his upbringing by Dr. Annie Besant and Bishop Leadbeater and his subsequent journey in Search of Truth. Sis. Aban Amroliwalla spoke on Bishop Charles Leadbeater's contribution to the Theosophical literature and the establishment of Liberal Catholic Church.

The celebrations had two historic events: The first was the release of a Booklet on 'Zoroastrianism' authored by Sis. Aban Patel, senior lecturer at Blavatsky Lodge. It was the content of her lecture delivered at the Ojai Valley Lodge, California, United

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As H. P. Blavatsky, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society (TS), observes: "All is life, and every atom of even mineral dust is a life, though beyond our comprehension and perception . . ." This Oneness or cosmo-centric vision finds its most eloquent expression in the universal prayer of the TS, composed by Dr Annie Besant:

O Hidden Life! vibrant in every atom,  
O Hidden Light! shining in every creature,  
O Hidden Love! Embracing all in oneness,  
May each who feels himself as one with Thee,  
Know he is also one with every other.

Human love has to be enlarged so that there is expansion in the human psyche, making room for spiritual refinement. Body, mind, and spirit form a continuity in the evolutionary scale. Mind is the subtler form of body, and spirit is the subtler form of mind. The psychic crisis today is an inevitable expression of the spiritual bankruptcy that has overtaken humanity and resulted in a frantic bid to serve human interest at the cost of all other sentient life. Now is the time for inner as well as outer transformation.

It is time for humanity to ponder over the silver linings the pandemic has provided for a more sustainable, harmonious, and just world. We pray and hope not to return to normalcy but for a new normal, not a "stitched tyre" but a "new tyre", a new world, a better world.

(Courtesy: *The Theosophist*, March 2021)

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States on 6 January 2021. Sis. Aban Patel was assisted by Sis. Kashmira Khambatta for the Power Point Presentation with beautiful pictures and Sis. Aban Amroliwalla's inputs. The publication was sponsored by the BTF from Late Sis Mehra Dhalla Memorial Fund created with donations of Brethren of Bombay. The Booklet was launched by Bro. Vinayak Pandya by unwrapping the booklet. He lauded the creation of this booklet and spoke about Late Sis. Mehra Dhalla, Stalwart of Bombay.

The Release slide with all pages of the booklet 'Zoroastrianism' with a quick run were shown by Sis. Kashmira Khambatta. Sis. Aban Patel in her response shared inspiring words of Dr. Annie Besant addressed to Zoroastrians about Zarathushtra's Teachings and the Sacred Fire.

*('Zoroastrianism' Booklet after release is sent with compliments of BTF to Active Brethren. For remaining few copies, interested Members may please contact BTF Secretary Sis. Mahazaver Rustom Dalal (M): 9833131216.)*

The second event was the launch of the current issue of *Synergy Journal*, the issue which is dedicated to Theosophy. Dr. Rajam Pillai spoke at length on how as an Editor of Hindi journal *Gandhi Prawah*, published by Mani Bhawan, Mumbai, she had heard about Dr. Annie Besant and that was the reason for being drawn to Theosophy. 'Synergy', her journal which is bilingual has transformed gradually into a Theosophy journal targeted at the student community of Mumbai University. She is funding the project through her Family Trust and has been silently propagating Theosophy worldwide through Poetry, Art and Theosophical content.

The 'Synergy' issue was launched by Bro. Kanubhai Shah and Brethren displaying cover page card of the issue. Three contributors in this issue were present and spoke which added colour to the celebrations; Sis Manorama Saxena, who had been in the movement for seventy years, Sis. Freny Pagdiwala, the whole and soul of the Blavatsky Book Depot and Sis. Manjula Kannabar, who had interacted with Bro. Jiddu Krishnamurti.

Though Sis Manjula could not attend the meeting she sent a video. The Fourth contributor Bro. Arni Narendran, Treasurer of Blavatsky Lodge, was present as the Master of Ceremonies.

Bro Taral Munshi recited his composition of Hindi Poem 'Pyara Adyar – Tera Mera'. Sis. Deepa Kapoor spoke on behalf of her mother and her association with Theosophy. Sis. Jasmine Cawasji, Lodge Secretary, gave vote of thanks to all the speakers and participants. Sis. Zeena Rastomjee rendered the concluding prayers.

