

# THE INDIAN THEOSOPHIST

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**Editor**

**PRADEEP H. GOHIL**

While I was humiliated, you crowned me with honour; while I was slandered, you believed in my integrity and good faith; while I was crushed under the heel of bureaucratic power, you acclaimed me as your leader; while I was silenced and unable to defend myself, you defended me and won for me release. I was proud to serve in lowliest fashion, but you lifted me up and placed me before the world as your chosen representative. I have no words with which to thank you, no eloquence with which to rapay my debt. My deeds must speak for me, for words are too poor. I turn your gift into service to the Motherland; I consecrate my life anew to her in worship by action. All that I have and am, I lay on the Altar of the Mother, and together we shall cry, more by service than by words: Vande Mataram.

**ANNIE BESANT**

Opening remarks of Presidential Address to the thirty-second Indian National Congress held at Calcutta  
26th December 1917.

**MESSAGE**  
**from**  
**The International President**

One-hundred years ago Dr. Annie Besant was elected President of the Indian National Congress. It was a monumental decision that reflected the commitment and selfless service she gave to the formation of the Indian nation. Her imprint upon the nation she so loved continues to this day.

It is fitting that the Theosophical Society in India is bringing out this special issue to commemorate the life of a spiritual giant and national hero.

May her influence and the influence of those great ones who support every movement toward human upliftment grace this issue and all who read it.

**TIM BOYD**

## A STEP FORWARD

Mrs. Annie Besant was elected as President of the Indian National Congress in December 1917 and as mentioned by B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya:

“With Mrs. Besant, the Presidentship of the Congress was not a passing show or a three-day festivity. It was a day-to-day responsibility, and in that view Mrs. Besant was the first to claim Presidentship of the Congress throughout the succeeding year. The claim was not new but its enforcement was not known in the previous history of the Congress”.\*

So, keeping the Centenary Year in view the Indian Section decided to bring out a Special Number of *The Indian Theosophist* on Dr. Annie Besant.

Annie Besant was born as Annie Wood on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1847 and first came to India on 16-11-1893. We all know that she was a devout theosophist and the second International President of our Society and also the second longest serving President from 1907 to 1933. She was a great religious and spiritual teacher who guided thousands of men and women all over the world in their spiritual quest, a practical mystic exemplifying in her life and in all her actions a lofty idealism and a truly religious awareness- a rare combination found in very few people, a clairvoyant who used her spiritual and yogic powers to investigate the nature of the super-physical realms, a chemist and physicist describing III atoms—including several isotopes not heard by scientists in those days, and the molecules of 29 inorganic compounds and 22 organic compounds.

She was a well-known women’s rights activist and the founder of Women’s Indian Association in 1917 over which she presided at Adyar, a lucid writer with more than 300 books and pamphlets to her credit, a journalist and an excellent editor, a well-known educationist who started a number of schools in India in those days-some of which still exist, a brilliant orator who could mesmerize the audience with her originality of thinking, clear diction and clarity of the message, a prominent trade unionist, a great legal luminary, who argued several high profit cases and won judgement in her favour, a constitutional expert, a fearless fighter against any kind of injustice, a champion of human freedom, a true philanthropist, travelled extensively and visited nearly all the countries of Europe more than once and having made several visits to the

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\**The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.-I, (1885-1935), Padma Publication, Ltd., Bombay, Reprint 1946, p. 146.

U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, South America and to several places in India.

Annie Besant was a very hard worker whose action became her slogan. She once said, “better remain silent, better not even think, if you are not prepared to act”. She was a great organizer with a capacity to make theosophy practical. She was a whole hearted supporter of Irish and Indian self-rule. She became active in Indian Politics from 1913 and gave a lead by claiming Home Rule for India. She had entered politics because she saw that India’s independence was essential for her age old wisdom to become a beacon for the whole world. She was elected President of the Indian National Congress (INC) and its two sections which were divided since 1907 were unified by her. As president of the INC she made the office one of active work throughout the year, instead of only presiding over it during the four day annual meetings, as was the practice earlier.

She was interned in 1917 for three months because of her success in arousing the love of freedom in the Indian people. She took as her motto not only “strike while the iron is hot, but also make it hot by striking.” She taught Indian journalists to write strong leading articles denouncing the action of the government, yet keeping within the letter of the law. Yet it was her basic principle in life of living and acting with respect for law that made her fall into disfavour with INC. Although she had a deep regard for Gandhi as someone whose life was guided by truth and compassion, she herself stood by constitutional methods for achieving political reform rather than Gandhi’s plan of non-cooperation and civil disobedience as she foresaw great danger of instilling disrespect for the law. Mr. Gandhi’s policies were adopted and the disasters she had anticipated occurred in various parts of India. To her credit, Annie Besant continued with her work for India even though she became unpopular and lost her position as political leader.

Dr. Bhagvan Das, General Secretary of the Indian Section in 1911-12 and who worked closely with Annie Besant, writes “Mrs. Besant was a great leader in every respect, with the soul of fire, the burning eloquence, the imaginative vision, the great and high aspiration, the quick decision, the generous and trustful nature, the scrupulous regard for promises made, the exceeding considerateness for juniors and subordinates, the anxious fulfilment of their hopes even casually aroused by any work of hers and, above all else, the mystic power of magnetic personality, which inspire and attract and keep followers.”

With so many brilliant facets to her character, Annie Besant can truly be described as a *Diamond Soul*.

In this number of the journal four articles have been reprinted. One by Dr. Annie Besant; one by Mr. N. Sri Ram (a close associate of Dr. Besant and International President of TS from 1953 to April 1973); one by Dr. Radha Burnier, (General Secretary of the Indian Section from

1961 to 1978 and International President of TS from July 1980 to October 2013); and one by Dr. Rohit Mehta (General Secretary of the Indian Section from 1945 to 1959).

I express my sincere thanks to our President Mr. Tim Boyd for having sent his encouraging message for this Special No. of the journal. Besides, I am thankful to all the authors who enthusiastically agreed to contribute article for this number and sent their respective papers before the due date given to them.

I hope that this number will encourage the readers to study the original works of Dr. Besant to go into the depths of the themes which she explained with such a great concern for the welfare of India as well as for the world. Even if one just tries to live in some ways a life like that of Annie Besant, it will be a great step forward in his life.

Pradeep H. Gohil  
General Secretary  
Indian Section, TS

We have scarcely touched the masses of the people, and in truth our work lies more with the educated; for the religions can deal with the uneducated, if the advanced classes be enlightened and spiritual. Better to work among those who influence the masses, than in the masses themselves, as regards reformation and change, Changes should always begin above and work downwards; then they influence powerfully and healthily; but changes which begin in the masses tend to bring about revolutions rather than reforms..... A very small body of disciplined people is far more effective and powerful than a vast mob of the undisciplined;.....

**ANNIE BESANT**  
“The Work of The T.S. in India”  
*The Birth of New India*

ANNIE BESANT

## ON EDUCATION\*

All over the world at the present time, thoughtful men and women- the men and women who make the public opinion of their day- are concerning themselves with education, as being the basis of national life, the foundation of national prosperity.

The importance of a wisely planned and wisely directed system of education is recognized by all the great nations of the world.... Pressing is the need for the creating of a sound public opinion on the subject, and then for the guidance of public activity along the lines of a really national education.

By national education I mean an education which is under national control, which provides for all the children of the nation... and which is directed with a sole eye to the moral, intellectual and spiritual welfare of the nation.

There is one principle which it is necessary to remember throughout, and which must dominate the educationalist in all his thought: the child that comes into his hands is not a sheet of blank paper, on which he can write what he wishes; the child brings a character with him, and education is more a matter of drawing out than of putting in. Plato said that "knowledge is reminiscence", and though many in the modern world may not be prepared to accept the truth on which all ancient thought is based, the truth of reincarnation, yet even from the scientific standpoint of the most materialistic kind it is true, as Buchner said, that "nature is stronger than nurture". The educationalist has to find out the best ways of cooperating with the inner self of the child, of enabling the faculties *already there* to manifest themselves and to grow, to strengthen all that is good and to starve out all that is bad, to work on the plastic material of the new brain from without, while the soul of the child works at it from within. This is the high office of the teacher, his great responsibility.

He should treat the boys and girls, the pupils who come into his hands, as living spirits, which have learned many lessons before in the school of life, and have come to learn new lessons in the life upon which they have now entered. Thus recognizing the grandeur and dignity of his office, the teacher will put himself side by side with all his boys, and help his students to understand him, checking their over-haste, disciplining their undisciplined powers, but ever making them feel that he is their friend and not their enemy, their helper and not their punisher.... And as the child has a past, of which his present is the outcome, so has the nation into which he is born a past, which may not be disregarded. Its types, its tradition, its spiritual,

\*All the excerpts in this article have been taken from THE BESANT SPIRIT- Vol.-I, TPH, Adyar, Madras, 1938

mental, emotional and physical characteristics must all be taken into account, and this can only be thoroughly done by those who are also born into that nation. Thus none who are not of the national household, however useful they may be as counsellors and helpers, must be allowed to dominate national education. Their help may be gladly welcomed, but they must never be allowed to control.

What is the ideal for a nation? It must have spirituality, expressed in many-graded religions, suitable for every class in the nation: and if there are several religions, they must be friends, not rivals, acknowledging their common origin, divine wisdom, and their common aim, the uplifting of the nation. It must have certain moral virtues of a virile kind as well as of the tenderer types. It must have intellect, directed and trained to meet with the multifarious needs of a nation- literary, artistic, scientific, political, agricultural, manufacturing, industrial, commercial, engineering, etc. It must have healthy conditions of life, a robust and vigorous manhood, a strong and refined womanhood. These are the things which make up the ideal; education is to bring them into realisation.

Let us see what virtues are needed specially for national life, for education must culture these :

First : a sense of national unity... there is a duty, to the home, to the town, to the province; but these duties must lead up to duty to the nation.

The next great virtue necessary for a national life is discipline, and school and college must instil this constantly. Do not confuse discipline with punishment. Discipline is sometimes enforced by punishment, but in a well- ordered institution it is maintained by public opinion and the spirit of self-respect. Forcibly imposed order is not the order of freedom; self-imposed order is the life-breath of liberty. The basis of national life is order, law, and where internal peace is not present stability of national life is not possible. Undisciplined strength is like steam which, having no proper channels along which it can flow and be turned to produce useful work, causes explosion in the vessel that contains it, and brings ruin and destruction all around.

Disciplined strength is a force for good. A few disciplined people can conquer a mass of undisciplined ones, although a thousand times the strength may be on the side of the undisciplined and there be only a minority of the disciplined. Every student of history, every patriot knows that in the disciplining of a nation lies the question of its success or failure. Hence every true patriot, every public-spirited man., in countries where the duties of citizenship are understood, sets an example of self-discipline, in order that he may guide the hasty as well as the thoughtful into useful lines.

These are what I mean by the virile virtues : the sense of national unity, patriotism and public spirit, discipline based on self-control and supported by public opinion, co-operation,

perseverance, endurance, courage. Nations composed of such citizens win freedom because they are worthy of it.

Sacrifice alone makes nations: you must sacrifice for the sake of principles.

Any work well done is honourable work if useful to the country, and the country cannot prosper if none of its skilled brains turn to productive work. Some say: "I am willing to direct a commercial or industrial undertaking, but I do not care to go through the rough drudgery". But the rough drudgery is the preparation for successful direction. How can a man control three or four hundred workmen if he does not know the details of their work? How can he blame bad work if he cannot say: "This is the way in which you should do it"? How can he discriminate between good and bad workmen?

Is it too much to ask you to study, to prepare yourselves for the glorious task of building up character to serve..... Train yourselves for service by doing your duty where you are at the moment. Learn self-sacrifice by practising it within the little world of your surroundings. And remember that love which does not express itself in service is but a sham.

From "Education as the Basis of National Life"

The condition of national greatness is the teaching of religion to the young. Teach them to be religious without being sectarian. Teach them to be devoted without being fanatical. Teach them to love their own faith, without decrying or hating the faiths of their fellow-citizens. Make religion a unifying force, not a separative; make religion the builder up of nationality, not a disintegrator; make religion the fostering mother of civic virtues, the nurse and teacher of morality. Then shall the boys and girls... look back with gratitude to those who, in the days of darkness, lifted up the light, and gave the religious teaching which alone makes good citizens and great men.

From "The Necessity of Religious Education"

The object of Education is to develop to the full every quality that a child brings with him into the world; to give him opportunities which will enable the qualities within him to grow, to develop, and to find their full evolution, so that those qualities in germ in the child may blossom into the flower of a noble manhood or womanhood. Education is not to fill his memory with facts, as if he were an empty bucket. These he can at any time find in books of reference which he can have on the shelf of his library. Education should give him the touchstone of reason; the ability to meet difficulties in life; the power to adapt himself, to fit himself to meet emergencies with courage and initiative; to be able to mould circumstances, and not only to be moulded by them, as if he were a piece of clay in the hands of the potter.

The child is a living spiritual intelligence, with an immemorial past behind him, and an incalculable future stretching in front of him. He is not a new-comer on our globe; not for the first time does he come into this world through the gateway of birth. Every time that he returns, he brings with him the harvests of the past, of past struggles and past defeats and past victories; and the difference between child and child, which shows itself even in infancy, is the difference of the evolution that lies behind them, and the consequent possibilities of the future that lies in front. Thus should you regard the child that comes into your hands to be educated, to be helped to make the best of himself. The parent, the teacher, is to discover the best way in which to educate the child. He is not a white empty sheet on which you can write just what you please he is a living being reacting to your touch according to the nature he has created in his past.

Our object is to make out of the child the citizen that the nation wants. He is to live in the family, in the community, in the province, in the Nation which has relations with other Nations—and thus international relations appear. He is to be made fit for his duty towards the whole of these; and the object of education is to make him as fit as his nature will allow, to make the best of what there is in him. You must take him as he is; he may be poor, he may be rich; he may be brilliant, he may be dull; he may be a genius, he may be a dolt; you must find out what he has, and utilise that to the very utmost of service; suit yourself to him, understand him, find out his tastes, find out his capacities, and frame your system of Education to fit the child but do not force the child into a system which does not fit him.

To be free is the grandest thing for any man or any Nation, yet with freedom comes responsibility; with power, duty. These children will be the heirs to that power, and on us falls both the responsibility of winning that freedom for them, and of equipping them to cherish and appreciate it. Not only the boys but the girls need strength to bear the burdens and responsibilities and the courage to face those of the future, and they need wisdom to be guided to the right.

From “Problems of Reconstruction”

The principles of education, its natural bases in the human constitution, are permanent, while their applications must be local, adapted to the conditions of time and space. Hence while the Natural Law of Education must be recognised, there should be freedom in experiment and flexibility in application, so that we may discover the best methods available to us for the moment, and use them until we find better ones. By following the Natural Law, we shall facilitate the evolution of the child into the adult, working with Nature, not against her; that is, Education will be recognised as a Science, and not a haphazard dragging up of youth, consisting chiefly of forcing into them knowledge from outside, instead of helping them to unfold and utilise the capacities they have brought with them into the world. As happiness increases the

life-forces and Pain diminishes them, as Love energises and inspires to Right Action, while Fear paralyses faculty and inspires Hate, Happiness and Love should be the atmosphere inbreathed by the young, whether in the Home, the School or the College.

