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Editor

PRADEEP H. GOHIL

A STEP FORWARD

Learning is a continuous process that involves the transformation of information and experience into abilities and knowledge. Learning is a two-way process that involves the learner and the educator leading to knowledge acquisition as well as capability.

The word learning has great significance. There are two kinds of learning. For most of us learning means the accumulation of knowledge of experience, technology, skill or a language. There is also psychological learning. It is learning through immediate experiences of life, which leaves a certain residue of tradition, of the race or of the society. There are these two kinds of learning how to meet life: psychological and physiological; outward skill and inward skill. There is really no line of demarcation between the two because they overlap. We are not considering for the moment the skill that we learn through practice, the technological knowledge that we acquire through study.

What we are concerned about is the psychological learning that we have acquired through the centuries, or inherited as tradition, as knowledge, as experience. This is called learning but one wonders whether it is learning at all. One should question whether the mind ever learns psychologically. It has learned, and with what it has learned it meets the challenges of life. It is always translating life or the new challenge according to what it has learned. However, is that really learning? Doesn't learning imply something new, something that one doesn't know and is learning? If one merely adds to what one already knows, it is no longer learning.

It is the function of the mind to learn through inquiry. Here learning should not mean the mere cultivation of memory or the accumulation of knowledge but the capacity to think clearly and sanely without illusion, to start from facts and not from beliefs and ideals. There is no learning if thoughts originate from conclusions. Merely to acquire information or knowledge is not to learn. Learning implies the love of

understanding and the love of doing a thing for itself. Learning is possible only when there is no coercion of any kind. There is coercion through influence, through attachment, through threat, through persuasive encouragement or through subtle forms of rewards.

It is widely known that learning is encouraged through comparison whereas the contrary is the fact. Comparison brings, about frustration and merely encourages envy, which is called competition. Like other forms of persuasion, comparison prevents learning and breeds fear.

It is one thing to learn and another thing to acquire knowledge. Learning is a continuous process, not a process of addition, not a process which one gathers and then from there act. Most of us gather knowledge as memory, as idea, store it up as experience, and from there act. That is, we act from knowledge, technological knowledge as like an engineering curriculum, knowledge as experience, knowledge as tradition and culture; with that background, with that accumulation as knowledge, as experience, as tradition, we act. In that process there is no learning. Learning is never accumulative; it is a constant movement. You cannot store up learning and then from that storehouse act. You learn as you are going along. Therefore, there is never a moment of decline with learning.

It must also be realized that learning is always in the active present; it has no past. The moment one says to oneself "I have learned", it has already become knowledge, and from the background of that knowledge you can accumulate, translate, but you cannot further learn. It is only a mind that is not acquiring, but always learning that can. It is only such a mind that can understand this whole entity that we call the "me", the self. I have to know myself, the structure, the nature, the significance of the total entity but I can't do that burdened with my previous knowledge. It is only through continuous learning that I can cultivate an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom and serve humanity as said in the Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society. To prepare oneself for true learning will be a step forward in one's life.

TIMBOYD

EXPERIENCE AND INTEGRATION OF THE POWERS LATENT IN THE HUMAN BEING

I should begin with a disclaimer: I am President of the Theosophical Society (TS), an organization which has a long history in the exploration of the latent powers of humanity, and of the as yet unexplained laws. However, I claim no expertise. I do not deny exposure to the workings of some of the powers within us, neither would I deny some personal exploration, but I have little formal training or academic certification in such fields. It is also my habit to encourage in myself and others the openness and freshness of mind that accompanies seeing things for the first time. To the mind of the beginner there are many options

The TS had its beginnings in the powers that are latent within the human being. It is an organization that was founded in 1875. Since then the third of its three Objects has been: “To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the human being.” In the late 1800s an important focus for this investigation was the widespread occurrence of spiritualistic phenomena. Messages were being received from people who had died, objects were being materialized from seemingly thin air, apparitions, levitations, a whole range of inexplicable phenomena associated with spiritualism and mediums were the subject of daily newspaper reporting in cities throughout the US. On deeper investigation many of the supposed phenomena were shown to be fake, but a significant number were irrefutable. An initial aspect of the TS’s work was to address these phenomena, to provide grounding in the Ageless Wisdom tradition, and stem the tide of the fanciful “explanations” and theologies that were being manufactured by believers.

I was first attracted to the Ageless Wisdom tradition that the TS represents through a gentleman who was highly regarded for a developed clairvoyant ability. Like me, many young people were attracted to him. I did not come to him for that, but rather because he was a person who had demonstrated profound wisdom in terms of

the inner life as well as how to live outwardly. He never emphasized the psychic or clairvoyant component; it was just something that came with the package.

I found myself in a setting where many of the people surrounding this man we came to call “The Old Man” were either attracted by his clairvoyance, or who were themselves quite psychically sensitive. My upbringing had not exposed me to any of this, and so to step into this milieu was both fascinating and challenging.

In the early 1970s there was a wave of Eastern gurus arriving on the American shores, and many, mostly younger people, found themselves turning their attention in that direction. For the first time people were hearing a more expansive vision of latent powers. As is natural to the human population, there are a certain percentage of people who have genuine, awakened, or awakening abilities to see or hear things beyond the normal range of perception, often to foresee things. Some of these younger people found their way to Bill Lawrence, the Old Man

Often he would make the point: “Don’t believe that you’re crazy because your possibility for perception is different from others. These things are real. But also do not make the mistake of believing that this is some special gift that sets you apart from the rest of humanity, because it isn’t. It’s real, but don’t get caught up in it. These same “powers” and more are sleeping in everyone. Given the proper cultivation they appear, but to force their growth can be a tragic mistake.”

