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***Editor***

**PRADEEP H. GOHIL**

## A STEP FORWARD

Spirituality is a world-view and a way of life based on the belief that there is more to life than what meets the senses, more to universe than just purposeless mechanics, more to consciousness than electrical impulses in the brain, and more to our existence than the body and its needs. Spirituality usually involves the belief in a higher form of intelligence or consciousness running the universe, as well as life after death. It exists to satisfy the deeper human thirst for meaning, peace, mystery and the real truth.

You may fumble at the lock with the wrong key and hamper it, but you will never be able to open it unless you have the right access with a proper key. What we want is the key to understand the spiritual meaning to do good to our soul. We all know the meaning of the word 'spiritual' because we are all together in a spiritual organization called Theosophical Society which is concerned with helping people develop and reach their full potential. Spirituality involves the recognition of a feeling or sense of belief that there is something greater than myself, something more to being human than sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature.

One way to look at spirituality is that it is a knowledge about our lives having significance in a context beyond a mundane everyday existence at the level of biological needs that drive selfishness and aggression. It means knowing that we are a significant part of a purposeful unfolding of Life in our universe.

It is often a conscious appreciation of the ultimate mystery that is life, the universe and everything in it, that characterizes the spiritual seeker. The skeptic confines himself to rational enquiry while the spiritual person knows there is more to understanding than logic and reason; in fact he knows that true understanding goes well beyond logic and reason into the deeper truth of not knowing.

In the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha explains how human nature generates suffering and how to transcend the inevitable misery of unconsciousness and reach to a state of wisdom, serenity and acceptance. The Eightfold Path delineates a realistic way to achieve the happiness we all desire through consciously dropping unhelpful patterns of resistance and attachment. Buddhists like to speak about skilful actions or behaviours. It is this that leads us to the crux of the spiritual life—there is a drive for self-improvement to rise up out of unconsciousness and the misery it generates to a state of greater illumination; to think and behave skilfully rather than randomly or immaturely. The means to achieving this come through accepting things as they are instead of being driven to emotions and actions by the forces of attraction, repulsion or indifference. Suffering is defined as the result of not accepting reality as it is.

After seeing all this, we can consider one definition of spirituality consistent with the Buddha's path: spirituality is the indefinable urge to reach beyond the limits of ordinary human existence that is bounded by unconscious forces and self-interest, and to discover higher values in ourselves and to live them consistently in our roles and relationships. It involves developing practices that aid us in rising and expanding, perhaps beyond the merely good to the transcendent, in the process of looking inwards rather than outwards for our own morality and guidance. Above all, it means becoming a more loving and compassionate human being, in thought, word and deed.

Spiritual development requires successive degrees of freedom based on the realization that thoughts are not facts but simply transient mental phenomena, as indeed are our emotions. Increasing number of persons are discovering this through mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, which in bringing a person to the here and now creates the mental climate in which this deep spiritual insight can help relieve anxiety and depression.

There are countless ways of how to practice spirituality and help

improve your well-being. Spirituality is a very personal experience, and everyone's spiritual path may be unique. However, some spiritual stress relief strategies have been helpful to many regardless of faith. Some ways one can follow to start exploring spirituality include:

**Pay attention to how you are feeling:**

Part of embracing spirituality also means embracing what it means to be human, both the good and the bad.

**Focus on others:**

Opening your heart, feeling empathy and helping others are important aspects of spirituality.

**Meditate:**

Try to spend 15 to 20 minutes each morning engaged in some form of meditation.

**Try mindfulness:**

By becoming more mindful, you can become more aware and appreciative of the present. Mindfulness encourages one to be less judgemental, both of yourself and others and focus more on the present moment rather than dwelling on the past or future.

Spirituality helps one to find purpose and meaning of life, it helps to cope up with feelings of stress, depression and anxiety, it restores hope and optimism and prepares a person for spiritual development. Practising spirituality will help one's spiritual progress and be a step forward in it.

*TIMBOYD*

## THE LAND AND US

I WOULD like to share a few thoughts with you on a subject that may seem a little odd, "The Land and Us". When we look around the world the land that we all inhabit universally seems to have great importance. No matter where we are from, or from what point of history we tend to look at, the land is the source of some of the highest human expressions.

On the one hand, there is the heroic patriotism and inspired leadership — in service to the motherland, the Fatherland, the Holy Land, and the sacred land that has motivated people throughout history. One can see the heights of selfless activity. I was in Lhasa, Tibet, some years ago. It was a space regarded as sacred by the people living there, to the point that there was a ritualized treatment of the land. One would see people every morning doing the Kora (circumambulation) around the Jokhang Temple in the central square. For many the Kora included prostrations. You could tell the people who had been devoted to the practice for many years. The prostrations involved bowing down touching the forehead to the ground. The longtime practitioners would have a callus in the middle of their forehead from having touched the sacred ground so many times!

On the other hand we are all too familiar with the land evoking a different, dark and destructive tendency, particularly the Holy Land or the Fatherland. In our recent history those very words have repeatedly sent millions of people marching toward unnecessary death and violence.