As man is a spiritual being, manifesting in the external world as Intelligence, Emotion and Activity, the Education of the young must help the inspiring Life to unfold itself, and must train the organs of Intelligence, Emotion and Activity; that is must be religious, mental, moral and physical. Any so-called education which omits any of these four departments of human nature is imperfect and unscientific, and its outcome will be a human being deficient in one or more of the groups of capacities on the balanced evolution of which the extent of his usefulness to Society, depends.

But the introduction of the word “Society” reminds us that Education is not the training of an isolated individual, but of an individual living within a social order, the happiness of which depends on the recognition by each that he is not an isolated but an interdependent being. Society is a congeries of interdependent individuals, every one of whom has his place and his function, and on his due discharge of the latter the right working of the whole depends. Hence Education must consider the youth as the embryonic citizen, with social duties and social responsibilities; must see him in relation to his environment-the Home, the School, the College- and from his earliest years must train him, as boy or girl, to feel himself as part of his country, with his duties and responsibilities to the Motherland; that is, he learns to serve the Motherland in the Home, the School and the College, as a foundation of, and as a preparation of –not as apart from- the wider and fuller service, as man or woman, in the larger world. We must evoke the sense of duty, by showing the pupil that duty is a debt he owes, first to the parents, the brothers and sisters, the servants, who have protected him in his helplessness, have surrounded him with affection and on whom his nurture and happiness still depend. We must evoke the sense of responsibility by showing him how his thoughts, feelings and actions affect his environment, and then react on himself. Needless to say we do not teach these principles to the child, but they must be understood and practised by parents and teachers, so that they may base their education of the child on knowledge and vitalize it by example.

This duality, the evolving life and its environment, must be borne in mind throughout education, as its subject matter will be distributed under these two heads.

The first includes the evolution of the individual qua individual, the drawing out of all he has in him, thus raising him in the scale of evolution. The second is what the old Greeks called Politics, a word which has been narrowed down in a most illegitimate fashion in our modern days to the strifes of political parties, a degradation of a noble word which used to include all the relations of a man to his environment; in that older sense we shall use it here in order that the unity of the relation of man to his environment may be realised- the unfolding consciousness

recognising, and therefore becoming related to, a larger and larger environment, the Home, the School, the College, the City, the Province, the State, the Race, Humanity, the World. There is no break in principle; the first three are a preparatory stage for the second three, and this whole six for the remaining three; the infant, the youth, the young man is the embryonic citizen, to be born into the outer world truly, but shaped and nourished in the womb of his mother, himself all through.

From "Principles of Education"

Everyone who is interested in the subject of Education, every one especially who has practical influence in moulding it, whether by thought or practice, should have a very definite ideal in his mind as to what kind of human being the education is designed to foster and to develop. For, after all the conduct of affairs must be directed by thought, by the ideal towards which we are aiming, and we have to consider what kind of a man, what kind of a woman, we want to see come out of our schools worthy to take a place in the new world we are looking forward to. And so I will suggest that the great aim of our education is to bring out of the child who comes into our hands every faculty and quality that he brings with him, and then to try to win that child to turn all his abilities, his powers, his capacities, to the helping and serving of the community of which he is a part, trying to induce him to see the larger self of which he is a part or a fragment, trying to win him to realise that in the service of that larger self lies his own true happiness as well as his own duty.

Modern science has very clearly shown that the human being is a developing organism, and that a child born in a civilized society, with a long course of human and social experience behind him, brings with him into the world a very definite character, moulded largely and derived from what may be called the general social experience; so that you are not dealing with a piece of clay that you are moulding as you please, but with a very definite human being, a mass of qualities, a mass of capacities, a mass of possibilities within him, and that the education should therefore be based primarily on the study of the individual child as adapted to his peculiarities.

Hence the whole theory of education which in the older days used to be based on coercion is now based on liberty, a fundamental change in the whole method and system which, once accepted, has to be worked out practically into detail, every child being encouraged to show what he has in him, and the teacher being expected to accept that child as he is, and to make the very best possible out of the material that the child affords for the helping and shaping hand of the teacher. We do not deny that it is necessary, because of the ignorance and inexperience of the child to guard him from dangers into which his inexperience and ignorance might lead him. We protect the child largely from the results of his own inexperience, but it is wise, I think, wherever it is possible, to help the child in gaining experience for himself and not to be

too eager to stand between him and a piece of experience which he may run into, causing himself not a serious, but a slight amount of trouble, and even possibly pain, because in many ways experience is the wisest teacher, and the will of the child, if too carefully protected from the experience given to him by contact with nature, is likely to be unwisely weakened, and the intelligence and discrimination of the child too much impeded in their exercise. It seems to me enormously important to help the child to see that any rule suggested for his guidance has its justification in the larger experience of the teacher, and not in any desire on the part of the teacher to control or dominate the child. That is, that as far as possible where a suggestion is made or in cases where serious harm would result from the lack of experience, the reason for what then in those cases would have to be an order should be very carefully explained. It should not be taken for granted that the duty of a child is to obey. It is very often important that he should understand that it is sometimes the wisdom of the child to obey, but those ideas are exceedingly different. The old way, which probably the elder of you have had said to you in your own childhood, "You must do it because I tell you to", inevitably raises a feeling of rebellion and an intense desire to do the exact opposite, because the bigger person wants to compel you to follow his way. That is the kind of feeling that ought never to be raised in the mind of a child, and my reason for saying that is that one of the great necessities for the citizen is reverence for law. On that the fabric of society is built up; by that society gradually evolves. And unless the child gains that reverence, primarily based on a study of the laws of nature which he finds to be inviolable by his own experience and not simply by the dictum of the teacher, the reverence for law which is based on that study of nature, which makes the child feel that he lives in a realm of law, will not be developed, and that reverence seems to me a vital part of the training of the child. Wherever possible, then it is well that he should find out for himself, well that he should be warned by an older person who knows it as a fact that if he does so and so it will cause him trouble and will not lead him to happiness.

And so I would ask you to develop in education both the individual and the social conscience, and let the young man and the young woman learn to realise the difference between the laws of nature and the laws of man; but reverence for the law will teach him that if he breaks a law because of conscience he accepts the suffering that comes from the breaking. For so does he pay alike his duty to himself and his country.

From "Education for the New Era"

Education must be prolonged far more than at present is recognised as necessary in modern life. The ideal of the future for education is that every child born into our Nation must have the opportunity of developing every capacity he brings with him through the gateway of birth. That, and nothing less than that, is the education that he should have. And that education should be free to the child of every citizen; not only that primary education, but the education

of the higher schools, of the University itself. For wealth and capacity do not always go together; ability and money are not always found in the same family; and it is capacity to profit by higher education that gives the child or the youth the right to that education.

And as the particular capacities of the young person develop themselves, that is the mark of his place in the National life. What is called vocational education, in the fullest sense of the word, is necessary in order that all the individuals in a Nation may find their appropriate sphere of work; work for which their faculties fit them, and which therefore is an enjoyment in the carrying of it out, and not a drudgery, as it too often is in our own days, Hence I submit that the time for education is the whole period of youth, vocational in the latter part, general in the earlier; and that the education should go as far as the faculties are aided in their development by it- roughly, during the first twenty-one years of life.

From "Evolution and Man's Destiny"

Education becomes a removal of obstruction in the way of that power (i.e., the divine power in the child) rather than a nourishing of certain germinal qualities which the child has.

That is the work of Education, to liberate, to release the Divine within what we call man's higher nature, and also to train its reproduction in the lower by those outer methods of teaching which will conduce best to the evolution of the Divine Man, the unfolding of the Hidden God within.

We want an Education that shall be absolutely devoid of anything that creates fear, because half the faults, as they call them, of the children, are the result of fear.

I think many of the blunders from which you have suffered are because you do not realise, not only that every child has a right to education, but that the education of every child should extend, not only through the earlier stages, but right on into young manhood and womanhood.

From "The New Civilization"

More and more you must make education the business of youth, and not place on youth the duty of bread-winning, which must be on the men and women who are in the plenitude of their strength.

Every child born into the nation should be educated without cost to the parents, for the State is going to be profited by the child far more than the parents.

From "Problems of Reconstruction"

*N. SRI RAM\**

## **DR. ANNIE BESANT'S WORK FOR EDUCATION IN INDIA\*\***

It is very rarely that it is given to a person to play many roles in one, displaying a diversity of gifts in different fields of life. Dr. Besant was an educationist with high aims and ideals, but she was at the same time a politician of world-wide repute and eminence, and a great spiritual teacher, venerated as such not merely by thousands, but without exaggeration, tens of thousands of all races and faiths. She combined in herself to a remarkable degree the gifts of exposition, writing and organization. One does not readily find a person of thought, who is capable of giving ideas of value, equally well translating those ideas into action, and helping bands of people attracted by them to become leaders in their turn. She had also the rare combination of an unflagging youthfulness of spirit with the balance and maturity of age and a wide outlook upon the problems and affairs of her age and the people.

When she came to India in 1893, she seemed to have before her mind's eye a broad plan of India's renaissance. She first plunged into the task of the religious revival of India, because she found that those who had modern education on western lines were beginning to be materialistic and look down on their ancient faith with contempt or indifference. They were being carried away by the glamour of western civilization, and apologetic about their own national culture and ways. So everywhere she awakened the people of India to the glory of their heritage, to the splendour of their own ancient civilization and faith. After she had succeeded in making thoughtful Indians once again turn their minds to the truths of their philosophy, the truths embedded in the religious system, which she did with electrifying effect by lecturing over the length and breadth of India, she began the work of education with the starting of the Central Hindu College at Benares. After several years of this work for Indian youth, she gave those lectures in Madras entitled "Wake Up, India!" dealing with the problems of social reform. She did not plunge very deeply into this aspect of Indian life, for she considered it was the duty of the Indians themselves to tackle their social evil. Lastly, crowning all her previous work, she started the campaign for India's freedom.

It is remarkable that in each one of these phases it was a deeply religious attitude which constituted the core of her outlook. Education was to her a matter of life and therefore of religion. It was based upon religious principles and the religious outlook of the people. Social

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\* International President of the Theosophical Society from 1953 to April 1973.

\*\* Adyar Lodge public lecture, Gokhale Hall, Madras, 10 July, 1947.

reform in those days was especially divorced in its orientation from Hindu religion and philosophy. The social reform she advocated was aimed at removing out worn customs and accretions which had encrusted the faith of the people. When she took to politics she took to it with a fervour of idealism that cannot be described as otherwise than religious. As Gandhiji himself has said, she made Home Rule a mantram in every village. She was not merely an agitator, though she had to agitate for her ideals – and none could do it better- but she was above all a nation- builder. One of her biographers has described her as “a passionate pilgrim”; whatever the path she took, she trod it as a pilgrim, with all the fervour of a dedicated spirit pressing ever onward to its goal.

Her education had two distinct aspects; one was that it had a religious foundation, and the other was patriotism or love of the Motherland. To her religion was not a narrow creed. She took the leading part in producing those text-books of Hindu religion and ethics which were called the *Santana Dharma Series*. Anyone who reads them will see that she has put together there the essentials of the Hindu faith, leaving out whatever may be of the nature of an excrescence or superstition. Her religion included an appreciation of the truths of other religions; similarly, her patriotism was not a patriotism of hate, or of narrow- minded pride, but a patriotism of love which expressed itself in every constructive endeavour and was based on the greatness of the past as an inspiration to the future.

She gave a number of talks to the students in the Central Hindu College, which have since been published, giving the stories of Shri Ramachandra and the Mahabharata war. We see there how she proceeded to awaken the enthusiasm of students, and- I may add- grown-up men too, for the ideals and truths enshrined in our ancient epics. Her ideas on Education, her principles, were exemplified in that College, which soon became famous all over the land. It attracted boys from almost every corner of India. Being situated in Benares, the holy city of India, it had students from places as far distant as the Punjab and Eastern Bengal, and Tuticorin in the south. A Central Hindu College boy had a stamp which was distinguishable from boys of other colleges.

She carried on her work there with the help of Dr. Arundale and a band of other devoted assistants. She stressed certain ideas that might be familiar now but were not considered at all at that time, such as the importance of building up the adolescent body with proper diet, hygiene and the playing of games. The Central Hindu College was noted for the skill, the expertness and the capacity of its students in every game that was played in those times- cricket, hockey football and others. She was later to become the pioneer in Indian Scouting, a movement which she started in order to build up character and the attitude of ready service in young men who badly lacked such an outlet for their energies. She formed a cadet corps in the Central Hindu College, which drew much attention wherever it went; the cadets were all dressed in an Indian uniform, drilled in military style and taught to act as a team loyal to one

another and to their leaders. She tried also something that was then new to Indian schools, namely, the prefect system. All the time, in her institutions, the stress was on character and service, and there was the distinctive feature of a complete absence of punishment. Dr. Besant's ideal was to train the young men into men of courage, upright and able to face the difficulties and responsibilities of their lives. She made it a cardinal rule in every institution under her control that discipline should be based on love and respect and free from fear.

Dr. Besant did not believe in political action by students, and that point was brought out very strongly during the days both of the anti-partition movement in Bengal and the Non-Cooperation of 1920-21. She regarded the student years as a period of precious preparation for citizenship; she did not countenance the throwing of them as raw recruits into the battle-line to become ready casualties, as in her view battles were not won by such tactics. But she advised her young people to study politics, and every other problem of general interest; to take part in school and college parliaments, both in order to learn to present their points of view in debate, to appreciate opposed views, and to cultivate the graces of courtesy and parliamentary manners amidst sharp differences of opinion. She edited for a number of years a magazine, *The Young Citizen*, in which she held up high ideals for the inspiration of young people.

When the Central Hindu College flowered into the Hindu University, that University recognized her unique labours in the educational field by conferring upon her the degree of Doctor of Letters- an honour which she very much appreciated.

Freed from the responsibility of guiding that college, she formed the Theosophical Educational Trust, and soon a number of schools and colleges in different parts of India came under the control of that body. In these institutions, the principles which were followed were those advocated by Dr. Besant. Education was regarded as an aid to natural growth, and was to be education not only for livelihood but also for life and leadership. She attached very special importance to the education of girls, because she realized that it is the women of the land who are the best custodians of its culture. She stressed the importance of preserving distinctive ideals of Indian womanhood; not turning them into copies of western women- however splendid these might be- but making them embodiments of their own culture and ideals.

She was in the Central Hindu College, and in all the institutions with which she was associated, a constant inspiration both to the teachers and students. To every student she was loving and accessible mother. She had the remarkable gift of attracting around her helpers who were eager to give their all for the cause which they considered it their privilege to serve under her guidance.

In addition to all this, she lectured in all parts of India on national education, and she visited even small towns and villages which one could not reach by convenient means of transport, because she felt that it was necessary that the principles of right education should be

understood by the people, so that the education of India may be controlled by Indians, that it may be national education in the true sense of the term, purged of all the faults which were so glaring in any system that had been devised for other ends and purposes than the building up of India into a strong nation capable of holding her own.