In the Chicago area there were a number of people with highly developed abilities of this sort. Most were very much aware of him. On a couple of occasions he called a number of these people with various psychic and healing abilities for a meeting at his home, which was where a number of us lived at that time. Before these meetings took place he would talk to us: “While these people are here just observe for yourself, and then form your own opinions.”

On one of these occasions there was a woman who was quite well known as a psychometrist. She would take a physical object that

someone carried with them, a ring, a set of keys, and so on. As she held it and focused she would be able to see and accurately speak about characteristics and activities of the owner. Seeing her in action that night I was impressed with her level of vision, but very unimpressed with her level of discretion and kindness. For example, she was given one lady's ring and started to talk about something very private, clearly not a subject for a group of strangers. She went into inappropriate and salacious details of this woman's personal business. It turned out to be 100 per cent accurate, but inappropriate for what we would think of in a normal moral sense.

On another occasion there was a conversation going on with a woman who was a very well-known psychic. During the meeting she and I never interacted. At the time, I was a university student and there was a paper I had been struggling to complete which was overdue for submission. Somehow I just could not get it together. As we were leaving I shook the lady's hand and said: "Goodbye. It was nice meeting you." She looked at me and said: "Why are you waiting to hand in that paper?" And added: "It's one of the best papers you have ever written!" When I did finally submit it, sure enough, it was the highest grade in that class.

What is the value of experiences such as this? What do they do for us? What does it really mean? We have experiences of all types all the time, but what is the factor that separates any normal experience from something that actually becomes integrated into our being, that moves us toward transformative experience. Do we have any level of participation in the process, or do things just happen to us?

This is my interest particularly because of this Ageless Wisdom tradition, which says that each one of us is responsible and can be proactive in our own unfoldment. We make choices. Whether we like to think that is true or not, we are continually choosing. If we choose to sit at home and interact with no one, we have made a choice, and conditions follow from it. So how do we choose? Is it even of interest to us that we have deeper potentials that are as yet unrevealed, but which can be? This is something we need to decide for ourselves and act accordingly.

A strong emphasis for the Old Man was that healing is one of the sleeping powers within us. It is resident in everyone. For some, it just pours forth with little effort, but for others it is something that can be developed. If we ever get to the point where we recognize that we are not merely physical, but energetic beings functioning on many levels, a pathway to effective healing opens for us.

We are all completely familiar with the bodily levels. We experience a variety of sensations in the body — painful, pleasurable, neutral. But everybody has emotions — sadness, happiness, anxiety. We function on this energetic level perhaps even more so than the physical. We are also creatures of thought. With the dawning awareness that we are energetic beings, possibilities to link ourselves with deeper powers open up. Healing is one of them.

Over the course of the meetings with psychics and healers one of the things I did observe was that not all, but many of the people who had these highly developed powers were uneducated. They did not have the formal educational training that might have shut them off from their potential. They had not been trained to believe that the capacities that were so natural to them did not exist.

One evening the Old Man invited a profound healer, a lady named Evelyn, to come to one of the meetings. Many of the healers and psychics were deeply religious. For her, like many of these people, if you asked what was the source of her healing power, she would say it was a gift from God, or Jesus. Very few had any insight into ideas of energy, or the multidimensional nature of the human being.

Late that night Evelyn had worked on a couple of people, when suddenly the Old Man stood up, left the room, and went out to the front porch. Later he said that at that moment he did not know what made him go outside. A car pulled up in front of the house next door and the neighbor stepped out. He asked her: "Miss Jones, are you feeling well?" And she answered: "I'm feeling so sick. The day after tomorrow I'm due to go into the hospital for surgery." He invited her to come inside.

When Evelyn saw her she immediately put her hand on the lady's belly. Then she started to describe what she was seeing. She said: "I see a hole in your stomach! It's bleeding." Then she said in a commanding voice: "In the name of Jesus, I see it closing!" After a few minutes of this she pronounced Miss Jones as healed. In those days they were operating on bleeding ulcers. On the appointed day for her surgery she insisted that she have an exam prior to the operation. After the exam the doctors were uncharacteristically confused and diagnosed her condition as "a spontaneous remission". I knew that lady for thirty years after that, and she never missed an opportunity to talk about this experience, for her it was "a miracle".

Healing is one of the latent powers that are readily available to anyone, even if not at the level of Evelyn. However, balancing physical distress is only one of the forms that healing takes. There are people that we find ourselves drawn to in times of difficulty, not for their verbal advice, but for their presence. Just being around them instills a sense of ease and strength to carry on. Connection to the present moment and a sense of peace are also powers.

When most people talk about powers the tendency is to look to clairvoyance, seeing the future, seeing or hearing at a distance, seeing auras, but there are other powers of equal or greater significance — deeper powers in terms of their capacity to influence the way we live our lives, and magnify the effect we have for uplifting others. It is not good enough just to live our 70, 80, 90 years and to leave this world having merely taken up space during our time here. A major part of our reason for being here is to contribute to the wellbeing and happiness of others.

What is it that assists in integrating experiences that can lead us to a broader, less separative view of the world? I have known a number of people who have had an NDE, or Near Death Experience. One of the common features of the experience is the "life review". It may take a second, or even less, but the person sees their entire life in perspective and in review: the things they were right and wrong about, the people they helped or harmed, and the distilled, essential character of the life just lived, all flow across the screen of the mind. When people return

from that experience, invariably they find that there are changes in their priorities.

I know people who have had complete changes of life and moved along a path that they would not have anticipated as a result of this near-death vision of their life.

There is a hierarchy of experience in terms of the degree to which they integrate into our personality and its behaviours. Profound experiences, such as an NDE, or even normal experiences to which we give focused attention can affect us deeply.