Very recently, about two weeks after the attack on the people in Israel and the beginning of the siege of Gaza, my wife and I were in Egypt for a theosophical conference. It was not the first time I had been in Egypt. As a two-year-old my family was living in Egypt with

my father, who had taken on the position of Cairo mission chief of CARE, an American relief organization. This was in the aftermath of the Palestine war or, as it is called within Israel, the War of Liberation. The upshot of that war was that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced, many of them to Egypt, creating a housing and food crisis. My father was there to attend to the housing crisis. This was almost 70 years ago, and here we are in 2024, with history repeating itself. The question that we must ask ourselves is not just what have we learned, but what is the power of place that influences us in this very strong way.

Every high-school student in the United States is exposed to what is considered by many to be one of the greatest speeches in the English language, given by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, the fight between the South and the North, that ultimately centered on the issue of slavery. I do not remember the whole speech, but here is what I remember: “Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”. It is ingrained in my memory. The speech was given to dedicate a cemetery, the Soldiers’ National Cemetery. It was a commemoration of the death and ongoing dying in war of young people throughout that country. These feelings of not just patriotism and devotion, but simultaneously separation, isolation, racism, colonialism are our unquestioning response that the land brings out.

There is an expression that coming events cast their shadows before them. My experience lately has been that wherever I go there is a sense among people that something great is impending, that we are on the cusp of some as yet unrevealed challenging moment of change. The anticipated nature of this greatness will of course depend upon one’s perspective. To someone whose sense of reality is derived from a regular consumption of the daily news reports of war, violence, pandemic, climate change, cyber attacks, and so on, this great something that is coming might be a cause for fear. There is another

way that this can be viewed. Clearly there is an impending future that is challenging, but where some see fear, others see a need, an opportunity. There are always those who, knowingly or not, have prepared themselves to meet and address the needs of this moment in human history.

The TS was founded in 1875 in New York City, ten years after the end of the Civil War, which is to say, ten years after the legally supported enslavement and sale of other human beings was no longer permitted. The TS came into being with the vision of what this world can and should be, it was an organization that insisted on a universal brotherhood, regardless of caste, creed, race, gender, or colour, the multitude of things that we have created as barriers to one another.

In one of the most important letters from the Mahatmas, the “Maha Chohan’s Letter”, some specific things are said about the reason for the TS’s formation and its potential value. The letter gave attention to an important division taking place in the human family, portrayed as if humanity was gravitating toward two separate poles of thought. One group was being influenced by what was described as “brutal materialism”, influenced by the worldview of science at that time, which was materially based and reductionist. The other was spoken of as “degrading superstition”. Between these two poles, the scientific and religious, humanity was being divided into camps. The letter asserted that the formation of the TS could provide a needed third way, free from the dogmatic assertions related to either one of those camps. The idea that a renewed connection with the Ageless Wisdom tradition and the TS were a need for humanity is what brought it into being.

The purpose of the TS as stated by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) in *The Key to Theosophy*, one of the last books she wrote, was that its purpose is to make it known that such a thing as Theosophy exists. When I first encountered this statement it was curious to me, and raised more questions than it immediately answered. What is it in Theosophy that the knowing of its existence confers some power?

What is it about Theosophy that has a potency such that even the knowledge of its existence can have a transformative effect on an individual and the world?

One of the things that many people are searching for in this Wisdom tradition, knowingly or not, is an answer to the essential question: Who or what am I? One of the ways this question is answered is that the human being is highest spirit and lowest matter linked by mind. The statement is simple enough, but the depth and potentials within us that it speaks to are profound. Spirit and matter linked by mind; gives the clear indication that mind is where we find our work.

Generally we focus on the lower uses of the mind. Thinking about the world around us and how we might be able to manipulate it to our advantage is normally one of the ways that we view it. Although it is an odd and not wholly accurate expression, one aspect of what we are here to do is to “spiritualize matter”. The mind as the messenger conveys the influence of the spiritual dimension into the material world; equally the mind has the capacity to stabilize ungrounded spiritual expression. The cultivation of the mind occurs in this moving to and from these poles of our own existence.

The human being is all of these: spirit, matter, mind. HPB described it as three schemes of evolution. Just as we talk about the material world and the land that we associate with it, we live in other lands as well. By virtue of our “humanness” we inhabit the land of spirit, of matter, and of mind.

The way HPB described it these three evolutionary schemes are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. This is not our normal view. We tend to think in terms of layers, with spirit at the top, matter at the bottom, and mind in between. Like colour and taste in water, we are simultaneously physical, mental, and spiritual beings. Our forgetfulness of this truth limits our capacity to bring a spiritualizing influence into the world of matter. That is something of the power that a knowledge of the existence of the Ageless Wisdom can bring.

So what then might be the role of those who have found some value and even had some experience of it? It is quite true that the knowledge of this threefold nature of our being has a certain power that is attractive, it is magnetic in many ways. To the extent that we become close to it we find that it affects us. Often, I use the example of a cold bar of iron placed in front of a fire. It is influenced by its proximity to the heat. The longer it sits there, the more it takes on the qualities of fire.

Part of what we have been attempting here at Adyar, is a regeneration rooted in the mind, and spirit, but also in the land. This place is infused with the presence of great people. Wherever you walk, the ground breathes itself into you, but as only inbreathing is not possible, we are required to breath out this presence into the world we create.