In the year 1918, after the goal of Home Rule had been accepted by the British Government, she launched the national education movement with the help of Dr. Arundale, because she felt that without education on national lines there could be no true national freedom and that in India democracy should not grow into government by multi-headed ignorance. In the Commonwealth of India Bill for the freedom of India, which she drafted in 1925, she wrote down the right of citizens to free elementary education, embodying her view that every child born in the land should be able to enjoy that right; he should not only have the necessary physical care, but also the education needed to launch him into the stormy waters of life; the Bill contemplated one or more schools in every village managed by the village authorities.

Dr. Besant was always full of encouragement to the young people. This particular Association in the premises of which we are meeting today- the Young Men's Indian Association – was part of her gifts to the young men of Madras. When the Pachaiappa's College was suffering for want of a hostel in which to house its boys, she gave a handsome donation which enabled them to build a hostel, so that the young people who needed to reside in the city of Madras for study might have a place in which they might be properly housed and looked after. She paid the fees of ever so many young boys who came to her for help, sometimes for urgent assistance. I know that they all addressed her as "Mother," whether they knew her personally or not, and she accepted that description. She used however to say she was a mother to so many that it was not possible for her to meet all their requirements.

Dr. Besant was one of the first to stress the importance of giving education in the mother-tongue of the boy. She fully recognized the value of English as a second language and as a means of communication with people of other lands and its value for other purposes too, but the use of English not merely for learning as a language but as the medium for learning other subjects constituted a crushing burden to the young brain. She encouraged also in every way possible the learning of Sanskrit and Arabic, as the classical languages of India.

In all these respects and ways she was an educational pioneer. Her education did not aim at the mere manufacture of graduates by the hundred. She taught that every child had his own unique individuality, which the true educator must respect; the system should adapt itself to the child, not the child to the system. These ideas of hers have yet to find their true and proper fulfilment. Her educational ideas were characterized by the wisdom with which she planned all work with which she was concerned. In the field of politics she was constructive statesman of the highest caliber; she was equally a statesman in every other field of life.

Dr. Besant, although she passed away in 1933, has not yet become dim in our eyes. We would do well in this Centenary year to keep her memory green with our gratitude, by recalling all her splendid work for this country and the ideals which she so constantly placed before us for our inspiration and guidance. Our entry as a free nation into the circle of nations is a culmination of Dr. Besant's work for India in the political field. Her work in the educational field will no doubt bear its equally important fruit in course of time, as a free India undistracted by the pressing problem of her politics turns her attention to the constructive tasks that await her consideration.

(Reprint from *The Theosophist*, Adyar, TPH, October, 1947)

The practical gardener is the man who roots up the weeds, so that in the future they shall not sprout again. And the fault, the error, of most modern politicians is that they deal with results and not with causes, they deal with effects and not with the underlying roots; and the outcome is that the evils come up again and again and again, in never-ceasing succession, and humanity wearies itself century after century cutting off the hydra heads of evils that grow again as often as each head is cut down.

Now Theosophy goes to the root of the problem, and deals with the evils in a slower but in a more effective way.

**ANNIE BESANT**

“The Value of Theosophy in the  
Raising of India”

*The Birth of New India*

RADHA BURNIER\*

## ANNIE BESANT HER LIFE AND MISSION

Dr. Annie Besant was described as a *yogi* by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, even though he did not entirely approve of her eclectic approach to national problems. Earlier, during the period of her work with the Socialists of England, Bernard Shaw declared that there was no woman orator equal to Annie Besant. The impact of the oratory was not just the result of her exceptional eloquence and the silvery tone of voice for which she was famous. Her lectures were special because many in her audience felt uplifted by the power which flowed through her, and which made them feel at their moral and spiritual best.

She was a great organizer with extraordinary energy. At the same time she was deeply religious in a large-hearted and profound sense. Her intellectual attainments were also noteworthy. Therefore one could say without exaggeration that her life was an example of *Karma*, *Bhakti* and *Jnana Yoga*, a life of utter selflessness dedicated to the welfare of others.

On 16 November, 1893, when she set foot on the soil of India for the first time, she did not come as a stranger. She had addressed large audiences all over Britain about the oppression which colonized people had to endure. Her pamphlet entitled *England, India and Afghanistan* had been widely circulated. Thus she came here as a devotee of Indian philosophy and a champion of her people.

In 1895 she settled down in Varanais and began to delve into India's philosophies and sacred lore. She adopted the simple Indian way of life, sitting crossed legged, living among Indians as one of them, very soon she translated the **Bhagavad-gita**, having sufficiently mastered Sanskrit.

She delivered numerous lectures all over India on the deeper truths of the great religions. She stressed the need to be religious without being sectarian, to love one's faith without decrying those of others. 'Make religion a unifying force, not a separative one', she taught. 'I make no apology here for the variety of religious beliefs, for I assert that in that variety lies their greatest value to men, Men are of different temperaments, of different lines of thought. Would you have religion one in its forms as well as one in its essence? Then tell the sun to send out but a single ray of colour; and make all the varied world one colour'. Today's India would benefit immensely from her advice to its people about religion. Her words on the brotherhood of

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\* General Secretary of the Indian Section, TS, from October 1960 to 1978; International President of the Theosophical Society from July 1980 to October 2013.

religions are worthy of very wide circulation as means to combat present-day fundamentalism, fanaticism and selfishness, parading as religion.

Dr. Besant also saw that Indian youth needed an education suited to their culture. The educational system at that time was organized to produce clerks and subordinates for the British. She decided to restore self-respect, to build character, and provide to the young clear concepts of good citizenship. Hence, she founded the famous Central Hindu College and Schools in Benares, keeping them free of control by the British rulers. The institutions grew into national celebrity. Several princes came forward with support and eager young men threw up their jobs to teach. She herself inspired the students by talks about ancient Indian ideals, and taught them to be gentlemen. She was against using young people in politics. The young must learn to think and understand before acting, she said. At the same time she saw to it that her students were trained to take part in the national life.

Her Central Hindu College and Schools (one for boys and another for girls) were provided with beautiful grounds and buildings, but when Mr. Malaviya proposed to start the Benares Hindu University, she gave it all away with her usual magnanimity. Then she turned her energy to opening a series of national schools all over India. She declared: 'Our work is the training of thousands of India's sons into noble manhood, into worthiness to become free citizens in a free land. Some of you imagine that freedom is to be won by loud talking, by violent speeches, by noisy demonstrations, by tumultuous processions through the streets. I tell you that Liberty is too lofty and too divine a goddess to descend into a county until purity of heart, noble living, self-sacrifice, discipline and self-control have made of the citizens a throne on which she may sit and reign'. So successfully were the young boys and girls in her institutions trained into a sense of responsibility and of public duty that even under stressful circumstances there never was any indiscipline or trouble in any of them.

Side by side with educational work, Dr. Besant engaged in activities for reform of the social structure. She spoke throughout India against superstitious beliefs and outmoded customs like caste, child marriage, forced widowhood, the ill-treatment of the depressed classes and cruelty to animals. These were published under the title *Wake up India*. Many pledged themselves to abandon undesirable customs, and work for reform. The practice of **Swadeshi** was also part of the programme. Thus, the way was paved for political action.

In 1916 she launched the Home Rule Movement, and branches of the Home Rule league were established so widely that the consciousness of even the rural people was awakened to the need for independence. This led Gandhiji to remark: 'It is Dr. Besant who has awakened India from her deep slumber and I pray that she may live long to witness a free India'. At that time, when other leaders were hesitant, she demanded of the rulers nothing less than full self-

government. The communities were divided, but she got them together for unified action. But she was insistent about using only constitutional means to achieve freedom. She knew by her long experience in social and political work in England, how dangerous it is to teach the message to flout the law. She warned: 'Is Home Rule to be achieved only to find a country which is in condition of anarchy, resistant of all disciplines, defiant of all authority, where everyone, is a law unto himself?' Unfortunately, her advice against using unconstitutional means was not accepted and today we suffer from the conditions she anticipated.

A powerful instrument of political action and reform was the daily newspaper *New India*, which she owned and edited for fifteen years from 1914 onwards. Though the government penalized her again and again for her trenchant articles, she was undaunted. The British government was alarmed by the impact of her campaigns, and so they interned her in Ootacamund for a few months. The result of this imprudent decision was that when she was released, public enthusiasm was redoubled and she was elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1917, to which office she gave a new dimension by being active throughout the year, instead of for three days only.

But popularity did not last for she opposed civil disobedience, as it meant teaching people to break the law. However, she never feared unpopularity. Undaunted she continued to do her best, in spite of advancing age. A National Conference organized by her culminated in drafting the Commonwealth of India Bill, which envisaged a graded system of suffrage and also a system of qualifications and disqualifications for holding public office. The nation did not support this effort, but the Bill reached the British Parliament and had a reading. Undoubtedly our country would have benefited immensely if some of the concepts of that Bill had been incorporated into the Indian Constitution. Sadly, today there is nothing to prevent even people with criminal records from holding high office.

Dr. Besant's great work was in many fields: the Scout Movement, the Indian Women's Association, the Labour Movement, the Young Men's Indian Association and other institutions were either started or inspired by her. But we must not forget that her mission was not confined to India. She was a world-renowned personality. In 1893, when the first Parliament of World Religions was held in Chicago, she was one of its outstanding figures. Even a hall seating 3000 was not enough for the crowd which came to hear her speak on 'The Supreme Duty'.

In 1907, Dr. Besant was elected as the President of the Theosophical Society. She travelled to every part of the world, was revered as a spiritual guide. She nurtured several outstanding figures, none more striking than J. Krishnamurti, who was to prove that her prophetic insight about his future was justified.

The keynote of Annie Besant's life and mission can be summed up in two words: Truth and Love. She wrote: 'An imperious necessity forces me to speak the truth, as I see it, whether the speech please or displease, whether it brings praise or blame'.

The other side of her nature was Love. Few know how many of the poor she benefited, how many hundreds of students she educated. If the world were blessed with a few Annie Besants there would be hope of swift progress towards a golden era. The following words of hers represent the spirit that was hers:

When those who have, are ready to sacrifice, then the dawning of the new era will be seen in the sky that is over our earth; when wealth and education and power are held as trust for the common good, ah! Then will come the laying of the foundations of a better and nobler State. When the educated man and woman remember: 'This education of mine, bought by the ignorance of thousands who have laboured in order that I might be educated, really belongs to them, and I must give it back to them in service, in order to pay the debt that I have contracted to them': when the wealthy man feels: 'I am a steward, not an owner of this wealth which had come out of the labour of thousands; let it help the uplifting of thousands' – then Brotherhood is beginning to show itself upon earth.

(Reprint from *The Indian Theosophist*, Varanasi, Nov. – Dec. , 1993)

The dominant motive of all her activities is compassion, a divine sympathy for the weak, the oppressed, the suffering, all who lack opportunity for growth and happiness. From this never-ceasing fountain of sympathy and compassion flow the fertilising streams of her service in every direction..... Because compassion is the essence of her being, and true compassion takes the form of service, all her joy is in work and in naught else. Everything dear to her, even the closest of personal relations, she sacrifices, if need be, without a moment's hesitation, for the sake of the work which means the good and the happiness of all.

**N. SRI RAM**

*Annie Besant: Servent of Humanity*  
Special Jubilee Number of New India, August, 1924

ROHIT MEHTA\*

## THE FUTURE THAT AWAITS US

It may seem ludicrous, almost ridiculous to speak about a future at a time when things are completely in a mess. Not merely in India. In India we know it is in mess. But all over the world there is such an upsurge of violence, killings, innocent killings. We do not know where we are going. Is there any future? In fact we are afraid to look at the future if the future is going to be a continuity of what is happening, or is that future going to be different? It is in this context that I am presenting views on the future that awaits us. What is that future that awaits us? I feel that in the context of what Mrs. Besant said and did, it is possible to visualize the future that she spoke about. Mrs. Besant was a future dominated person. She had a clear understanding so far as future was concerned and it is very necessary of us to understand the future that she envisaged during her time because what she saw then seems to be coming true today. Mrs. Besant spoke and wrote many things. In one of her articles appearing in New India- a paper she conducted for many years, she wrote these memorable words, *if India lives, who dies; if India dies, who lives?* This was the indication given by Mrs. Besant about the future of India. If India lives, but- is India alive today? Or has India to find out her roots? India does not seem to be alive.

There have been ups and downs in India's history. We are passing through a very difficult period, and the reason is that we have lost all faith in whatever really represents India. In education, in politics, in administration, in public life, nowhere does one see any trace so far as India's special cultural quality is concerned. I for one feel that this culture is one of the subjects that is completely misunderstood. We interpret the term culture in many ways but we hardly know what we really mean by it. Culture is not language, culture is not ceremonies and rituals. Culture is not history either; culture is something that is intangible, which you cannot hold but can experience, Therefore, much that is beside the point is being spoken about so far as Indian Culture is concerned. Mrs. Besant had understood this Indian Culture and she had complete faith in India. In fact she is one of those rare individuals in human history who had complete faith in India. That is why she said if India lives then there is no fear at all, but if India dies then nobody will be alive at all. So, if we are talking about the future that awaits us, we must, first of all, find out whether we are alive as a country or a nation or we are not, and unfortunately, we have to admit that we are not alive. We are passing through a difficult period, a period in which we have lost everything.

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\* General Secretary of the Indian Section, TS, from 1945 to 1959.

We talk of Mrs. Besant's educational work. Look at her educational work and look where our education is, today? Our education is, once again, trying to imitate the western way of life, whereas Mrs. Besant was absolutely clear that through education, she would be able to bring about in India, the revival, for which she was working and that is why in the Central Hindu College she introduced that subject of religion, not sectarian, but Religion in its broadest sense. She gave lectures on *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to the students. She wanted students to know all this so that in the young age they may be able to find these impressions imbibed by them which would later on grow, and perhaps then it would be possible, for the country, for India to find a generation of people who would be able to represent Indian culture in the true sense of the word. One had to know her to understand what dynamism she represented. She electrified whatever thing she touched; she electrified many movements in spheres of religion, education, social freeform and last but not the least in the sphere of politics, her work in politics.

When Lord Pentlant, the then Governor of Madras Presidency asked Mrs. Besant, "Mrs. Besant, why don't you restrict yourself to theosophy? Why do you come into politics?" Her reply was, "Pentlant, understand, that my politics is my theosophy. I make no distinction whatsoever between politics and theosophy." She was, of course, interned. When she was interned Gandhiji came on the scene and asked Mrs. Besant, "Shall I start civil disobedience movement in order to get yourself released?" Mrs. Besant said, "No, I don't want you to start civil disobedience movement for my release, I will be released in due course." In fact we have not quite understood the relationship between Mrs. Besant and Gandhiji. It is true that Dr. Besant opposed the movement which Gandhiji had started but we must bear in mind that she never opposed individual civil disobedience. When Gandhiji introduced mass civil disobedience she warned him of the consequences and told him that when India became free this would recoil upon him. How true those words were! Today we see strikes and so many things disrupting our civic life. This is the outcome of mass civil disobedience about which Gandhi spoke; otherwise there was absolutely no difference whatsoever. In fact Gandhiji himself said that if he had been able to do something for India, it was very largely because of the work which Mrs. Besant had done previously. Mrs. Besant had brought a new vision in politics. Before Mrs. Besant came, the political meetings of the Indian National Congress used to be held in small halls, small offices, but Mrs. Besant was not satisfied. She brought out these meetings into the public. And for the first time on the Marina beach in Madras, big political meetings were held, addressed by Mrs. Besant and others. This is a tribute paid to Mrs. Besant by Shri Pattabhi Sitaramayya in his book entitled *The History of the India National Congress*. There he says that Dr. Besant was the first leader, who, for the first time brought Congress into the open and therefore it was no longer an institution that was holding its consultations in closed door meetings but it was in the open.