For example, the Zen (Chan) tradition in Buddhism arose from a wordless teaching by the Buddha. His disciples had gathered to hear him preach, but instead of speaking, the Buddha simply held up a white flower and gazed at it. Kayapa, one of his disciples, understood the meaning of this "flower sermon", and Buddha signaled his understanding with a smile. In this way the Buddha's teaching about reality was transmitted to Kayapa and on to future generations, not through words, but by direct experience.

We tend to focus on the value of knowledge and we also tend to restrict what knowledge actually is. Most of us think of knowledge as data and its permutations — systems of thought. Out of that we develop a subset that we use in the world. There is a missing factor, or catalyst that transmutes mere knowledge into a power with universal application. What we think of as knowledge can be more accurately described as "love-deprived knowledge". It can be as harmful as it is helpful.

Knowledge infused with the quality that we describe as "love" changes its nature and use. The addition of love transforms to a perception of reality in which we are not the separated, isolated, contentious, competitive individuals that we accept ourselves as being. All of our ordinary activity confirms that we are separate. Love confirms the opposite.

(Courtesy: *The Theosophist*, Oct. 2022)

PEDRO OLIVEIRA*

INTERVIEW WITH MR S.S. VARMA**

*S. S. Varma (1911-1999) was a distinguished member of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society in India. He served as Treasurer of the TS at its International Headquarters at Adyar, Madras, India, and also as a member of the Society's General Council and the international Executive Committee. He was also for a period of time Officer-in-Charge of the TS Archives. Mr Varma is the author of three books which present a distinct contribution to Theosophical literature: **Yogic Practice – Yama and Niyama** (The Theosophical Publishing House, Chennai, India, 1991); **Teachings on Discipleship – As outlined in the Mahatma Letters** (The Theosophical Publishing House, Chennai, India, 1995); and **Shrī Rāmācaritamānasa – An Esoteric Study** (Aparna Publishers, Cuttack, Odisha, India, 2017).*

We are going to have a conversation with one of the senior most members of the Indian Section of the TS, Shri S. S. Varma. Varmaji: can you tell us something about your childhood?

A. I was born in Mainpuri, in 1911. My childhood was spent with my family where everybody, so to speak, showered a lot of care and love on me. But my mother died when I was less than three years old, and I was in the care of my Aunt, who loved me very much and who came from a family with a religious background. So, she gave me a training in ethics and even as a child I was taught verses which told me how to behave and what is good and bad. My father was a member of the TS, a little later, and gradually I learnt from him some elements of Theosophy, not knowing that they were Theosophical, which I

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**The interview was conducted at Adyar by Pedro Oliveira in 1996. The interview was kindly transcribed by the late Mrs Kusum Satapathy, Varmaji's daughter.

learned only afterwards. When I was about 10 years old, Dr. Besant visited my birthplace and, luckily for me, I was selected to present her some flowers. She was very kind and, of course, I remember only that I looked at her very admiringly, and came away. Then, when I was about 11, I used to be very angry; and the anger lasted a long time, through frequent outbursts. But I saw pictures at Mr. Dharma Narayan's place, father of Shri Surendra Narayan. He used to project the pictures of *Man Visible & Invisible*, *Thought Forms* and others and explain what they were. He showed the picture of a person in great anger and explained that this is how a person looks when he is angry and sometimes this condition may last for more than twenty-four hours. I was horrified to know or see how I looked and since then I started trying to curb my anger. Father gave me some books like 'Life of H.P.B.', 'Life of A.B.'. I read those with great interest. In 1926, my Aunt who was taking care of me fell sick and in 1927 she died. I had a peculiar experience at the time of her death. I felt as if she was visiting me for the last time. She did not speak anything, I did not know that she was dying. But in the morning somehow I had the feeling that it was a farewell visit and I told my father that something has happened. Just in that afternoon we got the telegram that she had passed away that morning.

Then, another incident which gave me a feeling that there is a lot in the invisible world was my visit to the Convention at Benares. Dr. Besant was presiding at the Convention and on the other side, i.e. in the Central Hindu College, an educational Conference was going on. As I went from the Theosophical compound to the other compound, I felt there was a noise this side, outside the TS compound, but there was silence within. I thought it is because there are so many people wandering on the other side. So I stood at the door to see whether it was real. And as I moved the head from side to side, I felt there was some sort of screen shielding the Theosophical compound and dividing the two. When the head was on the Theosophical compound side there was silence. On the other side there was a peculiar buzzing noise.

So it was not a physical noise but it was some sort of disturbance and I felt that there is something which is not physical and some quietness, something in the compound in the Theosophical atmosphere at Benares where Dr. Besant was presiding. She was also attending the other conference, but it was not the same atmosphere. So then I prepared my mind in a way and because of the death of my Aunt, I asked my father to give me some books telling one about life after death, karma and reincarnation, and I tried to study them and find out how or why this happens and what does happen to a person after death. He had given me Leadbeater's books and I read them with great interest. But I did not quite understand why such a good person as my Aunt should pass away so quickly.

Q. What was her name?

A. Her name was Smt. Hardevi.

Q. And your Father's name?

A. Shri Prem Bihari.

Q. And if I may ask you – how large was your family?

A. I had three sisters and three brothers, but as at that time it was a joint family, my cousins were also treated like brothers and sisters and we were quite a large number.

Q. This was in Mainpuri?

A. Yes.

Q. So your basic education was in Mainpuri?

A. Basic education was in Mainpuri but for some time I had also gone to Shahjahanpur to stay with my uncle and study there. That was for about 18 months.