There is the idea that everything that is now real was once imagined. Whatever it is, from the chair we sit on, to the clothes we wear, all of it is the product of imagination. This TS campus that we walk through is the result of imagination brought down to Earth. We have been in a process of reimagining this place that is our home. What does that mean? What are the effects of this imagination?

The Theosophical Society has the statement of its mission that is 24 words in length. I encourage everyone to acquaint themselves with it. Its first three words give the broad statement of our mission: “to serve humanity”. The question becomes: How? Our response has become: By any and every available means. For example, recently at Adyar there has been a renaissance taking place in art. We are reacquainting ourselves with the rich heritage that has been running through this place from its beginnings. It is not that we have suddenly found an interest in art; for years in our Museum we have had important works of art that are examples of various art movements influenced by this place and by Theosophy. That is making itself more and more clear.

Because we have been ill-equipped these artworks require restoration. This restoration project, like many of the things that we do, exceeds our internal capabilities, and so in a sense it necessarily draws in others. The supervisor of our restoration project, Elif Kamisli, is from Istanbul, Turkey. I first got to know her through email in 2014, when she was involved in curating a biennale (biannual) art exhibition in Istanbul and wanted the “Thought Forms” paintings which at that time we did not have, but found later. Out of that association she became more deeply acquainted with the impact and value of this place (Adyar). What began as others assisting in the work, has now become a TS member taking on the work.

Everything of any importance that the TS has accomplished in its almost 150- year history has been the result of a dream. Invariably our experience has been that you dream a world, and from all around the resources, required to bring that world down to Earth and to expand upon it, find their way to live inside of the dream. We dream a world, we populate that world with the characters of our dreaming, nothing is apparent on the ground as yet, but we dream the dream of HPB, the dream of the Masters. There is the potential for a world that is somehow grounded in a sense of brotherhood, a dream that has attracted some of the finest minds.

Now we are in a new phase of our dreaming: this place has this wonderful forest that is an ecological resource at a time when such things are deeply needed. We are not talking about a park, but there is a consciousness that exudes from an intimate proximity with the natural world. This is a direction in which we are moving.

After Joss Brooks’s talk last night, I was approached by a person deeply moved by Joss’s passion and ecological knowledge, who pleaded with me not to let this end as just another good talk with a beautiful vision. I had to interrupt to say that Joss Brooks was here because for months we have been dreaming our way into this different world, this different approach and without knowing him, or the breadth

and scope of his work, this dream had taken shape and brought us together. This campus is going to be a jewel, a refuge for animal and wildlife, an educational tool for people who are living on a planet that is burning itself up day by day, an education about another way, and every bit of it relates to the sense of oneness, all of it supported by a deepening awareness of reach of the Wisdom.

Mahatma Gandhi’s autobiography has a brilliant title, “My Experiments with Truth”. This TS Adyar campus is an experiment, it had not been tried, had not existed, and was predicted by some to wither and die on the vine. It is an experiment intended to exemplify the possibility of an awareness of oneness with the potency to affect every level of our environment. The immediate results are uncertain. Will we help in bringing the world back from the heedless misuse of the resources and people of the planet? In the short term the outcome is uncertain. Speaking personally, I would be more comfortable if I could feel that human behaviour will curb itself and move away from the denial of our destructive impact on the planet. In the long term, there are some things that are certain. It is a certainty that no effort is wasted; it is not in keeping with the economy of Nature that any action is lost. It is a certainty that there are great beings — the Masters of the Wisdom — whose attention and influence aids and supports all efforts that align with their purposes. It is a certainty that each of us can be instrumental in bringing about the changes that will bring this dream down to Earth. These are the things over which we have some control. These are the things to which we need to dedicate our efforts.

Our process is to move beyond knowledge to awareness, to bring that awareness to consciously applied activities that uplift wherever we find ourselves. If in fact there is some degree of connection to the depths of power that Theosophy indicates, it should be revealed in everything we touch. That is our responsibility and the task ahead.

(Courtesy: *The Theosophist*, Feb. 2024)

U.S. PANDEY\*

## PYTHAGORAS - His Life and Philosophy

**INTRODUCTION:** Pythagoras has been quoted often in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky, the principal founder of the Theosophical Society and also of many other theosophical writers. He was a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher who lived during ca. 582-507 BCE.

Greek historians regard him as the first theoretical Physicist because of the emphasis he gave to mathematics in the study of natural world. For Pythagoras, mathematical investigation and religious studies were complimentary, not mutually exclusive, and he never would have separated his philosophical and mathematical intents from his priestly roles as the initiator of his disciples in the rites and doctrines of ancient mystery religion.

Religion and Science for him were the two sides of the same proverbial coin. He taught that by studying the problem of numbers and then contemplating how they manifest in the natural world, one could achieve far more than just understanding how it works—the sole purpose of science.

Pythagoreanism was about teaching its adherents how to recognize the signature of God in the world by rising beyond the ever incomplete understanding of particulars—the function of science—to an awareness of the whole and the holistic principles that govern its many manifestations in the natural world.

C.W. Leadbeater in his books *'The Masters and the Path'* and *'The Lives of Alcyone'*, writes that Pythagoras was a previous incarnation of the Mahatma K.H., one of Blavatsky's teachers.