Mrs. Besant did much not only for the political life but for the educational life too she had a systematic programme. She first turned her attention to awaken India, awakening India in the spiritual sense. She awakened India, she went round the country several times from East to West and from North to South. She addressed meetings and awakened people through her matchless oration. While organizing the *Swadeshi Exhibition* in India Colonel Olcott once said to the Indians, “*my fellow Indians, your Mother is not dead, your Mother is asleep. Wake up your Mother.*” This is what he said and this is what Mrs. Besant did- Wake Up India. But today probably we will need another Mrs. Besant to come and wake up India because we have gone to sleep. The conditions that prevail today in India are conditions about which we cannot be proud at all. Something has happened whereby our national life is completely ruined and perhaps we will need a leader of the stature of Mrs. Besant to wake us up out of the slumber in which we have been. This is the reason why I shudder to think about the future, the future that awaits us. What is the future about which we are talking? Does this country have a future? If that future is there then what is the nature of it? I feel the nature of that future was indicated by Mrs. Besant in her significant sentence. “If India dies who lives, if India lives who dies.” We, therefore, have to find out whether India is alive or not. We hold meetings, we hold discussions, we do many many things, but is India alive or is India dead? Dead India will mean nothing whatsoever. It is only if India is alive that we can talk of the future of India and I very much doubt whether we can say today that India is alive.

This is the time when we require somebody, and if we don't find an individual then you and I together will have to pull out the country from the condition in which we find it today. It is a herculean task, but it has to be done. We seem to be thinking that we shall be able to revive India by means of religion, secular or sectarian religion, but we won't be able to do it. India has been a land which has given asylum to all the religions of the world. We will find in India the earliest Christian communities; we find in India the earliest Jewish community, we find the Parsis. Similarly so many religions have come. India is not a country of one religion. India is the country of the parliament of religions but we seem to have completely forgotten this. We think that India is a Hindu country. In fact the word Hindu does not appear anywhere, neither in the Upanishads nor in Gita nor in the Vedas. *Hindu* is the word that the Muslims have given us and we call ourselves Hindus. We have talked of the *Sanatana Dharma* that India stands for. *Sanatana Dharma*, the religion not merely of one period of life but the religion of eternity and therefore we will have to revise our ideas about religion because much confusion prevails today. In India, particularly in Hinduism we have to bear in mind what is Historical and what is Mythological. These two things have been mixed up and we seem to be thinking that which is mythological is historical too. And therefore much clearance has to be done so far as these misunderstandings are concerned, and we must remember that Mrs. Besant was the one

individual who tried to clarify many many things. Unfortunately we did not understand her. We completely misjudged her. We thought that Mrs. Besant was a foreigner who had come to India. She was not a foreigner. She was more Indian than most of us, not only in outer behaviour but also in spirit. The time has come, though very late, that we must begin to understand her. Very few people have done so much about India, raising India, talking about the stature of India which she has done. Therefore, if we are to think of the future that awaits us, then we can only think in terms of India becoming alive. An alive India, an awakened India has no danger whatsoever. This was the faith which Mrs. Besant spoke about and that faith must grow within us that India has something to give to the world. She used to speak about India as the mother of the nations of the world and we have to understand that you and I have to discover India. We have read about India; it is a concept, but we have not discovered India. It is high time that we started this work of the discovery of India. Only by discovering India shall we understand her greatness.

She awakened India that was asleep. We have forgotten Mrs. Besant who really awakened us. The greatest tribute we can pay to Mrs. Besant would be not only by remembering her but by discovering the spirit of India. With the discovery of the spirit there will be the awakening and when India is alive once again then she is destined to be the mother of the nations of the worlds.

Among the many books that Dr. Besant wrote, one of special significance is *A Study in Consciousness*, because it throws a new light on the problems of today. Today we are in the midst of a consciousness crisis which even modern science recognizes. It is in terms of consciousness that we have to look at the future that awaits us. Dr. Besant indicated that the future of humanity lies in the shift of consciousness, from the mind to that which is beyond the mind. That indeed is the future that awaits us.

(Reprint from *The Indian Theosophist*, Nov.-Dec. 1993)

## ANNIE BESANT : A SUBLIME DESTINY

Annie Wood was born on October 1, 1847 in an Irish family on the maternal side. The pedigree on the maternal side was rather prestigious. The paternal side was an old branch that had fallen in decadence since the 17th century although one of her cousins, Lord Haterley, was Vice-Chancellor during the reign of Victoria.

With an irreproachable moral background, highly educated, and above all, proud of the honour of the family, her father had given her great intellectual faculties and her practical abilities, and on the maternal side, she had inherited a passionate nature, deep feelings, loyalty, pride and determination.

From sixteen to the threshold of marriage, she led a joyful but studious life surrounded by the educating and wise affection of Miss Marryat, her main benefactor. Annie never read a book of romance. This fact had an important influence in shaping her destiny. In her state of ignorance of human life and in her passionate adoration for Christ – which gave her the yearning to be a martyr – Annie met the man who, strangely, became her husband.

### **First part: Life of wife, mother, and of despair**

Her marriage was based on two misunderstandings, the first was of a psychological order, the second of a conventional order. At nineteen, Annie Wood exalted her adoration for Christ, so as to call him “the most beautiful of men’s children” and to give her the desire to be his love in life and in death. The first misunderstanding was based on confusion of feelings.

Indeed, it idealized the clergyman defined by herself “this mortal who bears something of the authority of the immortal.” At her nineteenth birthday, she met Reverend Frank Besant, then a deacon and a teacher. He was more attracted to Annie than Annie to him because she rather gave him deference; he was a clergyman, after all. At certain moment, he declared his desire to marry her. Annie was struck with surprise, but remained mute despite her wish to decline. This was the second misunderstanding. Moreover, later on, she confessed that the next fortnight was the most unhappy of her life. Eventually, she had let herself be trapped by her own weakness and fear of hurting others, and thus she was bound by a commitment to a man whom she could not even pretend to love.

When Annie was twenty and Frank twenty-five they got married but their union was ill-matched. Indeed, she was indomitable, being in love with freedom and passionate about Christ

\* Chairman, The Council of the European Federation of National Societies.

but not of the Church. She was incapable of trivialities while her husband was conventional, conservative, narrow-minded and retrograde. For him a woman had to submit to her husband. Annie, to lighten the gloomy life and probably to improve the mean living conditions provided by the Reverend, began to write and discovered the “delightful” feeling of independence when she received the first royalties. Yet, she discovered that the money earned by her belonged by right to her husband.

In addition to the unsatisfactory conditions of marriage and the non-idealistic aspect of married life, there were also difficulties in material life. The burden became too heavy to bear for a pure soul. Annie could no longer invent stories for herself, even the one of being a mystic. She gradually lost her faith in Christ. To the intellectual revolt often negotiable was added the rejection of the heart, more intransigent, implacable because such a rejection is felt but not reasoned. Annie sank slowly but steadily into a kind of nervous breakdown where sleep disappeared to give way to anxiety and intense headaches. Factually, she could no longer bear the light.

Her physician was intelligent enough to cure her by a mental diversion: he brought her books on science and anatomy. Annie recovered little by little. She conceded to keep the household: after all, with the help of her cousin Lord Haterlay, Frank’s financial situation had improved. Moreover, Annie was consoled with service in the parish. However, the religious question still absorbed her mind. She could not solve the problem of evil. Nobody, including the religious authorities, had been able to enlighten her. So, she told her husband that she would continue services in the parish, but that she could no longer take communion “without hypocrisy”. Moreover, she found the dogma of the Divinity of Christ unacceptable, a subject she had developed in a pamphlet. The pamphlet added difficulties to the presbytery. Annie sank again into depression diagnosed as nervous fatigue and heart trouble. The physician ordered a complete rest and a change of environment.

At the presbytery the parishioners were chatting: was not the Reverend’s wife heretical? The Reverend summoned his wife to follow the external observances of the cult if she wished to remain. Annie refused the ultimatum. The divorce was pronounced; of the two children born from the marriage, the boy stayed with his father, Annie got the custody of the girl. She received a meager alimony. She was 25 years old.

### **Second part: Public life, activism, struggle in human society**

As a prelude to freedom, a difficult period opened before her: Annie was a seamstress, then governess for a vicar while caring for her own children affected by the epidemic of diphtheria. During this time, her ex-husband, “reverend” as he was, had her followed by private detectives.

Annie hoped to settle again with her mother, the only person to whom she was attached. But Emily Wood, worn prematurely by the years of hard labour and half ruined by a shameless notary, died in the sadness of leaving her daughter Annie alone in life. Alone Annie was. Her brother having obtained a prominent position in the Arts Societies of which he had subsequently become director, had never manifested himself. Until his death he remained a stranger.

Annie worked at the British Museum and wrote pamphlets. Despite a low wage, it was a rich time for her intellectual activity. Her doubts resulted in quasi-atheism. But her atheism was not a cold belief; it was tinged with idealism and feelings. At this time, she met Charles Bradlaugh, spokesman for the Free Thinkers. The latter offered Annie the position of Assistant General for his newspaper, *The National Reformer*. This prolific period was dedicated to radicalism and social reform, led by Bradlaugh. Another acquaintance of Annie was the well-known writer George Bernard Shaw, one of the emblematic figures of the Fabian Society (which later became the Socialist Party and eventually the Labour Party).

The actions of Annie Besant were diversified and innumerable, spreading from politics to social sphere. She was fighting British oppression in Ireland, Afghanistan, Egypt ... while defending “defenceless” workers and fighting for women’s rights. Being a testimony of an exceptional avant-gardism, she advocated contraception, which resulted in the loss of the custody of her daughter. Her ex-husband argued in a lawsuit that the actions of Annie jeopardized the morality of their daughter. Annie was completely alone, without a family. However, as the water flows back to the source, later on, the two children rejoined their mother.

Inhibited by the thirst for knowledge, she found time to pass examinations in inorganic chemistry, animal physiology, general biology, botanic, acoustics, light and heat, mechanical theory, magnetism, electricity, mathematics.... She successfully taught classes in the Hall of Science for several years. Her studies served later, in the most mature stage of her life, when she would deal with this subject of evolution.

This prolific, highly active and social period filled a part of Annie’s life where she found the *raison d’être* of life in the service of humanity, social action and politics. But it already appeared that she was not going to keep this mode of action for a long time, for one evening when she returned exhausted from a meeting with workers, she asked her friend and companion why they did all this ... The answer was: “Because we cannot help it.”

Shortly after this conversation, in 1888, the Matchgirls Union was founded with Annie as secretary. As always, she wondered what remedy could be brought against the evils of humanity and how to organize aid with unselfishness and love.

### **The dawning of a ‘new day’ – Third part: Active life, struggle for the independence of India and action in the Theosophical Society**

Annie had always had the profile of a helper of humanity with a high standard of ethics in action. One can feel with her that something was lacking in her life. Indeed, she was incessantly moving towards a greater scope, a larger field. From a wife and a mother, she moved to be a writer. Her style was warm, fiery and stirring, but never sentimental.

Being advanced in her view of the human society, she said that society must solve the problem of the unemployed or the unemployed would solve the problem of society. This sense of anticipation can be found in another statement of hers asserting that it is up to everybody to proclaim in life a higher ideal than to win the race for wealth, and that it is up to everyone to declare firmly that health, comfort, leisure, culture, abundance for each are more desirable than a merciless struggle for existence and the accumulation of fortune at the expense of the pain of others. “Enough work, enough leisure, enough joy for everyone but not too much nor too little for anybody, that is the socialist ideal.”

Visionary, she foresaw that the big cities raise in their hovels a race that returns to the savage brute, more dangerous since fallen humanity has possibilities in evil that go far beyond the wild beast.

It was already obvious that she did not aim at anything selfish. Her view was anchored in the well-being of humanity. When she claimed that children need to be taught how to think and not to be told what to think, she came to the root of the human problem as well as its solution in educating the mind.

She concluded with reason that *unity* is the essence of Oneness; therefore, Divinity is identified with nature and extends itself to the whole Universe. Hence, God in the orthodox sense cannot exist, and it cannot imply a personal being endowed with an individuality distinct from the rest of the Universe. For her, there was no idea of God worthy to be called as such and which could be attained by our faculties in their present state. We yearn to know the Unknown whilst we call it the Unknowable. Yet, what is unknowable for the present may cease to be unknowable at other possible stages of consciousness. Exploring such concept, one reaches a region where one is not allowed to enter and one can only bow.

It is hoped for mankind that all creeds, all superstitions disappear in the clear light of freedom and that science shines on the regenerated earth – but this is only good if men committed themselves more closely to sincerity, honour and truth. Thus, we could see the dawning of a new day.

In *The Life of Annie Besant*, Geoffrey West writes that it seems that she and her friends perpetually lived in the expectation of this new day, and that when it came, all had already fled to a horizon more fertile in hope.

Indeed, that day did come. It led her to the third installment of her life, the one that would be fully dedicated to India and the Theosophical Society.

Here a turning point was completed: the social-minded activist, the loyal Fabian politician, and the buoyant writer Annie Besant embraced another cause. The latter seemed different from the previous ones, but this was just an appearance because the road she was about to tread was consistently in continuity with what she had achieved. The housewife, having survived brutality and injustice, had made her way to social service in favour of the under privileged before moving towards a widened aim, the service of the whole humanity, the 'great orphan'. What motivated her to move out of bigotry, to triumph prejudices of her time, to rid of resentment and self-pity no doubt dwelled in the core of herself, which was her passionate love for all living beings. This fundamental characteristic of hers was the main force, the 'dauntless' energy that allows the human souls to get out of the terrestrial mire.

Life is surprising in its own ways of bringing new situations. Those who are ready to change and to make a step forward do not hesitate to take the challenge brought about by the development of circumstances. Annie was ready to move forward in life when *The Secret Doctrine* was published. Its two large volumes put off the director of *The Pall Mall* to whom George Bernard Shaw suggested that Annie Besant could do the review commenting that she was crazy enough to get something out of these subjects.

History continued showing that Madame Blavatsky (HPB) recovered an old soul, that of Annie Besant who would begin to realize her true dharma in the service of the Theosophical Society. After HPB's death, a note of hers was found which read: "Annie Besant, the one, the only one".

Nicknamed 'the Warrior', Annie Besant – following 'the Messenger' (HPB) and the 'Pioneer' (Col. H.S. Olcott) – witnessed during her presidency two important events (or crisis) in each of them she played a major part. The Judge case was a big blow to the first-generation theosophists. Then the misunderstanding from several theosophists about her proclamation of the coming of the World Teacher in the person of Jiddu Krishnamurti led the German Section to break away with its General Secretary, Rudolf Steiner.