Q. Do you have any recollection of when your father joined the Theosophical Society?

A. I don't know. Ever since I started to know anything, he was a member.

Q. Where did you have your High School education?

A. High School I passed from Mainpuri. As I said, schooling was mostly at Mainpuri but partly at Shahjahanpur also where Uncle and Aunt lived.

Q. You mentioned that the experience during the passing of your Aunt was a very important experience for you.

A. Very important experience.

Q. Which came to you before you could even begin to study Theosophy.

A. Well, that made me study Karma, Reincarnation and Life after Death. Of course at that time, I did not become a member. My father never encouraged me to become a member but he gave me books to read.

Q. What happened to you after completing High School?

A. I went to Agra, to Radha Swami Education Institute, from where I passed Intermediate i.e. 12th class. Then after that I went to Lucknow to study in the B.Sc. class. Then, after studying about one and a half years, I was selected to study in Roorkee College – Civil Engineering. I went there for three years' study.

Q. During this period you had not yet joined the TS yet?

A. No, I joined the TS very late because my father said – 'you go on reading, studying' and I kept on studying Theosophical Books. In fact, much before I joined the Society, father gave me *The Masters and the Path*, which had been originally published in 1925. Soon after it was released he had given me the book to study. I read the book and I asked him whether it was permissible to meditate on the Masters. And since he said there was no objection, I did meditate on

the Masters even before I joined the T.S.

Q. So the Theosophical influence was very strong in your life.

A. It was very strong.

Q. But you were concentrating on your studies and preparing yourself for a professional career.

A. Yes.

Q. And what happened to you after completing your Engineering studies?

A. After completing Engineering studies those were days of great unemployment.

Q. Which year was that?

A. I passed in 1932.

Q. That was the time of the Great Depression.

A. The Great Depression was there, I could not get employment. First I got an employment in a Sugar Mill which was being constructed for about two or three months. Then I joined the railways as a student Engineer for some time. I worked there for less than a year. I applied in many places and got a negative reply generally. I was prepared to get that reply. Once from Bird & Co., Calcutta, I got a letter for an interview. I rushed to Calcutta and I was selected. In the beginning, on the first day, they said I should work free as there were two engineers who had passed from England and they had been working for about six months without any pay. So I thought I should also join in that way. I joined, but within a week I found that the design engineer found me almost indispensable. So I told him I will go back and finish my training in the railways. But he didn't want to let me go. He said, 'before the evening comes you must join and you must sign an agreement to work in the Company and I am giving you pay from today'.

Q. And you accepted.

A. I accepted and started getting my pay. Then those two Engineers who had passed from England, they also appealed and they said this is very unfair. And they were also given a contract.

Q. When did you decide to constitute a family?

A. In 1938. That was when I was still serving in the Railways. I had come to the Railways and had been selected to work there. And in 1938 I got married.

Q. So eventually you left Calcutta to resume your work in the Railways.

A. The work was at Simla and Delhi and for three years or so I was moving between Delhi and Simla. Delhi in winter and Simla in summer.

Q. May I ask you how many children came into the world as a result of the marriage?

A. There are five children. Two daughters and three sons, all well settled now.

Q. I understand some of them are in America.

A. One son is in America, in California.

Q. Does Mrs. Sheela, your wife, also come from a Theosophical family?

A. No. She does not come from a Theosophical family, but somehow she had a desire to understand Theosophy and learn about Theosophy. When my first child was about 16 months old, it was one such occasion. It was easy to go for the Benares Convention [of the TS]. She insisted on going. My father agreed and took her to Benares to attend the Convention. And I have always found her very receptive, very co-operative. We have often studied together – books on

Theosophy and other religions.

Q. In which year did you actually join the TS?

A. 1939

Q. And where were you living then?

A. In Calcutta.

Q. And how was your involvement with the Society? Did you start immediately to participate in the Lodge work? Did you become an office bearer of the Lodge?

A. No, in the beginning I was only going to attend the meetings. And the meetings, most of them, were in a language I could not understand. But part of it was in English. And still I persisted in going till I moved to Allahabad in 1942. There, of course, the whole work was in English and there I met some very senior members of the Society, like Dr. [I.K.] Taimni, Mr. Prasad; and they encouraged me. They made me take part in the Lodge work. In fact, Dr. Taimni made me give three lectures in the Lodge. I had written them down and somehow he was very happy with those lectures and he showed them even to CJ [C. Jinarajadasa] when he went to Allahabad.

Q. Mr Jinarajadasa was to become the President of the TS in 1946.

A. Yes.

Q. This introduces very naturally another question: in your whole career – you joined in 1939, we are in 1996, which comprises almost sixty years of membership. Who were the Theosophical leaders, the Theosophical stalwarts, that you met during your time of membership in the TS – you mentioned Dr. Taimni. Can you say something about him? What kind of a person he was?

A. Dr. Taimni, when I met him in the early 1940s, was writing the book – *Self Culture*, and he used to come and discuss the chapters

with my father. I was a listener, interested listener mostly, and he had to make those figures which I made for him.

Q. The diagrams.

A. The diagrams. Three diagrams; and he was kind enough later, as I said, to encourage me to do work in the Lodge and to take part in discussions and give talks; and I was fortunate enough to meet a number of leaders at that time. Afterwards Rohit Mehta took over; he used to come to our house. Mr Dharma Narayanji was a constant visitor to the house and a neighbour and he was very kind to me later on. We used to meet often and talk about various religious things. And it was he who gave me a lot of interest in *Râmacharitamânasa*, saying that this contains Theosophy in abstract form. A person who can understand this well has to know Theosophy.