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## EARLY LIFE, STUDY, AND INITIATION:

He was born in Sidon in Phoenicia according to Iamblichus, his one biographer. Another biographer Prophyry mentions his birth place as Samos.

There are disagreements and inconsistencies in the accounts of his biographers, like Iamblichus, Prophyry and Diogenes Laertius who were about 800 years after Pythagoras.

Pythagoras was one of at least three sons of Mnesarchus, a Phoenician gem-engraver and his Greek wife Pythenis. In *Theosophical Glossary* of H. P. Blavatsky, his father is mentioned as a man of noble birth and learning. (p.266)

Pythagoras was a handsome, precocious youth, both pious and sagacious, and his reputation spread to neighbouring cities. His impression on people was so good that the legend grew that he was the son of Greek god Apollo.

Pythagoras spoke the language of Phoenicians, his father being a native of Tyre, another Phoenician city. After undergoing initiation in the Phoenician coastal city of Byblos and Tyre, Pythagoras lived as a hermit in a temple near Mount Carmel.

His teacher Thales being too old, advised him to go to Egypt and study more under the priest of Memphis and Zeus where he was certain of being the wisest and most divine of men. He went to Egypt and there he was admitted by the Priest of Diospolis. He spent next 22 years visiting temples, studying their mysteries and rites and learning the Egyptian language and the sacred hieroglyphic language of the priesthood. He also absorbed some of their customs and taboos. Among them was a prohibition against eating beans because of their foetal appearance. Pythagoras later included the taboo in his teachings that animal flesh should not be eaten because it pollutes the psyche. His students had to wear only linen clothes as the wool and animal skin were forbidden because these too would pollute the psyche.

Pythagoras was captured by the soldiers of Cambyses, the son of the king of Persia who invaded Egypt in 525 BCE and became its king. Pythagoras was deported to Babylon where the Magi instructed him in their sacred rites and taught him arithmetic and music. He acquired firsthand knowledge of Chaldean wisdom. This was based upon the so-called “Book of Numbers” which is mentioned as the original literary source of Jewish mystical tradition called Kaballah. Pythagoras also studied with prophets descended from Moses and therefore was fully versed in mystical doctrine of ancient Jews—a fact of great significance in view of the fundamental connection revealed between Kaballah and Pythagorean number mysticism. HPB also says that Pythagoras travelled to India where he studied the esoteric sciences with the *Brahmanas*. HPB says that Hindu metaphysics was the source of his teaching concerning the sacred number of ten. He also studied Buddhist philosophy which formed the basis of his teachings. He is known to this day in India under the name of *Yavanacharya* (“Yavana or Greek-teacher”).

E. Pococke derives the name *Pythagoras* from *Buddha*, and *guru*, a spiritual teacher. Higgins makes it Celtic, and says that it means an observer of the stars. If, however, we derive the word *Pytho* from *petah*, the name would signify an expounder of oracles, and Buddha-guru a teacher of the doctrines of Buddha. (*Isis*, II, p. 491 fn.)

Pythagoras — *Pitar Guru*, “father and teacher”, as he was known among the ancient Hindus — came to Krotona to sound the keynote of a long cycle now being reaffirmed for an equally long period in the future. He taught his disciples to honour their father and their mother, and to take a sacred oath to the Holy Fathers of the human race, the “Ancestors of the Arhats.” (*The Theosophist* - April 2023-article: *The Gospel according to St. John* by Raghavan N iyer, p. 12)

Thus Pythagoras seems to have travelled all over the world,

and to have culled his philosophy from the various systems to which he had access. It was Pythagoras who created the word “philosopher”, composed of two words meaning a “lover of wisdom”—*philo-sophos*. As the greatest mathematician, geometer and astronomer of historical antiquity, and also the highest of the metaphysicians and scholars, Pythagoras has won imperishable fame.

Pythagoras himself got his recondite doctrines, first from the descendants of Mochus, and later, from the Brahmans of India. He was also initiated into the mysteries among the hierophants of Thebes, the Persian and Chaldean Magi. (*Isis*, II, p.338)

HPB states that Pythagoras was an initiate in the Mystery schools (as were PLATO and some other early Greek philosophers), which traced their ideas to Egypt, and eventually to India (*SD* I, p.361). Porphyry, treating of Pythagoras, says that he was purified and initiated at Babylon by Zar-adas, the head of the Sacred College. (*Isis*, II, p.128)

#### **THE SCHOOL, FELLOWS AND MANNER OF TEACHINGS:**

After being set free in Babylon, he returned to his island home. He converted a cave overlying the town of Samos into a home and school, where he spent most of his time in meditation and teaching. Later he left and went to city of Krotona, in Magna Grecia (Southern Italy), where he established a school to which very soon resorted all the best intellects of the civilized centres. In this school he taught an Esoteric doctrine to a group of disciples who revered him as a demigod. Here he had gathered about 600 fellows who learnt mathematics, astronomy, ethics and music. It was more a religious brotherhood than academic. About the framework of his school there are somewhat varying descriptions, such as:

(i) His followers were required to maintain a discipline of silence for the first six years of their discipleship during which they were called *akoustekoi* or “hearers” (*Shravaka*). He also held women to be the



equals of men and enjoined his followers to treat slaves humanely and to respect animals. It is obvious, then, that his was not just an intellectual philosophy, but was a spiritual practice, and the “philosophy” meant to his followers a genuine pursuit of wisdom, not merely an acquisition of knowledge. (*Theosophical Encyclopedia*, p.522)

There was no tuition fee, membership being open to both men and women and decided solely on their merit. His followers had to practice the discipline of chastity, silence and vegetarianism, while sharing in common their possessions and wealth, whence they derived the name of ‘Cenobites’ (Greek for common life).