Parallel to her intense activities in the Theosophical Society, none can forget her prominent role and action in the process of India becoming independent as well as her contribution to the constitution of the Home Rule together with the Indian Congress.

#### **The fourth part: Beyond the visible, a tentative synthesis**

Had Annie Besant planned her life? Apparently not. Her pure soul seemed to take life as it came. Who guided her in the innermost of her being? If there were some guides, they were not visible. Her life was a manifestation of burning devotion, offering a permanent disposition at the service of the most needy as well as an unconditional adoration of the Most High. Her mind was in constant fervour, despite the diversity of its manifestation. It might lead her to some form of exaggeration particularly in the proclamation of Jiddu Krishnamurti (K.), which was taken for granted by some theosophists that K was the returning Messiah. In fact, she foresaw the great destiny and the incomparable dharma of K but the expression of her devotion and vision took a particular form due to her religious background.

Who was Annie Besant? Who or rather what was this Soul in constant search for the Highest?

Only God can know. Not this god generated by fear, self-concern, and pride, but the Effulgent Divinity that is always shining in each and all, from the beginning of time till its end. Being a passenger of time, each one can take the determination to be a witness or an actor. Annie Besant was an actor in more than one way. Moreover, her 'constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection' made her unique.

Having fulfilled her dharma at every step of her life on earth, with purity in the heart, with unconditional devotion to the Highest and with passionate love for humanity, Annie Besant made her life a sublime destiny. She is an effulgent example for generations of those who try 'to live to benefit humankind', offering them a touch of eternity.

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(Original in French, now translated into English)

P. KRISHNA\*

## **MRS. ANNIE BESANT : THE REVOLUTIONARY**

Mrs. Annie Besant was an extraordinary woman. Born in 1847 as Annie Wood, in an average middle-class family in London she faced circumstances far more hostile to a young girl than those that prevail in India today. Despite that, it is incredible what all she achieved in one lifetime, both in England and in India, by virtue of her qualities and dedication to truth, justice and fairness. Her life is an inspiration to all of us never to feel disheartened by adverse circumstances in life.

Her father was “keenly intellectual and splendidly educated; a mathematician and a good classical scholar, thorough master of French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese,...”<sup>1</sup> He had migrated from Ireland to make a living in London. Her mother was a traditional Christian housewife. Annie was only five years old when her father passed away. Her mother ran a boarding house for school boys to earn a living. She had neither the time nor the means to educate Annie, so a family friend, Ellen Marryat, offered to look after and educate Annie. She soon discovered that Annie was smarter and more intelligent than all her classmates. As was the custom then, at the young age of 19, Annie was married to a Roman Catholic clergyman named Frank Besant and went to live with him. For a few years the marriage was happy and they had two children; then differences developed. Annie saw that in the church the priests and fathers talked about love and compassion but they paid a lot of attention to rich donors and ignored the poor people. She could not tolerate this hypocrisy and refused to attend the church sessions. For a clergyman’s wife not to attend Mass was not acceptable. She published short stories and articles and was paid for them by some magazines but her husband would not let her keep the money. Such differences led to quarrels and eventually to a legal separation in 1873. Annie took her daughter to live with her mother and the boy stayed with his father.

Annie started learning science and soon acquired enough proficiency to start teaching in a school. She saw how women were being treated merely as breeding machines and not permitted to practice birth control or family planning. She wrote articles protesting against it and developed a friendship with Charles Bradlaugh, who was an atheist and a free thinker who had founded the National Secular Society. He supported her in her protests and they reprinted an old pamphlet describing birth control methods and distributed it free among the public. She was charged with obscenity and arrested. She argued her own case in court and was released.

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Her husband filed a court case against her saying he did not want his daughter to be living with her as she was an atheist. The Court ruled in favour of her husband, so both her children were taken away from her. She took up the cause of exploitation of girls as cheap labour in a match factory. The girls were made to work long hours in unhygienic conditions and underpaid. The management was forced to offer a fair deal. This made her famous as a social activist and she gave long speeches denouncing all the injustice she saw in society. It initiated the labour movement in England. She also became a member of the Fabian Society and the Socialist Democratic Front and struck a friendship with Bernard Shaw. Once when she was agitating on the streets for women's rights, she requested Bernard Shaw to join her. He wrote, "Annie, I can write articles about it but I cannot join you on the streets!". It is said that she lost her respect for him and said, "Oh, you're just an armchair critic!".

On the family front she faced a grave situation. Her mother was very old and dying and she was looking after her. Being a devout Christian her mother wanted a Christian priest to give her absolution before she died. But they all refused as Annie was an atheist. Her mother insisted that Annie must be present during the ceremony. With great difficulty Annie found a liberal-minded priest who knew her and sympathized with the work she was doing to help the poor and the marginalized. He agreed to come and administer the absolution to her mother in the presence of Annie though she was an atheist. "So Dean Stanley came that afternoon, all the way to Brompton, and remained talking with my mother for about half an hour, and then set himself to understand my own position. He finally told me that conduct was far more important than theory, and that he regarded all as 'Christians' who recognized and tried to follow the moral law of Christ".<sup>2</sup>

In 1888, Annie stood for election to the London School Board and became the first woman on the board. She wrote on that occasion, "See the wheels of destiny; they took my children away from me and now I am in charge of all the children in London!" She was one of the greatest public orators and earned her living by working as a journalist. In the course of her work she was asked to review a new book entitled, *The Secret Doctrine* by Madam H.P. Blavatsky, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society. She was fascinated by what she read and realized that atheistic materialism was a narrow-minded philosophy and there are much larger vistas to life with which she was quite unacquainted. She sought a meeting with the author of the book. That meeting with Madam Blavatsky led to her joining the Theosophical Society and committing her life to work for it.

She studied Theosophy and started lecturing about her new interest. She was sent to participate in the first Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and represent the society. There she met and heard Swami Vivekanand speak on Hinduism and befriended him. That same year she visited India for the first time and toured the country to deliver lectures at

various centres opened earlier by Madam Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott. She made new friends and was fascinated by Indian culture, philosophy and way of life. She decided to come back and settle in the Theosophical Society in Varanasi. There she learnt Sanskrit and translated the Bhagwad Gita into English.

Soon after settling down in Varanasi Mrs. Besant started new avenues of social reform and took up the following causes:

### **1. Women's Rights and Education**

She noticed that in those days very few parents sent their daughters to school for education since they did not want them mixing with boys. She started several schools and colleges for girls, not only in Varanasi but in some other parts of India as well. In England she had fought for Women's right to vote and participate in Government. She advocated and encouraged the same in India. She had great respect for the character and temperament of women in India but she wanted them to be treated as equals and have the same rights, education and opportunities as men.

### **2. Revival of Indian Religions and Culture**

She found that Indians had mostly forgotten their rich religious traditions and were blindly aping the western culture introduced by the British rulers. She gave lectures on India's rich religions and pointed out that the essence of all religions was the same and they differed mainly only in their methods of worship and the forms of ritual. She called Theosophy the wisdom religion which respected people of all religions. These lectures were later published by the Theosophical Publishing House as a book entitled, *Seven Great Religions*.<sup>3</sup> She not only tried to revive the pride of Indians in their own culture but tried to alter education from that promoted by the British Government to one based on Indian culture and philosophy. For this she started in 1898 the Central Hindu College in Varanasi, which did not take any government grants and had its own atmosphere and methods of education. Later, when she found that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya wanted to create a university with similar ideals, she gifted the whole college to him and it became the nucleus of the Banaras Hindu University.

### **3. Theosophy and Occultism**

In 1894 in London, Mrs. Besant made friends with a fellow-theosophist from Australia named C.W. Leadbeater who was clairvoyant and had other occult powers. He helped her to become clairvoyant and together they conducted occult investigations of the universe, matter, thought-forms and the history of mankind. In 1907 when she became the President of the Theosophical Society at Adyar in Madras she invited him to join her and in 1908 they jointly published a book entitled, *Occult Chemistry*.<sup>4</sup> In it they described their investigations of the structure of various chemical elements. They stated in it that they mentally made themselves

smaller than the smallest atoms in the material in front of them and were writing what they actually 'saw'. Their findings did not agree with those of modern science at that time and were discarded by the scientists. Later, with the development of elementary particle physics and quantum mechanics, many parallels were found between their findings and those of modern physics. A theoretical physicist named Phillips published a book<sup>5</sup> in 1980, comparing their results with those of modern science.

After the death of Colonel Olcott in 1907 Mrs. Besant was elected President of the International Theosophical Society and she made Madras her headquarters for the rest of her life. She had the reputation of being the most brilliant exponent of Theosophy both as an orator and as an author. She brought about a transformation of the religious life in India and untiringly worked for a radical change in the social conditions. She gathered around her a band of idealistic Indians and foreigners to work for the regeneration of the country. She started the Boy Scouts Movement in India. During her tenure the Theosophical Society grew enormously both in size and in membership throughout the world. She passed away in September 1933 and, as per her wishes, was cremated on the grounds of the society in Madras.

#### **4. The World Teacher Project**

Madam Blavatsky had predicted with her Occult powers that the Maitreya Consciousness, which in the past had reincarnated on the earth as the Buddha and as Jesus Christ was going to reincarnate again to give a new interpretation to religion for the modern age of reason and science. She said it will come this time in an Asian body and function as a world teacher, revealing truths far greater than any she herself could perceive. It is said that she told her close followers that the purpose of the Theosophical Society was to work for the coming teacher and his teachings.<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Besant and C.W. Leadbeater believed in this prophecy and were looking for a suitable boy through whom the Maitreya consciousness could function. In 1909, their choice fell on a 13 year old boy named Krishnamurti whose aura was perceived by Leadbeater to be completely free from any trace of selfishness.

They confirmed this through contact with their masters and then announced publicly that Krishnamurti was going to be "The Vehicle of the World Teacher". Mrs. Besant legally adopted Krishnamurti and his younger brother Nityananda as her sons, in order to bring them up and prepare Krishnamurti for the role of the world teacher. She was so confident of this prediction made on the basis of their occult powers that she established a new organization, independent of the Theosophical Society, called "The Order of the Star of the East" and made Krishnamurti its Head in 1911. Some senior theosophists and friends felt she was deluded and resigned from the society or openly disagreed with her; but she did not change her mind. Later developments have borne out her faith and prediction. In 1925 when she considered the

World Teacher had manifested through Krishnamurti she announced it in London in her public lectures entitled, 'The Coming of the World Teacher'. She never wavered in her resolve till her death. In this connection it will be worth mentioning: Mrs. Besant reminded her critics of the fact that Madam Blavatsky had "regarded it as a mission of the TS to prepare the world for the coming of the next great Teacher, though she put that event perhaps half a century later than I do".<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Sanjiva Rao, a close associate and disciple of hers has mentioned in his book *Letters of Wisdom* that she could leave her body at night and travel on other planes to meet her masters and receive divine messages.<sup>8</sup>

### **5. The Home Rule Movement**

Mrs. Besant was unhappy with the unjust way in which the British Government in India treated Indian citizens. "In 1916 she launched the Home Rule Movement, and branches of the Home Rule League were established so widely that the consciousness of even the rural people was awakened to the need for independence. This led Gandhiji to remark: "It is Dr. Besant who has awakened India from her deep slumber..."<sup>9</sup> In 1917 the British Government interned Mrs. Besant for her 'anti-national activities'. Gandhiji wrote demanding her release from prison. Upon her release, 'the Provincial Congress Committees recommended Annie Besant as the President of the ensuing Indian National Congress'. Besant and Gandhi worked together for a few years but serious differences soon developed regarding the means to be adopted for the agitation against the British Government.

Gandhiji was preaching non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Mrs. Besant wrote to him, "You are teaching indiscipline to the people; you may get independence a few years earlier by these methods but it will not remain worth getting". He replied, "We are using these methods against the unjust British government, we will not use them against our own government." She replied back saying, "You may understand this but the people will not." She was also against Gandhiji using students in his political agitations. She said they are immature minds and their job is to study, it is unfair to use them for this purpose. She felt only constitutional means should be employed with full respect for the law, that only right means lead to right ends. These differences grew and she resigned from the congress. Before coming to India she had strongly supported the Home Rule Movement for the independence of Ireland, which was also then under British Rule.

### **CONCLUSION**

I do not know of a single woman, anywhere in the world, who has done more for the transformation of human society than Mrs. Besant. Any one of the above contributions would suffice for her to be listed among the great public figures of the world, but she made so many

and in such diverse fields. She not only led an exemplary personal life herself, she also fought for social transformation wherever she saw injustice, discrimination or exploitation, irrespective of whether it was in England, India or Ireland. When Radhaji asked Krishnamurti for his opinion about Annie Besant he said, “You have no idea of her capacity for love.” When Krishnaji was asked to say a few words of tribute after her death in 1933, he said, “Dr. Besant was our mother. She looked after us, she cared for us but one thing she never did: she never told us do this or do not do that. She left me alone. In saying this I have paid her the highest tribute.”<sup>10</sup>

Today her ideas may seem a normal part of civilized life but the fact that she fought for all these 150 years ago, in the 19th century, was truly revolutionary! She was totally devoted to the quest for truth not merely as philosophy but she put the truths into action the moment she perceived them. Indeed, she wrote that the only epitaph she wanted on her tomb was, “She tried to follow Truth.”

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PADMA VENKATARAMAN\*

## DR. ANNIE BESANT AND THE WIA

Women's Indian Association turned one hundred years old this year. The centenary celebration of this organization was inaugurated by the Honourable President of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee on March 3, 2017 at The Theosophical Society in Adyar.

Why was the Theosophical Society chosen to be the venue?

TS is not only the birth place of WIA but was the home of Dr. Annie Besant, (one of the founder members of WIA) between 1907 to 1933. During this period she was the second President of the Theosophical Society.

Fondly she was called 'Diamond Soul' to emphasize on her multi-faceted personality. An outstanding orator, a champion of human freedom in particularly the emancipation of women, an educationist, a philanthropist, a spiritual leader and an author of more than 300 books to her credit.

She was born Annie Wood in London on Oct. 1, 1847, and grew up in England, Germany, and France. A devout Christian, she was married at twenty to an English clergyman, Rev. Frank Besant and became a mother to two children, a son and a daughter.

However, the free thinker in her challenged several of the Christian dogmas and leaving the Church in 1872, Annie Besant joined the National Secular Society in 1874. Around the same time, her marriage also hit the rocks and she separated from her husband. But her indomitable will did not let anything come in the way of her pursuit of truth.

It was after reviewing Madame Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, and her subsequent meeting with Madame Blavatsky that Annie Besant decided to join the TS in 1889. Pledging loyalty to the Founder President of TS, Col. H.S.Olcott, she became the most brilliant exponent of Theosophy. In 1893, she represented the TS at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Making India her home and choosing Theosophy as a way of knowing God, she worked untiringly for the upliftment of women, pleading for radical changes in their social conditions but never seeking any modification of the Indian women's temperament which she considered spiritual. She is credited with the setting up of the Central Hindu School and College in Benares in 1898, Central Hindu School for Girls and the Indian Scout Movement. In recogni-

\* President, Women's Indian Association.

tion of her work with the Scout Movement, Baden Powell sent her from London, the highest scout distinction-the Silver Wolf medal.