Q. Who was the person who introduced you to *Râmacharitamânasa*?

A. Mr. Dharma Narayanji – father of Mr. Surendra Narayan [former Vice-President of the TS].

Q. Did you meet the International President, Dr. G. S. Arundale?

A. I met him. But he did not visit us or come to my place. But I did meet him in the meetings. Later on I had invited Rukminiji to our house and she was kind enough to come. Before that CJ had also come. Of course, Rohit Mehta and Sridevi used to come to our house. But the greatest impact on me was that of Sri Ramji [N. Sri Ram].

Q. In which way did he cause this impact? Can you describe it?

A. It is very difficult to describe. It was an experience to sit near him and how it affected one I cannot say, because it was something intangible. He was very kind and one thing that struck me – he was never flurried. One day actually it happened that he was to have tea at our place and it was getting a little late. So the person with him was looking at his watch feeling uneasy and said – ‘we must go’. But NSR

[Sri Ram] said, 'yes I know; but my wife and myself had also to go; so let us take it easy and we shall still be in time'. He waited patiently for everything to finish, for us to lock up the house and go with him to the meeting.

Q. And he was unperturbed?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you have the opportunity to have conversations also with CJ during his stay with you?

A. No, CJ did not stay with me. I had him just for a visit. He took interest in the Mystic Star at Allahabad. I joined the Mystic Star movement. He trained us and he was very particular about every pronunciation. He made us repeat a word half a dozen times till it was correctly spoken.

Q. He was very meticulous.

A. Yes.

Q. You once told me that while with NSR one could feel an atmosphere of saintliness around him, while CJ was a very energetic person who radiated power.

A. That is true. That is the feeling I had when I was with them.

Q. I understand you retired from Government Service in 1969.

A. That's right.

Q. During this time, were you in Delhi or were you in Allahabad before retiring?

A. At the time of retirement I was in Delhi.

Q. So you were taking active part in the work of the Delhi Theosophical Federation?

A. Yes. I had been elected as President of the Lodge several

times, in the Federation I was working in various capacities and in different places. In fact one Lodge used to meet at my place.

Q. What happened after your retirement in 1969?

A. After 1969 I went to Lucknow for a short time. Then I got an assignment to go to Tanzania for three and a half years. I went there as an Advisor to the Government on Bridges and then I came back and resumed Theosophical work in Delhi.

Q. During your stay in Tanzania I understand you also took part in Theosophical activities there.

A. Yes. In fact at the time I went there, they were holding meetings only in Gujarati. Then gradually, I started going to Gujarati meetings also, and afterwards they introduced one English meeting and one Gujarati meeting and I took part in them.

Q. After coming back to India and resuming your Theosophical work in Delhi I understand that you also had an opportunity to be acting General Secretary in the Indian Section or Assistant General Secretary, during the time of difficulties there.

A. Yes. There was one year of some difficulty there and there was no real General Secretary. Then Dr. [A.] Kannan was sent there as General Secretary. To help him I was sent there. Although I did not want any position Dr. Kannan insisted and appointed me as Joint General Secretary.

Q. For how long did that last?

A. That lasted only one year before Dr. Agarwal was elected as the General Secretary.

Q. Now, I understand that you came to the convention at Adyar in 1985 and you were planning to stay over to write a book with Shri R.S. Gupta. Can you tell us something about that.

A. Yes. We had decided to write a book on the Mahatma Letters

and we had both come here prepared to stay for a month or six weeks, so that we could be together and write that book. But when we came to Adyar, I was told that there was a crisis in the Treasury, and that I should take over as the Treasurer. I said that I did not know much of accounts, but I was told by Mr. Surendra Narayan that I should take over, as there was a lot of general work to be done. I said I can only do it if I have an Assistant Treasurer who knows accounts. Dr. Gupta agreed to help me during that period and then we both decided to stay here. I had about two days to decide and then the President announced it in the General Council meeting that I will take over as Treasurer. Miss Annie Tjio had already resigned and therefore I took over as the Treasurer.

Q. Which was a completely unexpected situation.

A. This was a completely unexpected situation. Then of course we used to stay here and we went by turns to our homes, and brought things to be able to stay here for a year or for longer period.

Q. You are now in your eleventh year of residence at Adyar. What do you feel about life at Adyar? What is it like living at Adyar?

A. It is an experience to be here. I have found almost everybody without exception extremely nice. The President and the Vice-President have been particularly good and my life has been very pleasant here. The atmosphere is indescribably good and the people here are also very friendly even though there are some differences between people. But I found that with me, even if officially there is a difference, in private life they are very friendly to me and I found therefore living here to be almost heavenly and it is only with regret that I will go out of this place.

Q. What would you say to the new members who are joining the Society? What would be your advice to them in what concerns making Theosophy something living and not just a theory?

A. There are, as Theosophy presents it, the external side, where

we study all about evolution, how the worlds come into being and change, rounds and chains and all that. But in order to make Theosophy a living reality we have to realize that all that is to show that there is One Life of which each of us has to realize himself as a part, not as something external to himself. When we read all that generally we have a feeling that we are seeing something outside us. People talk of Brotherhood. We are told that that is the one object which is the most important object, if not the only object that we have to concentrate on. But they seldom realize that this Brotherhood is not so much an external thing which is reflected in our behaviour. Essentially, it is the realization that the individual self is fictitious; it doesn't exist. We are only existing as a part of a whole big life and that life is all pervading. With this idea, if we start living, we can then only be brotherly. Otherwise, brotherliness which people think of as just good behaviour, is not really Theosophy and those people who come into contact with Theosophy should study all the literature; but this one basic idea that there is One Life should never be lost sight of.