BTF President Bro. Vinayak Pandya gave a public talk on Pragma CS Studio Virtual meeting held on 7 February 2021. The meeting hosted by Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri from Adyar on 7th February 2021 was attended by Brethren from Philippines to USA covering 4 Continents. From India members were from Chennai to Delhi. Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri welcoming all said that this was one of the public talks organized by Pragma CS Studio of Lucknow and was to convey Theosophical Teachings to as many people as possible to realize 'Unity in Diversity' and 'Oneness of Life'.

Bro. Vinayak Pandya's subject of talk was 'THEOSOPHICAL EDUCATION & THEOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS'. In the course of his talk he said that the members of the TS, as Ambassadors of Theosophy, have a responsibility to try to implement Theosophy in life. This starts with Ethics and Moral values instilled from young age. Hence it is important to instil Theosophical values in young minds before they have set ideas and are not open to change.

A picture shows that when a child returned from school greatly disturbed as he had failed, members of his family showed their disapproval, but family dog with unconditional love hugged the child. Hence it is important to develop love and compassion to understand others and respond accordingly.

Adyar Theosophical Academy and The Golden Link College of Philippines teach Practical Theosophy to young ones,

who would grow up with Theosophy and will bring change for the good of the society. This is the reason International President Tim Boyd wants to have 100 Theosophical Schools in 50 years.

Describing the problems of today's educational system Bro. Vinayak said that stress created at home and schools drives students even to commit suicide. A child may not be academically good, but he may be having other potentialities. Education is for understanding of Life, i.e., *from One to many and from many to One*. Character building, acquiring life skill and professional skill is important. Understanding of human bodies and personalities is also needed.

Bro. Vicente Hao Chin Jr., Founder of the Golden Link College, and Sis. Sonal Murali, Principal of Adyar Theosophical Academy(ATA), also shared their experiences of teaching Practical Theosophy.

Sis. Catalina Isaza Cantor while giving vote of thanks shared her own experiences of assisting administrative work of ATA.

### **Kerala**

Question and Answer programme : An on-line Question and Answer programme was conducted by Kerala Federation on January 26, 2021. Dr. M.A. Raveendran, President K.T.F., presided. Bro. Harihar Raghavan, Dr. V.P. Viswakumar and Bro. K. Dinakaran were in the panel. Questions received on-line were answered by the panelists.

The questions varied from what are the three things a Theosophist should do and not do?, The panelists also answered to the queries made regarding the Emblem of the Theosophical Society and the Relevance of the Mission Statement beyond the Three Declared Objects.

Adyar Day Celebration on 17 February 2021: An on-line Webinar was conducted by K.T.F. Dr. M.A. Raveendran presided over the programme which commenced with Universal Prayer. Dr. Raveendran explained the importance of Adyar Day

and welcomed the on-line participants. Bro. K. Dinakaran, Secy. K.T.F., introduced the speakers. Bro. T.K. Nair spoke on Giordano Bruno - Apostle of Theosophy in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Sis. Vrinda, President of Anantha Lodge, Trivanduram, spoke on H.S. Olcott. The Anantha Lodge in Trivandrum was founded by H.S. Olcott in 1883 with the patronage of Maharaja of Travancore. Bro. Damodaran, a member of Trichur Lodge, spoke on C.W. Leadbeater. Bro. Venugopal of Aradhana Lodge, Vaikom, spoke about J. Krishnamurti.

The meeting concluded with Shanti Mantra.

### **U.P. and Uttarakhand (UK)**

Dharma Lodge, Lucknow, held on-line meetings on 03 and 24 February, 2021, when talks were delivered on the topics 'Purification of Life', and 'Look to all circumstances with gratitude'. The speakers were Bro. S. S. Gautam and Bro. Ashok Gupta respectively.

Nirvan Lodge, Agra, held on-line meetings on 04, 11, and 18 February, when talks were delivered on the topics 'Life and Death', 'Psychology of Sufism', 'Allegories and Symbols in Religious Narrations'. The speakers were Bro. S. M. Kapur, Bro. R. P. Sharma and Bro. U. S. Pandey respectively. Besides, a seminar on 'Spirituality and Morality' was organized by the Lodge on 25 February.

Bharat Samaj Puja was performed on 14 February by Bro. Gyanesh Kumar Chaturvedi.

The following on-line meetings/activities were organized by Pragya Lodge, Lucknow, in the month of February: A talk by Bro. Vinayak Pandya on 'Theosophical Education and Schools'; talk by Sis. Isis Resende (International Speaker) on 'Mystical experience through meditation.'; Published a video on the History of Adyar Day and Giordano Bruno on Youtube channel PragyaCS studio on the occasion for Adyar Day; and a short skit performed by Bro. Taral Munshi of Mumbai on the subject 'Search for oneself.'