After the demise of Col. H.S. Olcott, she became the second President of the TS, a post she held until her death in 1933. Travelling extensively in India, she encouraged women to join the movement, something they were not allowed to at that time. Mahatma Gandhi remarked once that Dr. Annie Besant had awakened Indians from their deep sleep.

Getting actively involved in Indian politics she led the Home Rule for India movement in 1916. As President of the Indian National Congress in 1917, she started the Young Men's Indian Association to train them in public service. With two journals under her, *The Commonweal*, (a weekly letter that talked on issues of national reform) and *New India* (a daily promoting Home Rule and ran for 15 years), Dr. Annie Besant's love for India and Indian welfare was clear. She stated : "India demands Home Rule for two reasons, one essential and vital, the other less important but necessary: Firstly, because Freedom is the birthright of every Nation; secondly, because her most important interests are now made subservient to the interests of the British Empire without her consent, and her resources are not utilised for her greatest needs."

In 1917, she was interned for protesting against British rule. This led to a wave of protests from different Indian groups. To great national acclaim, she was released securing verbal promises from the British. It helped strengthen the Indian belief that self-rule was a possibility. She was made the president of the Indian National Congress in December 1917.

In 1917, Dr. Besant along with Ms. Margaret Cousins and Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy laid the foundation for Women's Indian Association.

The establishment of WIA became the inspiration for the All India Women's Conference in New Delhi, ten years later.

WIA fought for the abolition of devadasi system, child marriage and women's emancipation transcending all barriers of caste, creed and religion.

In 1933, Annie Besant died in India on 20 September. She had earlier written in her autobiography- 'I ask no other epitaph on my tomb but- 'She tried to follow Truth.'

N. Sri Ram, who was then her Secretary, wrote the following tribute-

'Dr Besant was nothing if she was not wholehearted and whole-souled in all that she undertook, in every aim and every inner impulse. . . . Almost always, as I know from personal knowledge of how she affected various people, they were struck with the

extraordinary magnetism that seemed to surround her, the brightest energy, which seemed to leave her at the end of the day almost as fresh as at the beginning.’

It is thus apt to conclude with the remarkable note of Sarojini Naidu :

“Today pondering over her incalculable service to the Indian cause, I can pay no finer tribute to her manifold greatness than to acclaim the sweet miracle wrought by her transcendent love for India. She came into our midst a stranger and created for herself an honoured and legitimate place in the annals of the glorious and heroic women of our race and tradition.”

She is not only the champion of womanhood, but she is the demonstrator to the world of what womanhood generally will be in the service of the Nations in the future. She is the Forerunner of the New Age of which already the prominent feature is the emergence of Woman to power in all aspects of public service.

None better than Indians can understand how her womanhood has given her her characteristic qualities of tireless industry, selfless devotion, quick intuition, patience in details, impatience regarding ideals, crystalline purity of life and invaluable gifts of quiet diplomacy, springing from the compassion of a loving, motherly heart and the balanced and unfettered intellect. The gratitude of Womanhood to Annie Besant, the best known and the most loved woman in the world, is too deep for adequate expression.

**MARGARET E. COUSINS**

Special Jubilee Number of New India

August 1924

P.K. JAYASWAL\*

## **DR. ANNIE BESANT REGENERATION OF INDIA**

### **Her Mission**

Dr. Besant aspired that India should first be politically independent before it can proclaim to the world at large the ancient wisdom which the Aryan race considered as the Ageless Wisdom which the modern humanity sorely needed to extricate itself from the scientifically materialistic formulations as well as the blind superstitions which the non-scientific traditions had generated and accumulated over the past years. As part of the Divine Plan she did become the President of the Indian National Congress, though for a brief period.

Her approach did not appeal to the then Indian leadership. She wanted that the concept of Commonwealth of Nations be accepted. This would have provided full autonomy to India to pursue her cherished goals. When Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene, he propagated the movement of defying the law of the land, though in a non-violent manner. This kind of engagement, which emphasized the need of total independence, passed through several phases. It is not necessary to dilate on them. What needs to be underscored is that India did become independent on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, but it was a truncated India because of the creation of Pakistan. We see now how this development has diminished the strength of India of Dr. Besant's dreams. Had she been alive, she would have been a sad spectator. All said and done, we need to pay our gratitude to her for her pioneering efforts which did result in political emancipation of India. It will not be foolish to foretell that if India is ruled by enlightened leadership, the major goals of Indian independence will be achieved in due course.

### **Dr. Besant, the Mother**

She chose to start her work from Benares the prime spot of Aryan dharma. She wore Indian dress and was so much identified with Indian customs and manners that her behaviour made residents of Benares look upon her as Mother Besant and address her as Ma Basant (*Amma*) and not as Dr. Besant. Her maternal love was profuse and expansive.

### **Her interactions with Sanskrit Scholars**

At Benares Dr. Besant had extensive and profound interactions with Sanskrit Scholars of Kashi. She knew very well that here was the seat of ancient learning. The discussions helped her to broaden and deepen her own understanding of Indian culture which she wanted

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\* Former General Secretary of the Indian Section, TS.

to flourish to stem the tide of western approach. She became proficient to deliver lectures on Upanishad and Bhagwadgita which she translated in English for the benefit of English speaking nations. We all realize that the modern Theosophical enunciation of eternal truths is nothing but restatement of Sanskrit versions. Sadly today Sanskrit is not taught as a compulsory subject in our schools and colleges. However, much of the purpose is being served by those like Dr. Besant who are conveying the wisdom in foreign languages. Dr. Besant has done singular service through her lectures.

#### **Dr. Besant the Educationist**

She knew that education is the best way to enable Indians to realize their glorious past. Therefore, she established a number of schools and colleges. Notable among them was the Central Hindu College which became the nucleus of Benares Hindu University. She selected her foreign and Indian followers to be the Principals and teachers. Today we have, to name a few of such institutions, Vasant Kanya Inter College for girls, Besant Theosophical Higher Secondary School for boys, Annie Besant School and Vasant Kanya Mahavidyalaya located at Varanasi. The Besant Education Fellowship guides all these institutions.

#### **Dr. Besant- the Scouts and Guides Patron**

She realized that the training imparted to scouts and guides is a very practical way of instilling discipline among the youths. Such training goes a long way in enabling an individual to lead a disciplined life throughout his /her life.

#### **Dr. Besant- the leader of leaders**

She received unconditional and unstinted support of those who helped her in her mission. They were not 'yes' men/women blind in their contribution to the success of their efforts. Her personality was such that she evoked leadership qualities in those who came in contact with her. A galaxy of leaders grew around her. They voluntarily used their ingenuity and originality to ensure that her goal, which they considered as their own goal, is accomplished in the true sense of the term. One such person narrated to me that when he met her, he was engulfed in her boundless love for him and felt elevated to great heights to be her valiant co-worker. She was sure that they constitute the group which will bring to fruition her task to ensure that India's ancient glory shines again and India occupies the position of the world's leaders in the sphere of spirituality which, blended with modern material advancement, will usher in an era of peace with progress and plenty. The present trends visible in the world today at some places point to this possibility. It was at India's insistence that the U.N. celebrates International Yoga Day. The yoga teachers from India are in great demand everywhere. The Govt. of India has created a special department to promote this process. Dr. Besant represents Lord Krishna whose Bhagwadgita was translated by her in English to enable the world

to understand the message. Each chapter mentions at the end the type of Yoga described by Lord Krishna.

### **Dr. Besant's Admirers**

The list of Dr. Besant's admirers is very long. Two examples, however, need special mention. Mahatma Gandhi, as has been pointed out earlier in this article, did not agree with her approach and philosophy. This did not mean that he disliked her. On the other hand, he was such a great admirer that he made it a point to meet her during her last days to pay his respects, mentioning her as a rare specimen of saintly souls.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya happened to hear her intonation of '*Aum*' at a function in Benares Hindu University. He remarked that only an accomplished saint can chant '*Aum*' in such a way. Needless to add that BHU exists as a memorial to her.

### **New India**

Readers can easily perceive in the emphasis of New India (saying 'I am New India') recently voiced by the Govt. of India, a fulfilment of Dr. Besant's aspiration for New India.

For the weak she will display her strength, for the angry she will display her gentleness and love, to those who suffer she will extend her comfort; distrust she meets with confidence; those who attack her she supports in their time of need. She identifies herself with none and yet with all.

**G.S. ARUNDALE**

SUSHILA SINGH\*

## **IDEA OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE SELECT WRITINGS OF ANNIE BESANT**

Annie Besant (1847-1933) has been described as a ‘Diamond Soul’. She distinguished herself in several facets of life. An outstanding orator of her time, champion of human freedom, educationist, philanthropist, above all, she excelled as a litterateur and writer of numberless books and pamphlets, unmatched treasure of knowledge and wisdom. Naturally, she rose to be a Guide, a Teacher worldwide for people in their spiritual quest. The ‘Spiritual’ is defined as (i) of the spirit of the soul as distinguished from body or material matters, (ii) of, from or concerned with the intellect; intellectual, . . . (iv) characterized by the ascendancy of the spirit; showing much refinement of thought and feeling.<sup>1</sup>

Thought precedes understanding of life and the Divine Wisdom (*Brahma Vidyâ*, Theosophia) or Theosophy comes to the world as a philosophy, religion and ethic embracing all, believed Annie Besant. APJ Abdul Kalam echoes this when he says, “Dream, Dream Dream/ Dreams transform into thoughts/ And thoughts result in action.” Seeking advice from Pramukh Swamiji on vision India, he learns, “to transform India, add . . . faith in God and developing people through spirituality . . . . The goal behind God’s creation of the universe is that every person, every soul, attains bliss. For this, together with knowledge of His creation, He has given the knowledge of Himself. So, together with this worldly knowledge, knowledge given by God – Spirituality – is equally necessary”.<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, very much akin to Annie Besant, finds man is not at present at the end point of evolution, a transitional being. If we ask, “After man, what?” several concepts of the Superman are there. For example, Friedrich Nietzsche conceived of a being with a mighty will and urge to power which has caused much havoc in the world. But Annie Besant and Sri Aurobindo appear meeting at the level of consciousness, the keynote being evolution in both of them. Both the sages had worked for the higher consciousness. Sri Aurobindo, in fact, wrote in a letter about his existence as consciousness, “No one can write about my life, because it has not been on the surface for man to see”.<sup>3</sup>

Annie Besant was endowed with a higher presence – that is why she was drawn towards India to make it the country of realization for her. She knew with Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan “A large part of the world received its religious education from India . . . In spite of continuous struggle with theological baggage, India has held fast for centuries to the ideals of spirit”.

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Annie Besant, with faith in God believed in evolution of people through spirituality. For this it is essential to create moral and spiritual atmosphere. Her writings and lectures were directed to rekindle faith in scriptures and God. In the context of spirituality and realm of consciousness, APJ Abdul Kalam recounts his conversation with Pramukh Swamiji. Swamiji explained to him the goal behind God's creation. That one needs to learn both *para* (spiritual) and *apara vidya* (worldly knowledge). Together with knowledge of the *apara* and *para* as well, *apara* knowledge will be founded on dharma and spirituality.

In her effort to have a coherent conception of the Universe, Annie Besant approached Theosophy which was founded on the principle of truth. From the Vedic times, the core of Indian thought has been the commitment to one paramount value - Truth. Since the ancient Indian legend of Raja Harishchandra, Truth has been central to the Indian mind and imagination. The expressive and imaginative power of the legend is deeply etched in the thinkers like Annie Besant and Gandhi. Gandhi in fact saw Harishchandra play as a child which deeply impacted his thought and life:

This play-Harishchandra-captured my heart. . . .It haunted me and I must have acted Harishchandra to myself times without number. 'Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra was the question I asked myself day and night. To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me. I literally believed in the story of Harishchandra. The thought of it all often made me weep.'<sup>4</sup>

Annie Besant perceived that the great religions of the world have commonalities in religious, ethical and philosophical concepts. This common property, she finds, indicates a Brotherhood of great spiritual teachers: ". . .the Founders of the great religions are members of the one Brotherhood, and were aided in their mission by many other members, lower in degree than themselves, Initiates and disciples of various grades, eminent in spiritual insight, in philosophic knowledge, or in purity of ethical wisdom"<sup>5</sup> She says that it is difficult to deny that such men lived. The sacred books of the East are the best evidence of their great authors. These scriptures have remained unparalleled through ages in their spiritual sublimity, intellectual splendour of their philosophy and the breadth and purity of their ethic. These sacred books contain teachings about God, man and the Universe – identical in ideas. Undoubtedly, then they can be referred to as a central doctrine – Divine Wisdom – Theosophy.

She summarizes the main verities of religion:

(i) One eternal infinite incognizable real Existence, (ii) From THAT, the manifested God, unfolding from unity to duality, from duality to trinity. (iii) From the manifested Trinity many spiritual Intelligences, guiding the cosmic order. (iv) Man a reflection of the

manifested God and therefore a trinity fundamentally, his inner and real Self being eternal, one with the Self of the universe. (v) His evolution by repeated incarnations, into which he is drawn by desire, and from which he is set free by knowledge and sacrifice, becoming divine in potency as he had ever been divine in latency. (5-6)

Ascent is surely there for man, Annie Besant believes. The journey, however, may be weariedly long. She traces this evolution of self from “the embryonic soul of the primitive man to the liberated and perfected spiritual soul of the divine man” (321). This is so wondrous that the difference is only in the evolution. All traits of divinity are present from the beginning. One stage is the beginning and the other is completion. Annie Besant with her scientific temper charts the process in the forms of the sub-human – the animals, vegetables, minerals, elemental essence – below the primitive stage. Reaching divinity, there are infinite gradations of the superhumans, the mighty ones like the Manus, Buddhas, and the like. There is this marvelous link between lives stretching from the elemental essence to the manifestation of the Supreme Being. Thus, she traces the stages of evolving consciousness from the life of sensation to the life of thought. Annie Besant classifies human evolution under two parts – (i) the probationary Path; (ii) the Path proper or the “Path of discipleship.”

With the development of intellectual, moral and spiritual nature, man becomes conscious of the purpose of human life. With repeated realization of weariness of earthly joys, the moment of reckoning comes: “These joys are illusions, as bubbles on the stream, airy-coloured, rainbow-hued, but bursting at a touch. I am athirst for realities; I have had enough of shadows; I pant for the eternal and the true, for freedom from the limitations that hem me in, that keep me a prisoner amid these changing shows” (323).

As man on the evolutionary path becomes weary of earth so he becomes of heaven finding its intellectual and emotional joy impermanent. His will is to reach the eternal. Then he enters the probationary path which is purely mental and moral. This is his preparation to “meet his Master face to face.”

Who are these Masters? She explains, they are the great Beings who have completed “Their human evolution”. The Great ones – the Masters – are connecting link between human and super human beings. Men who fulfil certain given conditions become the disciples with the object of hastening their evolution.