In *The Secret Doctrine* also this comes in the very beginning, that there is One Life only which is manifesting everywhere. So if this idea is always kept in view it will be easier to understand the rest and also to live Theosophy. Quite often people feel they must go out and lecture but they forget that the best lecturing is by living Theosophy and understanding this, that there is one life. When this comes out from within, the whole atmosphere around one changes, which I have said already I could feel in the case of NSR, who probably lived in this light and therefore the whole atmosphere around him was different. And we have to, if we want to make Theosophy a living power, we have to cultivate this one feeling that we are a part of this one whole life and everybody is included in it, high or low. It is felt that if a person is bad according to our thinking he is to be shunned. But we must recognize him as another item or unit where the spark is not yet able to shine and the equipments are being trained to make it express through them. We see the mess that is created when anything great is being

constructed. As an engineer, I can see that when there is construction going on there is a lot of mess in the compound but every architect and engineer who can see the final building with his eyes is happy that ultimately it will result in that great structure. Similarly, in every person that spark is trying to come out and when it is able to shine out there will be tremendous vitality and greatness in that unit also.

Q. You have written a very interesting book on Discipleship as a result of your studies in the Mahatma Letters. This has been a lifelong study with you. In the old days of the Theosophical Society, when we read about its history, there was a lot of talk about the Masters, perhaps too much talk. More recently, or after say, the mid-fifties or so, this personal talk about the Masters and stages on the Path and so on ceased to a great extent. Can one come closer to the Teachers or Elder Brothers in this world or this possibility has become more difficult?

A. I think this coming closer to the Teachers has always been difficult, although when those things were materialized, people thought it is something which they can achieve. And they thought it is the 'I' which achieves them. Actually, my feeling is that it is not something to be achieved; it is something which happens to one. If we live that life then they themselves will overtake us. It is said that when the disciple is ready, the Master appears. So, it is not that we have to try and see that the Master comes; we do something for him to come. But we have to keep on changing ourselves and what we are told about the Masters; we have to learn their outlook. It was a very striking thing which I read in Leadbeater's life. When he came to know, he was struck by their outlook on life; and he said what a wonderful outlook it is. It is this when people think their outlook and their way of thinking is something we have to cultivate, the question of initiations, steps and materialization of all that goes out of the picture. It is only changing, keep on changing oneself and if there are those steps they will overtake one.

Q. So the challenge of discipleship rests basically with the individual. If the attitude is right the possibility of a closer contact with the Great Ones will be there. But if the attitude is not right there will not be any.

A. Quite right. The closer contact means making oneself as like them as possible. And therefore it is always up to the individual to change himself in that direction. It rests only with the individual to move on that path.

Q. We know that the formation of the Society was not decided by HPB nor by Col. Olcott. They received the directive from the Great Ones to start it. And they inspired the Founders, they inspired the leaders of the Society. Do you feel the Great Ones are still inspiring the Society?

A. It is a very difficult question. It is about what others feel or do and I am not in a position to say whether they are inspiring somebody else or not. But I do feel that if a person really opens up he will get the inspiration.

Q. Thank you very much.

Self-preparation is an important aspect of theosophical work. It is important because when a person comes to the threshold of truth perception, everything in his life changes and he also has the power to influence changes around himself.

RADHA BURNIER

“The Essential Work of the Theosophical Society”

Theosophy and The Theosophical Society, p.119
The Indian Section, TS, Varanasi

NEWS AND NOTES

Bengal

Annual Report of the Secretary

The Federation has crossed 102 years through many ups and downs. The Federation was formed in the year 1920 under the Presidentship of Late Manishi Hirendra Nath Dutta, a great Academician, Philosopher and one of the main pioneers of the Theosophical movements in West Bengal in 20th Century. We pay our homage to this great soul for his great works. Besides, we lost some of our brothers and sisters this year. We pay our respect to all those departed souls and pray for their peaceful onward journey.

The Federation conducted its Annual General meeting and Annual Conference on 28th August with a day- long programme. AGM was held in the morning session, where Secretary's report and Financial Statements were placed and accepted unanimously. Thereafter, new Executive Committee of the Fed. was formed for 03 years i.e. from Oct/2022 to Sept/2025.

The Federation is having 11 lodges with 152 Members. Out of 11 lodges, Bengal T.S, Bally Lodge, Jnanamarga Lodge, Mayfair Lodge, Vivekananda Lodge, are running satisfactorily. But, we are yet to receive reports from the remaining 06 lodges. Recently, Bally Lodge celebrated their 109th Anniversary function on 10th August/22. BTS and Jnanmarga Lodge celebrated their 140th and 49th Anniversary on 28th Aug. And 10th September/22 respectively.

The Federation, this year, successfully organized National Conference (on-line) comprising the States of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Utkal and Bangladesh on 12 & 13 March, 22, where Bro. Pradeep H. Gohil, President, Indian Sec. was the Chief Guest and Bro. B.L. Bhattacharya, former National Director, TOS was the Special Guest. Ven. P. Seewali Thero, General Secretary, Mahabodhi Society of

India, graced the occasion as a Guest of honour. Besides, Bro. Chittaranjan Satpathy, former International Vice-President of TS, Bro. K. Shivaprasad, National Director of TOS, National Lecturers Prof. C.A. Shinde and Bro. P.K. Mahapatra, Secretaries of the aforementioned Federations and their Representatives participated and spoke on this occasion.

A new bookshop was opened, at the entrance of the BTS Bldgs. On 20th May/22, for sale of the Theosophical books. Besides, facilities for reading in the adjacent library has been made free of costs. This was done by collecting donations from our members and partly by other means. Our sincere thanks to all the donor members.

Study Class/Camps: As most of the study classes are now being organized on-line by different federations, a good number of our members are attending the same besides attending International Convention every year. Study classes are also conducted at BTS hall at regular intervals by our members.