Members of the Lodge joined in the joint programme organized by Indraprastha Lodge, Delhi, on 14 and 21 February.

Sarvahitkari Lodge, Gorakhpur, organized three on-line meetings in the month of February when talks were delivered on the topics 'Practical Theosophy', 'Essence of Theosophy' and 'Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita' by Bro. L.S.Shukla, Bro. A.P. Srivastava and Sis. Vasumati Agnihotri respectively.

Sis. Vibha Saxena delivered a talk on 'Constitution of Man' during the on-line meeting held at Prayas Lodge, Ghaziabad, on 07 February. Sis. Suvralina Mohanty conducted discussion on 'Our bodies and their purification' and 'Adyar Day and its significance' on 14 and 21 February respectively. Besides, she conducted study on 'The Masters and Path-Ch.1-Existence of the Masters'. It was held on 28 February.

Sis. Suvralina Mohanty conducted on-line study class for children and youth on every Sunday morning at 07.30 am. The subject taken up for study was 'Religious Mind'.

The study of the book *The Voice of the Silence* was continued by Sis. Lalita Khatri during the meeting held on 07 February at Noida Lodge. Besides, Adyar Day was observed there on 17 February. A talk was delivered on 'Evolution in the Universe' by Sis. Vibha Saxena on 21 February.

Chohan Lodge, Kanpur, organized two on-line meetings. A talk was delivered on the topic 'Levels of Consciousness and harmony among mankind' by Bro. Chakit Swaroop. It was held on 7 February. A talk on 'Early Teachings of J. Krishnamurti' was delivered by Bro. S.B.R. Mishra on 27 February. Members of the Lodge joined in the joint programme organized by Indraprastha Lodge, Delhi, on 14 and 21 February.

UP & UK Federation organized a programme on 17 February to observe 'Adyar Day'. Bro. U. S. Pandey, President, welcomed the participants and briefly mentioned about the importance of this day. Bro. S. K. Pandey, Federation Secretary, made

a detailed presentation on history of observance of Adyar Day and also on 'Life and Work of Col. H. S. Olcott', the founder President of the Theosophical Society. Sis. Vasumati Agnihotri, Federation Lecturer, spoke about all the four personalities viz. Giordano Bruno, H. S. Olcott, C. W. Leadbeater and J. Krishnamurti, to whom thanks and gratitude are expressed on this day. Dr. N. C. Ramanujachary and Bro. C. A. Shinde from Adyar and Bro. Rajiv Mathur from Delhi, who joined the programme made valuable comments.

### **Contribution in other Federations**

Talk in Utkal Federation: On invitation by Siddharth Lodge, Bhubaneswar, Sis. Vasumati Agnihotri of Lucknow delivered on-line talk on the topic 'Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita'. It was held on 23 February.

### **Contribution in the Indian Section on-line programme**

Sis. Vibha Saxena, Secretary of NOIDA Lodge, delivered a talk on Mahatma Letter No.38 on 12 February.

Sis. Suvralina Mohanty delivered a talk on 'Exoteric and Esoteric Theosophy' on 21 February 2021.

### **National Lecturer**

UP & UK Federation organized an on-line programme for study of *Isis Unveiled* from 10 to 14 February 2021. The study was conducted by Bro. U. S. Pandey. A group meditation guided by Bro. U.S. Pandey was also practiced by the participants prior to study session on 13 February.

Members from many other federations also joined in the programme.

### **Talk in Delhi Federation**

Indraprastha Lodge of Delhi Federation organized a joint programme along with Chohan Lodge, Kanpur, and Pragya Lodge Lucknow, of U.P. & U. K. Federation. These were held on 14 and 21 February 2021 when Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri delivered on-line talks on the themes 'Hindu Symbolism and Shiv Linga' and

‘Science of Avatars and Mysteries of Buddha’ respectively.

On invitation by Indraprastha Lodge of Delhi Federation, Bro. U. S. Pandey delivered on-line talks on the theme “Mysteries of Life after Death’ in two sessions on 27 and 28 February 2021.

### **WHITE LOTUS DAY**

The following functions will be held in the on-line platform of the Indian Section to celebrate WHITE LOTUS DAY on 08.05.2021:

1. A study class through Zoom On-line on 6-7 May 2021 from 5 to 7 PM [IST]. Prof C A Shinde will conduct the study of the book “*The Original Programme of Theosophical Society*” written by H P Blavatsky.