There are four definite “qualifications” that the disciple must acquire. These are: (1) discrimination between the real and the unreal, (2) the disciple needs to add outward self-control to inner - must rule his speech and actions as he rules his thoughts. Needs to set pure and noble example set by his visible life. (3) Needs to build into himself the sublime and far-

reaching virtue of tolerance. Quiet-acceptance of each man, each form of existence; (4) Develop endurance that cheerfully bears all and resents nothing. Because he knows nothing can come to him but by the law. And he knows the law is good. The ensuing struggles develop the fifth attribute that is Faith – faith in his Master, and in himself. Then he learns to trust in the wisdom, love and power of his Master. He begins to realize the Divinity within him. In the process, grows the last attribute – mental attribute that is balance – equilibrium. With these attributes, the disciple yearns for union with all Divine. This Annie Besant further delves deep into with the knowledge of Hindu Scriptures and Pali scriptures. The same stages of evolution are in Sanskrit (1) *Viveka*; (2) *Vairâgya*; (3) *Shatshampatti*; (4) *Mumukshatwa*.

The ending of the Path is the threshold of *Nirvâna*, she says. Nirvanic consciousness is his normal consciousness. The long search is over and “he has entered into the joy of his Lord” (341). Annie Besant questions: has earth lost her triumphant son? And, she answers: He has become the very embodiment of light – manifested son of God. He returns to earth to bless and guide humanity, Master of Wisdom, kingly Teacher, divine Man. With her ascence in spirituality – Divine Wisdom, Annie Besant says, “Such are the stages of man’s ascent, from the lowest savagery to divine manhood. To such goal is humanity climbing, to such glory shall the race attain” (342).

Annie Besant dedicates her translation of the Bhagvad Gita (1896) to All Aspirants in East and West who are aspiring towards the loftier heights of being one with the Supreme Self. Annie Besant names The Bhagvad Gita ‘The Lord’s Song’ and says:

Among the priceless teachings that may be found in the great Hindu poem of the Mahabharata, there is none so rare and precious as this, ‘The Lord’s Song’. Since it fell from the divine lips of Shri Krishna on the field of battle and stilled the surging emotions of his disciple and friend, how many troubled hearts has it quieted and strengthened, how many weary souls has it led to Him.<sup>6</sup>

Understanding the central meaning of the Song Celestial she says:

“That the spiritual man need not be a recluse, that union with the divine Life may be achieved and maintained in the midst of worldly affairs, that the obstacles to that union lie not outside us but within us – such is the central lesson of the Bhagvad Gîtâ”. (xii)

She reads Bhagvad Gita as a scripture of yoga. The literal meaning of Yoga is union. She explains it means harmony with the Divine Law, the Becoming one with the Divine, Life subdoing the all outwardgoing energies. To reach that realization balance is essential because then the self joined to the self shall not be affected by pleasure or pain, desire or aversion. This idea she further elaborates upon in *The Ancient Wisdom* for perfect attunement with the One, the

Supreme Self. This is the goal for the disciple; this was the goal for Arjuna, the eternal seeker of Truth. But, first his doubts must be pacified, his questions answered:

“Could he slay those to whom he owed love and duty, and trouble on ties of kindred? . . . Where was the right way? Justice must be done, else law would be disregarded, but how slay without sin?”

The book is the answer, Annie Besant says:

The answer is the burden of the book: Have no personal interest in the event; carry out the duty imposed by the position in life, realize that Ishvara, at once Lord and Law, is the doer, working out the mighty evolution that ends in bliss and peace; be identified with Him by devotion, and then perform duty as duty, fighting without passion or desire, without anger or hatred; thus activity forges no bonds, Yoga is accomplished, and the soul is free. (Preface xv)

Such is the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita, she says. She further interprets; all the acts of an Avatâra are symbolic. Passing from the outer to inner space, we see Kurukshetra represents the battlefield of the soul. The sons of Dhritrâshtra are the enemies on the path of progress. Arjuna is the struggling soul of the disciple. Sri Krishna is the Logos of the soul. Annie Besant’s conviction is that the divine lessons come to all Arjuna like aspiring souls in East and West. Because their path is one, the zeal is the same. There is unity – Universal Brotherhood – in them, even if they may not be aware of their unity.

Gita has been also seen as “Song of the Spirit”, Royal Science of God Realization. Gita is the immortal dialogue between soul and spirit. Annie Besant’s immersion in Gita is due to its being a comprehensive spiritual guide. “The Gita has been understood and applied on all levels of human endeavour and spiritual striving – sheltering a vast spectrum of human beings with their disparate natures and needs. Wherever one is on the way back to God, the Gita will shed its light on that segment of the journey”.<sup>7</sup>

The enlightening revelation is invoked by Paramhansa Yogananda:

Heavenly Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved God,  
May Thy love shine forever on the sanctuary of my devotion,  
And may I be able to awaken Thy love in all hearts.

Annie Besant could see deep connection between all animate and inanimate objects in the Universe. Her concept of the Universal Brotherhood has vast and far reaching connotations. This awakening of the spiritual is the harbinger of a World-Religion and universal peace.

Therefore, she says, one must begin within oneself rather than without:

As we deepen our own spiritual nature, as we find out one truth after another for ourselves, as we realize what we are – Gods in the making growing into the perfection of the divine image – oh, as we recognize that, we are laying the bases of the World-Religion, and that which can never come by argument, by controversy, by intellectual reasoning, will come when the heart of love within us has awaked the spiritual nature. For love is deeper than intellect; love is greater than intelligence; and the love nature and the divine nature are so closely blended that the man who loves his brother will not be long ere he loves God.<sup>8</sup>

S. Sundaram in his talk on ‘Love and Service: Twin Stars of Brotherhood’ aptly points out, “There have been some outstanding personalities in human history who stood by what they considered to be true and just. These great seers and teachers of humanity drew men’s attention to the path of moral and spiritual upliftment and laid great stress on the supreme value of moral regeneration over and above material advancement”.<sup>9</sup>

This brings us to the very purpose of the creation of the universe. Annie Besant could very clearly *see* that “The universe exists for the sake of the Self. Not for what the outer world can give, not for control over the objects of desire, not for the sake even of beauty or pleasure, does the Great Architect plan and build His worlds. . . .they all exist, not for the objects themselves, but for their value to the Self. Not for themselves because they are anything in themselves but that the purpose of the Self may be served, and His manifestations made possible”.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, we find that all her work – service – for humanity as an educationist, philanthropist, and reformer is the result of Annie Besant’s deep spiritual awakening within her Self. Her line of thought, her philosophy of the Spirit – Self – the Supreme Being is pervasive throughout her oeuvre. I bow in devotion to the immortal soul, the sage thinker Annie Besant by remembering the lines from the Universal Prayer composed by her:

O hidden Life, vibrant in every atom,  
O hidden Light, shining in every creature,  
O hidden Love, embracing all in Oneness,  
May each who feels himself as one with Thee,  
Know he is also one with every other.

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Mrs. Besant looked upon the spiritual values of life as the true source of energy, and she proved from history that when the spiritual impulse weakened, growth and joy of life declined.

**IQBAL NARAIN GURTU**

“The Messenger of Hope”

*The Annie Besant Centenary Book 1847 - 1947*

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ANAND KUMAR\*

## **CHALLENGE OF NATION- BUILDING IN INDIA THE VISION AND AGENDA OF ANNIE BESANT**

### **Political sociology of nation-building**

Nation-building is a process of creating and institutionalizing ‘we’ feeling among people with territorial specificity through two ways – ethno-cultural unity based upon common language, religion, race and other cultural attributes or civic unity based upon a common citizenship, a Constitution and a sovereign State. Most of the nation-states in the modern world system are based upon a combination of both attributes with varying emphasis (informed by the historical circumstances, political settings and cultural contexts) – i. ethno-cultural, and ii. Constitutional citizenship. It is also a ‘daily referendum’ as the ‘we’ feeling as the basis of togetherness among citizens of any nation is related with togetherness of social, political and economic justice in inter-group relations as well as in the interactions between the citizen and the state. So nation-building, by definition, is also related with avoidance of nation-decay or nation-destruction.

Nation-building has been a process with roots in modernity. It got legitimacy since Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648 by major European powers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It became the central thrust in Europe where nations came into existence around ethno- linguistic unity like Italy and Germany. People of the colonized part of the modern world system became sensitive about the challenge of ‘nationhood’ and imperatives of nation-building from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They got inspired by the European and other examples of ‘nationalist conflicts, movements and revolutions’.

It was intertwined with increasing awareness of the slavery inherent in the expansion of the European nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This domination was manifested through empire-building based upon togetherness of three processes - economic exploitation (creating basis for economic nationalism), political subordination (generating resistances and protests for seeking justice through political nationalism), and cultural domination and colonization (promoting cultural nationalism to protect cultural identity) of the non-European people and territories. Therefore, there have been different trajectories of nation-building in European countries and the non-European people.

### **Vision of nation and path of nation-building in India**

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The Indian story of nation-building is a consequence of her long quest for Swaraj or freedom which was realized on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947. It took place in two phases : first there was the vision of 'a free nation' in the colonial context, and then there was broad based multi layered anti-imperial mass mobilization for the realization of the vision of 'complete independence'. Education, economy, livelihood and employment, political administration and representation, social customs and cultural practices, and languages and literature were some of the major sites of the process of nation-building.

The first War of Independence of India was fought in 1857-60, which was also called 'The Sepoy Mutiny'. It was followed by great repression by the British rulers and taking over of the reins of India from the East India Company by the Queen Victoria. There was a new system of rule under the direct command of the British parliament. It was a new chapter of foreign rule with introduction of colonial modernity through establishment of the High Courts and universities and colleges in the Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras.

But the vision and concept of Swaraj was presented before the people of India during the first decades of the twentieth century by a galaxy of outstanding men and women where Annie Besant was one of the greatest inspirations. Her life was an amazing journey from England to India in and from Fabian socialism to a Theosophical universal spiritualist. She was a path-finder who personified courage of conviction and led through many roles – spiritual leader, social reformer, educational pioneer, political campaigner and radical social reformer.

Dr. Annie Besant was the President of Theosophical Society from 1907 till her passing away in 1933. She was founder-editor of *New India* newspaper (from 1913). She was founder - President of Home Rule League (1916). She was a co-founder of Banaras Hindu University with Madan Mohan Malaviya (1916). She contributed to the unity between the Moderates and Extremists in Indian National Congress as one of the architects of the Lucknow pact (1916) and was the President of Indian National Congress in 1917. The British Raj was so nervous about her role as one of the leading voices for Swaraj ( Home Rule) that it interned her in June, 1917, to prevent her from writing in her newspaper '*New India*' and awakening the country through her powerful pen and oratory. It led to criticism and public protest in India and England which forced the colonial government to release her after three months in September, 1917.

According to Lokmanya Tilak, India came nearer to the goal of Swaraj due to her strenuous efforts, including her internment. In the eyes of Gurudev Tagore, Annie Besant was the only European in 1917, "who has shared our sorrow incurring the derision and anger of her countrymen.". Gandhiji wanted all public workers to cultivate the firmness, simplicity and self-control of Annie Besant. He wrote in *New India* of 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1928: "Religion is interwo-

ven in Dr. Besant's life and she has built a bridge between politics and religion. Swaraj without religion is of no use. It is Dr. Besant who woke India from her deep slumber and I pray that she may live long to witness a free India.”.

### **The Way of Annie Besant**

Annie Besant used to sign her name as ANNIE BESANT WARRIOR. In reality she was the awakener of the Indian nation. Of course, it is widely accepted that Annie Besant was ‘one of the builders of modern India’. She was considered ‘a great friend of India’ and popular books about her vision, work and life were written and published in 1921 in a series with the likes of A. O. Hume, W. Wedderburn, Edmund Burke, Edwin Arnold, Charles Bradlaugh, John Bright, Henry Cotton, C. F. Andrews and Sister Nivedita. But she was the only one who openly declared that India was not only her spiritual ‘motherland’ but also ‘savior of the world’. At the same time, she wanted the people of India to become ‘worthy’ of ‘India the imperishable’ by recognizing the challenges of nation-building through three kinds of urgent reforms – religious reforms, political reforms and social reforms. She wanted all to work for ‘India’ for ‘India is the veritable Holy Land of the world’.

But what did Annie Besant mean by ‘working for India’? According to one of her well known collections of her lectures and essays published in 1913 titled “Wake Up, India: A Plea for Social Reform” (Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar) underlined that Indians needed to work for Swaraj by addressing the following burning issues: i. ban on foreign travel, ii. child-marriage, iii. our duty to the Depressed Classes, iv. role of Indian industries in self-government, v. mass education, vi. education of girls and women, and vii. Passing of the caste-system. This was followed by creating a band of some of the best workers of Theosophical Society on the basis of a 7 point pledge of personal transformation for ‘casting away of every custom which prevents union among all who dwell within her borders, and in the restoration to Hinduism of social flexibility and brotherly feeling’.

What were these items for the code of personal conduct of “The Stalwarts’ Pledge for the Upliftment of India” introduced by Annie Besant? They were related with a) caste system, b) child marriage, c) education of women and masses, d) respect for widows, e) resist racism, and f) affinity with the Indian National Congress. Here they are: 1. ‘To disregard all restrictions based on caste’, 2. not to marry minor sons and daughters, 3. to educate daughters, 4. education of masses, 5. opposing social ostracism of widows, 6. to ignore all colour distinctions, and 7. to promote unity among active spiritual, social, political and educational workers under ‘the leadership and direction of the Indian National Congress’. She was a socially sensitive and politically alert reformist. So she had allowed non-Hindus to ignore the items related with the Hindu social order and the government employees from the point about affinity with the Indian National Congress.

Annie Besant's engagement about the realities of colonial India began with reviving the idea of Dharma, of function, in relation to the four castes. By 1905, she came to the conclusion 'that it was hopeless'. So she worked to mobilize public opinion in favour of change. She put her energy for promoting education for women as well as masses with the aim of 'awakening' the people of India to get conscious of their heritage, potentials and problems. But 1914 is recognized as the beginning of her period of 'greatest glory'. According to one of her close colleagues, George S. Arundale, "Over seventy years of age though she was, her energy was that of youth, her enthusiasm was liquid fire, while her devotion to the cause of India's freedom electrified the whole country."

Annie Besant identified and underlined eight spheres of initiatives 'for building new India' covering the major challenges in polity, economy and society. The state-craft needed a paradigm shift from Crown controlled administration to Home Rule or Swaraj with fundamental civic rights and duties with first priority to 'India's good'. Industry, agriculture and commerce were to be reoriented with reforms in taxation, land ownership and labour conditions. In the social sphere, there was emphasis on re-orienting the upper castes about the institutions of marriage, family and caste with emphasis upon status of women and conditions of the Depressed Classes. Resurrection of Indian womanhood and religion and patriotism as 'twin sisters' were key messages for the elite and youth. There was emphasis upon recognizing the value of inherited forms of culture in the domain of music and art.

This scheme identified education as the corner-stone of the new order. A scheme of national education (including the idea of national university) with emphasis on the inherited values, the mother tongue, needs of girls, Depressed Classes and working masses was presented through a number of educational institutions in different parts of India including Varanasi (UP) and Adyar (Madras). She was very emphatic about citizenship-building and developing social service orientation among the youth as the basis of building a new India.