(ii) Disciples were in two groups: (1) Students (mathematikos) who learned the reasons and theoretical basis of Pythagorean teaching, spending their time in study of geometry, arithmetic and music, and (2) less advanced group of hearers (akonsmatiko) who received only the summarized instruction without more detailed arguments or explanations and who only heard Pythagoras, never seeing him. Those who associated personally with him were called Pythagoreans (Pythagorikos) while those who merely imitated his teachings were called Pythagoristans (Pythagoristas).

Pythagoras secretly observed behaviour, speech and manner of students so that he might decide what and how much they could learn. A mathematikos was required to observe silence for five years during which his property was committed to trustees. If, after this time the probationer met with approval of Pythagoras, he became a trusted esoterikos and both heard and saw the sage as he lectured (prior to this he was permitted merely to listen to Pythagoras). If rejected, he was given back twice the wealth he had brought with him to the school and treated henceforth as a stranger by the fellowship.

Pythagoras communicated to each student only what he judged the latter capable of understanding. (*Pythagoras’ Life and Philosophy* by Stephen Phillips)

(iii) In her book *Esoteric Christianity*, Annie Besant quoting from *Orpheus* of G.R.S. Mead writes: “The authors of antiquity are agreed that this discipline had succeeded in producing the highest examples, not only of the purest chastity and sentiment, but also a simplicity of manners, a delicacy, and a taste for serious pursuits which was unparalleled” The School had outer disciples, leading the family and social life, and the above quotation refers to these. In the inner School were three degrees—the first of Hearers, who studied for two years in silence, doing their best to master the teachings; the second degree was of Mathematici, wherein were taught geometry and music, the nature of number, form, colour and sound; the third degree was of Physici, who mastered cosmogony and metaphysics. This led up to the true Mysteries. Candidates for the school “must be of an unblemished reputation and of a contented disposition”. (*Esoteric Christianity*, pp.22-23)

Some persons who were refused admission in Pythagoras’s school, became its enemy and burnt the school, many of the followers of Pythagoras died. He himself was away at that time and never returned. The school was closed at the end of the six B.C.E. owing to the persecution by the civil power.

Pythagorean centres were established in the Greek mainland during Pythagoras’ life in 2nd half of 5th century BCE. From these centres Pythagorean ideas reached Athens and merged into Platonism.

Mysticism of Pythagoras continued to survive as an esoteric philosophy among the faithful for a generation and became a primary influence shaping the cosmological theories of Plato. Aristotle was also interested (though to a lesser degree) in the writings of late Pythagoras.

**POWERS OR SIDDHIS OF PYTHAGORAS:** The followers of Pythagoras regarded him as a semi—divine figure—a superman with supernatural powers, if not a god. He remembered his past lives.

He taught the doctrine of Reincarnation. He also gave account of past lives of some of his disciples. Many miracles were attributed to him. During same day he was seen in Metapontan in Italy and at Tauromenin in Sicily, discussing with his disciples at both places, although these cities are separated both by land and sea by a distance travelling over which takes many days. Aristotle repeated this legend in his now lost monograph on Pythagoras.

Pythagoras was also said to have predicted earthquakes, to have power to controlling wild animals, to have calmed the waves of rivers and seas—and to have discerned clairvoyantly that a visiting ambassador had murdered one of his followers.

Iamblichus, the biographer of Pythagoras in his work '*Life of Pythagoras*' mentions that the Samian philosopher is said to have persuaded a she-bear to give up eating human flesh; to have forced a white eagle to descend to him from the clouds, and to have subdued him by stroking him gently with the hand, and by talking to him. On another occasion, Pythagoras actually persuaded an ox to renounce eating beans, by merely whispering in the animal's ear. (*Isis*, I, p. 283)

Pythagoras, the great teacher, who gave 'the knowledge of things that are' to his pledged disciples, is said to have possessed such a knowledge of music that he could use it for the controlling of men's wildest passions and the illuminating of their minds. Of this, instances are given by Iamblichus in his *Life of Pythagoras*.

(*Esoteric Christianity*, pp.20-21)

Thomas Taylor in his translation of Iamblichus' *Life of Pythagoras*, has remarked as follows: "Since Pythagoras was initiated in all the Mysteries of Babylus and Tyre, in the sacred operations of the Syrians, and in the Mysteries of the Phoenicians, and also that he spent two and twenty years in the adyta of temples in Egypt, associated with the Magians in Babylon, and was instructed by them in their venerable knowledge, it is not at all wonderful that he was skilled in

magic, or theurgy, and was therefore able to perform things which surpass merely human power, and which appear to be perfectly incredible to the vulgar." (*Isis* I, p.284)

**PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHINGS:** Now let us see some of the main points of the philosophical teachings of Pythagoras :

**Heliocentricity**-It was Pythagoras who was the first to teach the heliocentric system. He taught that the earth was a sphere which rotated on its axis and revolved around the Sun (ideas known to ancient Egyptians but rejected by Aristotle). He was aware of the inclination of the earth's axis and of precession of equinox.