Future Plan

Besides conducting seminars and in-house study classes, we have a plan to organize at least three Memorial Lectures during this year in the name of Late Hemendu Bikash Chowdhury, former President of BTS, Manishi Hirendra Nath Dutta, founder President of BTF and Dr. Annie Besant, the 2nd International President of TS, who took the Theosophical movement in India and abroad to a great height.

Annual Conference

The Annual Conference of the Federation was also held in the afternoon on 28 Aug. 2022 after the AGM at BTS Hall at 3 PM. Brahmachari Divakar Chaitanyaji Maharaj, in-charge Chinmoy Mission, Kolkata was the Chief Guest and Ven. Dr. Kachyan Bhante of Mahabodhi Society graced the function as Guest of Honour.

After the prayers of all faiths, welcome address was given by the Federation's President Bro. Pankaj Kr. Datta. It was followed by

opening song by Sis. Jaba Guha Thakurta. Then, a short speech, was given by Bro. Achintya Nr. Chakraborty, Secy./BTF on “Relevance of Theosophy in modern day crisis”. The Guest of Honour, Ven. Kachyan Bhante, spoke on the topic “Theosophy & Buddhism”. The Chief Guest, Brahmachari Divakar Chaitanayaji Maharaj, in his inspiring speech, explained about the essence of love & brotherhood and necessities to keep harmonious relationship with all including nature, in order to explore the beauties of life. The conference ended with the vote of thanks given by Bro. Avik Guha Thakurta.

Bro. B.L. Bhattacharya was felicitated on this occasion by the members of the Society and a documentary filmed on his life & his involvement in the Theosophical movement in the country and abroad was released as a tribute to him.

U.P. & Uttarakhand

Federation’s President Bro. U.S. Pandey visited the Lodge at Basti on 02 and 03 September and discussed administrative matters with the lodge officials. On 02 September he addressed a group of about 40 students from class 6 to 9 of Praxis Vidyapeeth. The topic of his talk was ‘Living the life and its purpose’. Then, he addressed the members of the Lodge and some other teachers on ‘Theosophy and Theosophical Society’. On 03 September, he briefly told a group of students about ‘Meditation- its purpose and benefits’ and then conducted a meditation session for this group of students and some teachers.

Manager of the school took Bro. Pandey to another branch of this school located at Hanumnganj where he addressed a group of about 100 students and teachers on the theme ‘A happy, healthy, successful and peaceful life.’ It was held in the afternoon of 03 September.

During the sessions at both places, i.e. Basti and Hanumnganj, basic points of theosophical teachings were touched and there was close interaction with the audience. Some students expressed about

their personal problems regarding lack of concentration, non-interest in particular subject of study etc. and suitable counseling was done.

Bro. U. S. Pandey visited Rudhauri Lodge (Distt. Basti) from 03 September evening to 04 September and discussed administrative matters. On 03 September, he conducted a meditation session in the evening followed by a session on ‘Rejuvenation by Self-awareness’ with a group of about 30 students and teachers of Praxis Vidyapeeth, Rudhauri. Bro. Pandey addressed a group of students and teachers on the topic ‘Thought Power and its Uses’ on 4 September. During the sessions basic points of theosophical teachings were also touched and there was close interaction with the audience. Some students expressed about their personal problems regarding choice of subject, choice of profession, lack of concentration etc. and suitable counseling was done

A session was also held with the members of the Lodge and some other persons when basic feature of theosophical society and basic teachings of theosophy were explained.

During the weekly meetings of Dharma Lodge, Lucknow, held on 07, 14, 21 and 28 September talks were delivered on the topics ‘Theosophic Life’, ‘Practice and Freedom’, ‘At the Feet of Master-Viveka’, and ‘Death of Death’ by Bro. B. K. Pandey, Br. Ashok Kumar Gupta, Bro. Pramil Dwivedi and Bro. U.S. Pandey respectively.

In the meetings of Nirvan Lodge, Agra, held on 01, 08, 15 and 22 September, talks were delivered on the topics ‘*Adyar Darshan*’, ‘*Bhagvat me naitikta vigyan evam sambhaav*’, ‘*Ramcharitmanas*’ and ‘*Man ki Vyakhya*’. The speakers were by Sis. Catalina & Shikhar’, Dr. Sahdev Krishna, Bro. H. V. Pandey and Bro. R. P. Sharma respectively. Annual meeting of the Lodge was held on 29 September. Bharat Samaj Puja was performed by Bro. Gyaneesh Kumar Chaturvedi on 25 September.

Sis. Vasumati Agnihotri presented the article ‘*Svanisedh se*

sukh, shanti paripoornata’ from Dharm Path (Hindi journal) during meetings of Pragma Lodge, Lucknow, held on 04 and 11 September. She also discussed the contents of the book “*Man Whence, How and Whither*” on 18 and 25 September.

The following talks were held at Sarvahitkari Lodge Gorakhpur: Bro. Arvind Rai’s two talks were on ‘Thought Power’ and ‘Mental Plane’. He delivered these talk on 07 and 21 September, respectively. The subject of Bro. S.B.R. Mishra’s talk on 14 September was ‘Astral Plane’.

Sis. Suvralina Mohanty conducted the study of chapter 9 of the book “*The Key to Theosophy*” in the on-line meetings of Prayas Lodge, Ghaziabad, held on 04 and 11 September. A symposium on the theme “Creating Character” was organized in two sessions held on 18 and 25 September when young members Kritika, Shruti, Pranshee, Mannsha, Amresh and Baivab expressed their views on the theme of the symposium.

Study of the book ‘*Light on the Path*’ continued by Bro. J. K. Khanna at Noida Lodge on 4 and 18 September.

Bro. S. S. Gautam gave three talks at Chohan Lodge, Kanpur, on the book ‘*Talks on the Path of Occultism-III*’. These were held on 04, 11, 18 and 25 September.