2. Bro. Pradeep H Gohil, President of the Indian Section, TS, will deliver a talk on “**Life and Work of Madam H.P. Blavatsky**”, on 8 May 2021 at 05 PM [IST].

The aforementioned programmes will be held on Indian Section Zoom on-line platform with Meeting ID: 878 8617 8860 Pass code: THEOS1891

Pradip Mahapatra  
peekem0277@gmail.com  
Mob. No. 9437697429

### **Obituary**

Bro. M.P. Singhal, a senior member and former General Secretary of the Indian Section, passed to peace on 13 March 2021. He held several responsible posts in the T.S. He was the General Secretary of the Indian Section from 1993 to March 1998; was National Director of the Theosophical Order of Service from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2002 to 2005; was the Vice-President of Besant Education Fellowship; and was elected as the Interna-

tional Vice-President of the TS and took up office from 5 January 2012.

May his Soul rest in peace.

A Commemoration Meeting for Bro Bertie Redwood was organized by Blavatsky Lodge. It was held on 22 January 2021 over zoom. The meeting started with Universal Prayer by Lodge President- Sis. Kashmira Khambatta. She shared the messages received from Bro. Bertie during the last few days and his ever-helpful nature. Bro Arni Narendran spoke at length about the outstretching and compassionate nature of Bertie and then read a Catholic Prayer for the Ascension of the Soul.

Then, several members paid tribute to the departed soul. Bro. Navin Kumar after paying his tributes read out passages from the Bhagavad Gita in the context of the Soul’s journey. The meeting ended with a Meditation dedicated to the Ascension of Bro. Bertie’s Soul on its onward journey to Higher realms.

Bro. Amal Krishna Mandal- Dip. No. 86044 of Bharadwaja Lodge (Bengal Federation) passed to peace on 26.02.21. He was the Secretary of the Bharadwaja Lodge and Treasurer of BTF and TOS West Bengal. He was a very sincere, amiable and dedicated member of the TS and was loved by all. A condolence meeting to pay homage to the departed soul was held on 27.02.21 at BTF Office at 5 pm where Bro. A.N. Chakraborty, Sis. Jayasri Das, Bro. S.Chakraborty, Bro. P.Mondal and Bro N.C. Laha recollected the sweet memory of their association with Bro. Mandal. Then one minute silence was observed to show respect to the departed Soul with prayer for his peaceful onward journey.

**CENTENARY OF THE FOUNDATION STONE LAYING  
OF THE BHARAT SAMAJ TEMPLE**

The Bharata Samaja was formed in December 1920 in Adyar for the purpose of Building the Bharat Samaj Temple (Temple of Light). The foundation stone for the temple was laid on 1 May 1921 by Dr Annie Besant. This year will be the 100<sup>th</sup> year of laying the foundation stone on 1 May 2021.

To commemorate centenary of the foundation laying ceremony it is planned to do Puja at 6 a.m. on 1 May 2021 in the Bharat Samaj Temple at Adyar, inviting members residing in the Campus and also those who would like to attend the Puja on that day. Besides, Puja will be broadcasted Live on YouTube channel of the Theosophical Society Adyar. Details of the channel are as follows:

Name of the Youtube Channel: Theosophical Society Adyar,  
Link of the YouTube Channel: <https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCG1SpKaIjNqk39aC1A6hjA>

Bharata Samaj also has a Bank Account and members wishing to donate on this occasion may send with an information to the undersigned. Details of the Bank account for remittance are:

Name of Account : Bharat Samaj  
Account Number : 439620288  
Bank Name : Indian Bank  
Bank Branch : Adyar  
Branch Address: 41-42, I Main Road, Gandhinagar  
Adyar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600 020  
IFSC Code: IDIB000A002

With best wishes,

S.M.Umakanth Rao	Dr. R. Revathy	M. Vijayalakshmi
President	Treasurer	Secretary
9444544508	9444802478	9003150973

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(See Rule 8)

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I, Pradeep H. Gohil, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: 1 April, 2021

**Pradeep H Gohil**  
Signature of publisher

**Only as you live Theosophy can you spread Theosophy. It is not our words, it is our life, that affects people... Our lives, if they are unselfish, pure, loving, and helpful, are the best propaganda of Theosophical ideas; for it is not good to talk Theosophy unless we live what we talk.**

**ANNIE BESANT**