In the *Vedas*, for instance, we find positive proof that so long ago as 2000 B.C., the Hindu sages and scholars must have been acquainted with the rotundity of our globe and the Heliocentric system. Hence, Pythagoras and Plato knew well this astronomical truth; for Pythagoras obtained his knowledge in India, or from men who had been there, and Plato faithfully echoed his teachings. (*Isis*, I, pp.9-10)

**Reincarnation and Metempsychosis**- He taught reincarnation as professed in India and much else of the Secret Wisdom. Metempsychosis or reincarnation was one of his principal doctrines and he required of his disciples strict habits of meatless diet and moral behaviour which he taught was conducive to achieving a more spiritual stature and eventual liberation from the wheel of birth. If the Pythagorean metempsychosis should be thoroughly explained and compared with the modern theory of evolution, it would be found to supply every "missing link" in the chain of the latter.

**Numbers, Mathematics and Harmony**- Doctrine of Pythagoras indicate that all things were in themselves numbers. The idea that number and geometrical symbol, rather than scriptural words, are the natural medium for expressing divine principles and for studying the immanence of God in the Cosmos was the basis of the number mysticism of Pythagoras.

The most characteristic doctrine of the Pythagorean School was that Nature manifests itself in terms of number or proportion. The 47th proposition in Euclid's geometry (that the square of the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the adjacent sides) is usually called "the Pythagorean theorem" and was undoubtedly discovered by Pythagoras or his followers. There is a postal stamp—the practical simple proof of his theorem—the 90° triangle with sides— $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$  was most significant as the Egyptian triangle. Greek postage stamp 1955 was issued to commemorate 2500th anniversary of the founding of the order- Pythagoras Theory. The squares on the sides of the right angle triangle revealed a Divine order.

More importantly, he taught that when the absolute manifests, it does so in mathematically describable ways. Ultimate Reality is a Unity or *monos* which emanates the world by means of Sound or Harmony. First to emanate is the Dyad, but since two is not a stable number (cannot make solid, i.e., manifest anything), it is followed by the Triad. The other numerical proportions follow from that. The soul, a self-moving entity, is symbolized by the number four, and is midway between a spiritual triad and a psycho-physical triad.—in other words, man has a septenary nature, which is the occult teaching as found in modern theosophy. The idea of the Decad or ten is important in Pythagoreanism and it is generally accepted that the Pythagoreans taught the decimal system, including the idea of zero (*SD I*, 361), long before the Arabs brought it to Europe from India. But twelve was their most important number, hence the dodecahedron (12 sided regular solid) was the 'perfect' figure, an idea that may be related to the twelve signs of Zodiac and other dodecads in ancient times (e.g., the twelve tribes of Israel). Pythagoras seems also to have taught that even moral attributes, such as justice, can be expressed by means of number or proportion. This idea probably influenced Plato's idea of justice as outlined in the *Republic*.

Pythagoras had a reason for never using the finite, useless figure-2, and for altogether discarding it. The ONE, can, when manifesting, can become only 3. The unmanifested when a simple duality remains passive and concealed. The dual monad (the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> principles) has in order to manifest itself as a *Logos*, the "Kwan-shai-yin", to first become a triad (7<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and half of the 5<sup>th</sup>); then, on the bosom of the "Great Deep", attracting within itself the *One Circle*, form out of it the perfect Square, thus "squaring the circle" – the greatest of all the mysteries, friend - and inscribing within the latter the WORD (the Ineffable Name)- otherwise the duality could never tarry as such, and would have to be reabsorbed into the One. The "Deep" is *Space* both male and female. (*ML111 cr. ed.*, p.379)

The Greek philosopher who maintained that the Universe was a huge animal penetrated the symbolic significance of the Pythagorean monad (which becomes two, then three, and finally, having become the tetraktis or the perfect square, thus evolving out of itself *four* and involuting three, forms the sacred seven)—and thus was far in advance of all the scientific men of the present time. (*ML 65 cr. ed.*, p.168)

It is recognized by modern science that all the higher laws of the nature assume the form of quantitative statement. This is perhaps a fuller elaboration or more explicit affirmation of the Pythagorean doctrine. Numbers were regarded as the best representation of the laws of harmony which pervade the cosmos. We know that in chemistry the doctrine of atoms and the laws of combination are actually and, as it were, arbitrarily defined by numbers. As Mr. W. Archer Butler has expressed it: "The world is, then, through all its departments, a living arithmetic in the development, a realized geometry in its repose."

The cosmological theory of numerals which Pythagoras learned from the Egyptian hierophants, is alone able to reconcile the two units, matter and spirit, and cause each to demonstrate the other mathematically.