Talks were delivered by Bro. K. K. Jaiswal on the topics ‘Theosophy in daily life’ and ‘*Brahm jugyasu ka jeevan*’ respectively. These talks were held at Anand Lodge, Prayag Raj, in the meeting held on 4 and 18 September. Besides, Sis. Archana Pandey spoke on ‘Spiritual Life’ on 25 September.

Kashi Tattva Sabha, Varanasi: As decided by E.C. of the Indian Section, a special drive is being made since July, 2022 to admit students and staff of the four educational institutions located within the campus of the Indian Section Headquarters.

In this connection Federation’s President Bro. U.S. Pandey held

a meeting with the Lodge officials and coordinators of the four institutions on 16 September, when status of the admission of students and staff as TS members was reviewed. Bro. Pandey appreciated the work done by all in this regard. He urged principals and coordinators of the institutions to make efforts to admit the staff and all the eligible students on roll, as soon as possible. For this purpose the process should continue after 01 October 2022 also.

Since start of drive in July 2022 and up to 30 September 2022, membership application forms of 72 staff and 1031 students (1103) from these four institutes have been submitted. In most of these cases, diplomas have been issued or nos. are allotted.

Bro. U.S. Pandey delivered introductory talks to some of the newly admitted students as members of T.S. and distributed two theosophical pamphlets among them.

Annie Besant Lodge, Varanasi: A new lodge named ‘Annie Besant Lodge’ has been formed in Varanasi and it was inaugurated during a brief session held on 16 September in the Annie Besant Hall of the Indian Section Hqrs. Bro. V. Narayanan and Br. U.S. Pandey interacted with the members of this lodge, welcomed them and diplomas to the new members of this lodge were given over. This lodge consists of some Research Scholars and one Asst. Professor of BHU and also few former BHU Alumni.

Contribution in other Federations

In joint programme (Triveni) of three lodges of Mumbai Federation (Jyoti lodge) and Gujarat Federation (Rewa and Rohit Lodges): Sis. Kritika Goel participated as a speaker in the on-line meeting organized on “Teachings of Kabir”. It was held on 13 September

Contribution to the Indian Section’s Work/ Programme

Bro. S. S. Gautam translated the Section’s journal “The Indian Theosophist” of October 2022 in Hindi.

Sis. Kritika Goel moderated sessions during talks on 'In the Outer Court' on 10 September, Study of Mahatma Letters on 16 and 23 September, talk on 'Compassion' on 17 September and talk on 'How to encounter your karma' on 24 September.

Contribution in the events of other Forums

In a seminar held at Eve's Welfare Club, Gorakhpur, Bro. S. B. R. Mishra spoke on the theme 'Life after Death'. It was held on 24 September.

In Young Indian Theosophists Group: Sis. Suvralina Mohanty participated as a speaker in the symposium organized on 25 September. The topic was "Study, Meditation and Selfless Service". Sis. Kritika Goel moderated this session.

National Lecturer

On invitation by Shankar Lodge, Delhi, Bro. S. K. Pandey delivered a talk on 06 August on the topic "Third Eye in Human Race"

Sis. Vibha Saxena conducted study of Mahatma Letters No. 58 and 59 on 02 September.

On invitation by *Shaswat Yoga Sabha*, Delhi, Bro. U. S. Pandey delivered a talk on the topic "Spirituality in daily Life". It was held on 08 September. The talk was followed by intensive interactive session with the audience and it helped in introducing basic theosophical ideas/principles among a non-theosophic group.

On invitation by Pyramid Light Forum, Delhi, Sis. Vibha Saxena delivered three on-line talks on the topic 'Constitution of Man and his Bodies'. These talks were held on 20, 21 and 22 September respectively.

STUDY CAMPS

1. A Study Camp has been organized at Anand Lodge, Prayagraj, from 02-04 December 2022.

The book for Study is "*Light on The Path*", by Mabel Collins.

Registration fee for the out station members- Rs 1000/= per person.

This amount includes accommodation and food charges from dinner on 01 December to lunch on 05 December

Members who are interested to attend the study camp may inform their names to Bro. K K. Jaiswal, President of the Anand Lodge, Prayagraj, latest by 16 November 2022. The amount of registration charges is to be paid on arrival at Anand Lodge, Prayagraj.

Mobile phone Nos. of Bro. K K. Jaiswal:

8960007076; 9839019657

S K Pandey

Secretary

2. A study class on the theme "ESOTERIC INSTRUCTION" will be held at Shri Krishna Theosophical Lodge, Amravati (Maharashtra), from 25-29 January 2023. Bro. U. S. Pandey, National Lecturer, will direct the study.

Board and Lodging charges per member is Rs 500/- for five days. Outstation members can confirm their participation at least one month prior to the study class by sending message to President/Secretary/Treasurer.

President- A.R Kajale Mob No-9975113922

Secretary- MM Bobde Mob No-9822463488

Treasurer- N.D Raut Mob No-7057676080

It is not just what we do which makes the work of the Society theosophical but the quality of our mind and the spirit of understanding and selflessness which we bring to it. When that quality exists a spiritual influence pervades the work and affects other people, helping to bring about world transformation. So the members of the Theosophical Society must be people who are working towards the liberation of the mind and who are full of the spirit of co-operation and affection in their relationship. In India there are temple structures with a thousand pillars. Each pillar is important because it bears a part of the weight. The Theosophical Society's work must be like that, with each member sharing the responsibility.

RADHA BURNIER

“The Essential Work of the Theosophical Society”

Theosophy and The Theosophical Society,

pp. 121-122

The Indian Section, TS, Varanasi