The solution of great problem of eternity belongs neither to religious superstition nor to gross materialism. The harmony and mathematical equiformity of the double evolution—spiritual and physical—are elucidated only in the universal numbers of Pythagoras, who built his system entirely upon the so-called “metrical speech” of the Hindu Vedas. In both the esoteric significance is derived from the number: in the former, from the mystic relation of every number to everything intelligible to the human mind; in the latter, from the number of syllables of which each verse in the *Mantras* consists. Plato, the ardent disciple of Pythagoras, realized it so fully as to maintain that the Dodecahedron was the geometrical figure employed by the Demiurgus in constructing the universe. Some of these figures had a peculiarly solemn significance. For instance four, of which the Dodecahedron is the trine, was held sacred by the Pythagoreans. It is the perfect square, and neither of the bounding lines exceeds the other in length, by a single point. It is the emblem of moral justice and divine equity geometrically expressed. All the powers and great symphonies of the physical and spiritual nature lie inscribed within the perfect square; and the ineffable name of Him, which name otherwise would remain unutterable, was replaced by this sacred number 4, the most binding and solemn oath with the ancient mystics—the Tetraktys.

“The numerals of Pythagoras” says Porphyry, were “hieroglyphical symbols, by means of whereof he explained *all* ideas concerning the nature of all things”. (*Isis* I, 35)

Pythagoras taught that the entire universe is one vast system of mathematically correct combinations. Plato shows the deity *geometrizing* (*Isis* I, 318)

The great significance of the metrical speech (in Vedic mantras) is derived from the number of syllables of which it consists, for each thing has (just as in the Pythagorean system) a certain numerical proportion.

Pythagoras says that “The number eight, or the Octad, is the first cube, that is to say, squared in all senses, as a die, proceeding from its base two, or even number; *so is man four-square or perfect.*” (*Isis* II, p.410)

Number Seven- One must consult the Pythagorean and Kabalists to learn the potentiality of this number *seven*. Exoterically the seven rays of the solar spectrum are represented concretely in the seven-rayed god Heptaktys. These seven rays epitomized into THREE primary rays, namely, the red, blue and yellow, form the solar trinity, and typify respectively spirit-matter and spirit-essence. Science has also reduced of late the seven rays to three primary ones, thus corroborating the scientific conception of the ancients of at least one of the visible manifestations of the invisible deity, and the seven divided into a quaternary and a trinity.

The Pythagoreans called the number seven the vehicle of life, as it contained body and soul. They explained it by saying, that the human body consisted of four principal elements, and that the soul is triple, comprising reason, passion and desire. (*Isis* II, 418).

(To be continued..)

## NEWS AND NOTES

### Bombay

The representatives of Bombay Theosophical Federation though few at the 148th International TS Convention, Adyar, their participation was distinctive. The First Session of New Year 1st January 2024 for symposium on *'Exploring & Understanding'* was chaired by BTF President Bro. Vinayak Pandya. Besides, he represented BTF at the Indian Section Convention – I. He attended meetings of General Council of the TS (International) and the meetings of the Indian Section Council. BTF Treasurer & Artist at Heart Bro. Taral Munshi introduced the concept of *'Theosophy by Art'* to spread Theosophical Values through different forms of Art.

The Evening Programme on 1st January 2024 dramatically compered by Bro. Taral Munshi in Hindi and Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri in English gave the message for 'Humanity' through combination of Drama & Music. The first Part had the skit – Street Play type by 4 students of Holy Faith High School of Mumbai. The Skit started with question, *'Where is Humanity?'* had ended with message, *'Humanity is within us. Let us awaken it. Let us be the carriers of Humanity.'* The second part was BEAT Choir (Bank Employees Art Group) conducted by their Teacher Ms. Rajeshwari had songs in English, Spanish, Hindi, Tamil and Bangla. It was a musical journey from *'Let there be Peace on Earth'* to *'Jeena Isika Nam Hai'* to which many danced including Int President Tim Boyd and Int Secretary Marja Artamaa. The programme was acclaimed by 600 in Adyar Theatre and 1000+ on-line on Live viewers on YouTube.

Bro. Arni Narendran as Honorary Director Member of World Federation of Young Theosophists was actively involved in preparation of the Flyer for celebration of 100 Years of WFYT with their Conference in Adyar in December 2023.

Bro. Vinayak Pandya was the Guest of Honour at the 93rd Annual Conference of Gujarat TF held from 24 to 26 Nov. at Kadoli near

Himmatnagar. Bro. Vinayak presided over sessions on: (1) *Brahma Vidya no Ashwad*, and (2) *Harjeewan Saurabh nu Satva*.

Sis. Zeena Rastamjee's paintings done at the age of 19 years were displayed along with Artwork of Indian & Foreign Ladies members of Indus International, Mumbai.

Dr. Rajam Pillai was Chief Guest at SNDT University and was felicitated with SNDT University 'World Hindi Diwa' Award.

Musical Tributes to Sis. Freny Paghdwala: Her Crystal Choral paid Tributes singing her favourite joyous songs. Fond Tributes were also from Blavatsky Lodge, Shanti Lodge, Mystic Star Ritual Group, Maitreya Round Table & Zonta International members of Bombay.

### Madras

Mr Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society, gave a talk on Sunday, 7 January 2024 at the Headquarters Hall, Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai. He gave away diplomas to new members during the function and exhorted them to acquire knowledge, meditate, and serve, which will lead to Wisdom.

A special introductory session on Theosophy was conducted by the Federation along with the Adyar and Gandhi Nagar Lodges on 21 January 2024. The speakers were Dr R. Revathy and Prof. C. A. Shinde. Dr Revathy mentioned 'The Theosophic Life' by Annie Besant and gave a beautiful introduction to Theosophy, outlining the Mission, Objects, and the important concepts of Karma and Reincarnation. This was followed by Prof. Shinde giving a high-level appreciation of the three gems of Theosophy, namely, *At the Feet of the Master* by J. Krishnamurti, H. P. Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, and *Light on the Path* by Mabel Collins. He pointed out that all the three writings were inspired by the Masters, and that all our activities are guided by them.

## U.P. & Uttarakhand

Talks on the topics 'Effort and Spiritual Path', and 'Truth alone conquers' were delivered at Dharma Lodge, Lucknow, by Bro. Ashok Kumar Gupta and Bro. Pramil Dwivedi on 3 and 10 January respectively. Group study of the book *Hints on the study of the Bhagavad Gita*. was facilitated by Bro. B. K. Pandey at the same venue on 17, 24 and 31 January.

A seminar on the topic 'Death and After' was organized by Nirvan Lodge, Agra, on 04 January. Then, in the meetings held on 11, 18 and 25 January talks were delivered on topics "Adyar Diary", 'Intoxication and Spiritual Effect' and 'Karma, Akarma and Vikarma' by Bro. Praveen Mehrotra, Bro. D. S. Rathore and Bro. H. B. Pandey respectively. Besides, Bharat Samaj Pooja was performed on 14 January by Bro. Gyaneesh Kumar Chaturvedi.

Bro. Sheshnath Tripathi delivered a talk on 'Teachings from Ideals of Ram'. It was held on 22 January at Village Jigna Brahmvidya Lodge.

Talks were delivered on topics 'Who am I?' and '*Ahimsa Paramo Dharma*' by Bro. S. B. R. Mishra and Bro. Ajai Rai respectively at Sarvahitkari Lodge, Gorakhpur, on 10 and 24 January.

Bro. S.B.R. Mishra delivered a talk on 'Philosophy of Eternal Wisdom' at Jogia (Distt. Kushinagar) – Satya Darshan Lodge on 13 January.

Group study of the book '*Nirvana*' was conducted at Noida Lodge on 7 and 21 January.

Bro. S.S. Gautam delivered talks at Chohan Lodge, Kanpur, on third and fourth Sunday of January in which he spoke on 'Be your path' and 'The One Path' respectively.

Bro. K.K. Jaiswal delivered talks on 'Service and Sacrifice' and 'Self-control' at Prayag Raj- Anand Lodge on first and second Thursday of January.

Support Covention was organized by Kashi Tattva Sabha on 04 January in which Dr. Shanta Chatterjee spoke on the theme 'The Universal Intelligence'.

**Talk to students/ teachers:** Sis. Vasumati Agnihotri delivered a talk before a group of students and teachers of Bappa Sri Narayan College, Lucknow, on 30 January. She spoke there on 'How to handle success - failure in life, depression - suicide'.

## National Lecturer

Bro. U. S. Pandey conducted study of *The Secret Doctrine* at Rajahmundry (**Telugu Federation**) from 06 to 10 January. Members of several lodges of Telugu Federation participated in it. Besides, he delivered a talk on the topic "Divine Wisdom and Science" in Shri Krishna Lodge, Guntur (**Rayalseema Federation**) on 11 January; He delivered a talk on 'Self-rejuvenation and transformation by awareness'. It was held at Shri Krishna Lodge, Amaravati (Marathi Federation) on 28 January. Then, he conducted study of the book *Theosophical Blooms* at the same venue from 29 January to 02 February.

Delhi Federation- Shankar Lodge: Sis. Sushma Srivastava delivered an on-line talk on 'Comparative Religions - an analytical study'. It was held on 20 January.

Bro. S. S. Gautam delivered an on-line talk on 24 January on 'Transformations required for Self-Realization'

Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri conducted on-line study of Mahatma Letters no. 91 and 92 (part 1) on 21 January.

## Contribution to the Indian Section's Work/ Programme:

Bro. S. S. Gautam translated the section's journal "*The Indian Theosophist*" of February 2024 in Hindi.

**Contribution to Young Indian Theosophists (Indian Section):** Bro. Chakit Swarup of Ghaziabad delivered an on-line talk on 28

January and the subject of his talk was 'Knowing Self is Wisdom itself'.

**Contribution to International Hqrs. Adyar Programme:**

Bro. U.S. Pandey participated in the programme of the School of Wisdom at Adyar from 16 to 26 January and delivered a talk on the topic 'The Science of the Soul' on 25 January.

**Contribution to other Forums:** Sis. Suvralina Mohanty, National Lecturer, delivered a talk on 'Expansion of Consciousness' on 26 January in a seminar organized by 'Art of Bliss' organization in Puri. Besides, she moderated a session in this seminar on 28 January.

**World Federation of Youth Theosophist**

I would like to let you know about the next international youth gathering that will take place from 22-27 June 2024, in the Theosophical Centre of Bhowali, in the Himalayas (India). More information will follow later on.

In case there is any young theosophist interested in attending. Feel free to contact us if there are any questions.

As this will take place in India, we would like to promote young Indian theosophists to participate.

Many thanks in advance for your cooperation,

Sara

Board of the WFYT

Community Officer

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