As a great teacher Annie Besant made Indians recognize the 'greatest dangers' and 'great opportunities' in her times. According to her perception, there were five major centrifugal dangers creating weaknesses among the people of India – 1. Revival of Muslim fanaticism which places its centre outside India, 2. Anti-Brahman persecution in southern India as an after-effect of Non-Brahman Movement in Madras, 3. The antagonism of out-caste population towards the non-Brahmin powerholders in the new government, 4. Hateful complaint of 'the influx of foreigners' in various provinces which has been fueled by the Non-cooperation Movement, and 5. Chauvinism in certain sections of the Press.

In short, Annie Besant was essentially a cautious optimist who always underlined the hopes and opportunities in terms of the increasing support for the vision of Home Rule or

Swaraj as evident from 1916 onwards. She was both - a visionary and institution-builder. She insisted on an inclusive vision of Swaraj with 'orderly' mobilization for systemic changes to pave the way of a new India. She popularized the idea of 'spiritual political Swaraj' and alerted the freedom seekers to be aware of the dangers of 'blindly following Western democracy'. She was one of the most inspiring icons of freedom who made Indians go forward to 'Keep the flag of freedom flying'.

One condition of freedom is that you should be free yourself, and you are not free as long as you are under the domination of the lower side of your nature. You cannot make your country free without making yourselves free; and no man is free who is not the master of his own mind and of his own body. No man can safely use outside freedom, until he has gained that inner freedom which we call self-control.

**ANNIE BESANT**  
"The Need for Ideals"  
*The Birth of New India*

PABLO SENDER\*

## ANNIE BESANT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THEOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

Anyone who has spent time reading about Annie Besant's life will soon come to appreciate her incredible influence in so many different fields, including unionism, human rights, feminism, Indian self-rule and politics, Indian education, the Boys Scouts movement, Co-Freemasonry, the upbringing of Jiddu Krishnamurti, and the Theosophical Society, to name a few. This is so remarkable that it is not uncommon to find biographers and scholars of the opinion that she has indeed lived several lives in one.

In this article I want to explore an aspect of her overall contribution—one that is quite important for devoted Theosophists—her contribution in the field of Theosophical practice.

### **Blavatsky's influence**

Since the founding of the Theosophical Society (TS), H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) became the main source of the teachings that were presented through this organization. Most of her work in this connection was focused in the fields of Theosophical philosophy and metaphysics—her writings revealing part of the Esoteric Philosophy she had learned from her Adept teachers. In 1888 this work came to a climax with the publication of her magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*. However, there was another aspect to HPB's activities that was less known by the public at large—she also taught lessons in practical occultism to the few who were willing to lead the kind of life required by the tradition in which she had been trained. During most of her career this work was done in private under her direct guidance. Towards the end of her life, however, she decided to give some practical instructions to a larger number of earnest TS members through the Esoteric Section (ES) that she founded in 1888. Two years later she formed an Inner Group with twelve members of the ES living in London, to whom she gave even more specific practical instructions. Unfortunately, HPB died in 1891, preventing her from developing the field of Theosophical practice as thoroughly as she had done with that of philosophy.

Annie Besant joined the TS in London in 1889 and immediately became a pupil of Blavatsky. She joined the Inner Group from the very beginning and showed such a remarkable growth that HPB wrote to WQ Judge, "It is only a few months she studies occultism with me in the *innermost* group of the ES and yet she has passed far beyond all others."<sup>1</sup> Besant's early Theosophical experience was heavily influenced by Blavatsky's teachings and training on practical work. This was quite different from what most members who had joined the TS in the

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\*Member of the TS in America.

late 1870's and early 1880's experienced, when the emphasis was on Theosophical philosophy.

### **Besant's contribution**

In her long career as a notable Theosophical leader and teacher Besant elaborated a very complete programme of self-transformation based on Theosophical principles. We cannot deal with all her work in this field in the space allotted to an article, but we can explore some of her main teachings in this respect.

A central concept she developed is that there are two sides to the practical evolution of human beings:

*i) A work to unfold the powers of consciousness that are latent in us, and*

*ii) A work to purify the vehicles of consciousness (mental, astral and physical bodies) so that they can express safely and accurately the newly awakened powers of consciousness.<sup>2</sup>*

### **1- Purification**

Annie Besant described the method of purifying these bodies and the results that follow in a scientific-like manner. To understand the process one must keep in mind that the mental body (which is the vehicle of thought), and the astral body (the vehicle of emotion), are constituted of non-physical matter. This subtle matter exists in seven sub-states—the lower ones being attuned to materialistic or selfish desires and thoughts, while the higher sub-states vibrate in answer to spiritual or altruistic thoughts and emotions. Every mental and emotional activity not only stimulates the kind of matter appropriate for its expression, but also attracts more of it from the surrounding atmosphere. From this we can see that we are constantly building these bodies by means of our psychological activity.<sup>3</sup> Thus, a person that regularly dwells on negative thoughts and emotions will have subtle bodies with a greater proportion of the coarser sub-states of mental and emotional matter, which will make him or her more vulnerable to the negative influence of the world:

If our mental bodies are composed of fine materials, coarse and evil thoughts will meet with no response, and hence can inflict no injury; whereas if they are built up with gross materials, they will be affected by every evil passer-by, and will remain irresponsive to and unbenefited by the good.”<sup>4</sup>

Depending on the kind of matter we have built into our subtle bodies, then, will be our power to respond to the spiritual inspiration coming from the higher planes or to the self-centred influence coming from the lower.

This knowledge about the mechanism of formation of these bodies gives us the key for

their purification. Positive thoughts and emotions set up vibrations that will have the double effect of *i*) expelling the lower sub-states of subtle matter, which cannot respond to this kind of activity, and *ii*) attracting the finer matter necessary to express the higher consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

To begin the work of mental purification Besant recommended that aspirants should engage in the study of elevating literature. This study should not aim at merely accumulating information but, rather, at engaging in a careful pondering over spiritual matters by means of which the higher sub-states of mental matter are attracted. For this reason she recommended that one should read for five minutes and ponder over it for ten.<sup>6</sup>

In regard to our emotional nature, an important aspect of it is the problem of desire. Because desires are often unsettling, ascetic traditions in the East and West recommend that spiritual aspirants should crush them. However, Besant did not believe in this strategy. She wrote:

I must here warn you of a danger. There is a rough-and-ready way of quickly bringing about dispassion. Some say to you: "Kill out all love and affection; harden your hearts; become cold to all around you . . . put a wall between yourself and all objects of desire; then dispassion will be yours." It is true that it is comparatively easy to acquire dispassion in that way. But by that you kill more than desire. You put round the Self, who is love, a barrier through which he is unable to pierce. . . . You kill love and not only desire.<sup>7</sup>

She recommended instead a path which, although more difficult than merely killing out desire, avoids the important side-effect of hardening the heart. What aspirants must do is to learn how to *transmute* lower desires into higher ones. This can be done by encouraging in life increasingly spiritual interests, which awake a higher aspect of desire.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the desire to work for the greater good will naturally replace that of a more materialistic or self-centred nature.

To help in the transition from lower to higher desires she recommended the following practices:

*i*) Since desire can only be sustained with the help of thought, when attracted to an object refuse to picture the passing pleasure that its possession would entail.<sup>9</sup>

*ii*) When the attraction is strong, instead of focusing on the pleasure derived from the object, picture the sorrow and inconvenience that its possession would cause.<sup>10</sup>

*iii*) During daily life think and desire the highest, never dwelling on the fault, the weakness, the error, but always on the perfected power or virtue.<sup>11</sup>

There is another useful tool in this work of purification. According to Besant, one of the most effective means of influencing desire is the conscious cultivation of a spiritual *ideal*. This ideal may be an abstract idea (such as *ahimsâ*, harmlessness), a cause (such as helping people gain wisdom), a divine incarnation (such as a Master of Wisdom), etc. The main factor here is that the ideal must have an attractive influence over us so that we begin to mould our life and actions to come closer to that which awakens devotion and inspiration.<sup>12</sup>

The work just described should be supplemented by keeping a constant eye on the kinds of thoughts and feelings we allow to enter the field of consciousness during our daily life. We should avoid exposing ourselves unnecessarily to situations that would encourage negative thoughts and emotions, and engage instead in activities that occupy our mind with a concern for the greater good—these are wonderful helps in this direction.

Finally, in reference to the physical body, she stated that one must regulate all its activities—sleep, exercise, food, etc. A vegetarian diet is preferable, since animal forms are most suited to express the kind of desires and activities that are detrimental for this path. She conceded that animal food may be good to confer easy vitality and strength to the body, but the spiritual aspirant is not interested in emphasizing the grosser aspect of physical vitality. Vegetable products can offer a healthy and balanced diet with a subtler form of vitality that doesn't go against having a sensitive body. Especially good is food that has *growth* as its next stage in the life cycle, such as grain, fruits, etc.<sup>13</sup> She was also against the consumption of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, since they make the body less sensitive and damage the brain, which should be kept in as best a state as possible to be receptive to the higher consciousness.

Besant warns that without this purification it is better not to attempt to unfold the latent powers of consciousness. They will only create friction and tension at the physical, emotional, and mental levels, which can be injurious to our health—both physical and psychological.<sup>14</sup>

## **2- Unfoldment**

In regard to our higher nature Annie Besant explained that, technically speaking, it neither develops nor evolves. The spiritual consciousness simply unfolds into manifestation that which is an inherent, though latent, aspect of itself from the very beginning.<sup>15</sup>

The powers in our spiritual nature express themselves as psychism on the lower planes (clairvoyance, clairaudience, astral projection, etc.), and as spirituality on the higher (wisdom, love, peace, joy, etc.) Besant recommended that our efforts should be directed towards the unfoldment of *spirituality*—the psychic faculties developing naturally as a result. In this connection, she explained:

It is a great advantage for the gaining of knowledge to have the astral senses as well as the physical at your disposal; but it will only give you more phenomenal knowledge; it

will not quicken your spiritual unfolding. Nay, it may possibly delay it, because it makes the phenomenal more attractive than before. It is more difficult for the person in whom these finer senses are developed to turn away from the outer and more attractive phenomena, and to fix the attention inwards to evoke the true spiritual vision, the knowledge of the One.<sup>16</sup>

Spiritual unfoldment requires as preparation a certain work on the intellectual, emotional, and moral aspects of ourselves. Part of this work is the purification that we discussed, since by these means consciousness unfolds patience, discipline, endurance, will, and a general power of self-mastery. The study of deep spiritual teachings and pondering over them gradually raises our intelligence from the concrete to the abstract, so that we can approach the region where spiritual unfolding takes place.<sup>17</sup>

An important aspect of consciousness to be unfolded is the faculty of attention and awareness, which makes the mind a more powerful and easily manageable tool.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in addition to the effort to be mindful throughout the day,<sup>19</sup> she recommended the following exercise:

In cultivating the power of observation, as in everything else, a little practice repeated daily is much more effective than a great effort followed by a period of inaction. We should set ourselves a little daily task of observing a thing carefully, imagining it in the mind *in all its details*, keeping the mind fixed on it for a short time, as the physical eye might be fixed on an object. On the following day we should call up the image, reproducing it as accurately as we can, and should then compare it with the object, and observe any inaccuracies.<sup>20</sup>

While this training unfolds our powers “of observation, of attention, of imagination, of concentration,” on the side of the vehicles of consciousness this activity will improve the organization of the mental body, thus preparing the aspirant for successful meditation.

### **3- Meditation**

While H. P. Blavatsky had given some instruction on meditation to her esoteric students, it was Annie Besant and her colleague C. W. Leadbeater who first taught this practice openly and systematically within the Theosophical Society. This, it must be kept in mind, was at a time when meditation was practically unknown in the West, and practised mainly by ascetics or monks in the East. Let us briefly present some of the techniques that Besant taught.

*i)* A method she frequently recommended is to meditate on a virtue so that aspirants can consciously shape their personalities. For this, we should first study our psychological nature to find a tendency or desire we want to overcome. The next step is to determine the opposite virtue or mood, and then meditate on it every morning—its value, its beauty, its practice under provocation, etc. In addition to this, we should make efforts to practice the virtue during the

day. This provides insights into the nature of the virtue and attracts the necessary kind of subtle matter so that we can express it more efficiently.<sup>21,22</sup>

*ii)* A different approach to the meditation on virtues is to use the power of imagination. In the way just described, we should choose a virtue that opposes a specific shortcoming. Then, we visualize ourselves in a situation that would challenge this weakness and imagine our response as being the embodiment of the chosen virtue, acting in a perfect way. This meditation gradually changes our consciousness and the habitual way of reacting to the specific challenge.<sup>23</sup>

*iii)* The use of the power of imagination can also be applied in a different way, to visualize an ideal embodiment of a virtue or spiritual quality. The object of meditation, which must be such that it awakens our devotion, could be a deity, an *avatar*; a mahatma, a saint, a teacher, etc. Besant recommended to select a scene from the life of our inspiring ideal and picture it vividly, to feel it as real as possible. If no stories about the life of our chosen ideal are available, we can create a scene where we are in his/her presence. As the mind stabilizes more and more in the visualization, we should gradually focus on our object of devotion, making efforts to feel united with it.<sup>24</sup>

*iv)* Another technique she recommended had to do with carrying out a deep inquiry in order to discover our true nature. One way to do this is to find out what in us is unchanging. As we examine sensations that come through our senses we realize they are impermanent and, therefore, they cannot be our true nature. We put them aside in thought. Similarly, we examine our emotions, which are always changing. We put them aside. Finally, we see that even thoughts are always changing and must be left behind. So, what is left in our consciousness that doesn't belong to the field of sensations, feelings and thoughts? Many will say there is nothing else—just emptiness. Besant encourages us to dwell in this emptiness, with full awareness, until the higher consciousness arises in the midst of the void.<sup>25</sup>

For the sake of completeness we must mention that she also taught other techniques in a more private context. The reason for this is the same that led HPB to give her instructions on meditation within an Inner Group—any method that may involve the focusing on some of the chakras or manipulation of energy is dangerous. They should not be attempted unless the aspirant has been working on the triple purification process described above for a number of years.

### **Final words**

In one of his letters Mahatma K.H. stated:

The truths and mysteries of occultism constitute, indeed, a body of the highest spiritual importance, at once profound and practical for the world at large. Yet, it is not as a

mere addition to the tangled mass of theory or speculation in the world of science that they are being given to you, but for their practical bearing on the interests of mankind.<sup>26</sup>

These modern days are full of distraction and psychological stress. People who feel there must be a better way of living are searching not merely for a *philosophy* of life but, rather, for tools that can help them walk a spiritual path. Annie Besant's contribution in the field of practical Theosophy is remarkably current and constitutes an important service to humanity. Every earnest Theosophist will do well to study these teachings and incorporate them. Then is one enabled to aid those seeking spiritual light.

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- <sup>25</sup> *Ead.*, *Initiation. The Perfecting of Man*, "Seeking the Master."
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## BESANT & GANDHI THE TWO SAINTS OF MODERN INDIA

The two great makers of modern India, Annie Besant and M.K.Gandhi, one hailing from West but adopted India as her homeland and *karmbhoomi* and the other from the East but educated in UK and worked initially out of India. Both had the same goal- India's emancipation from British rule, however they seemed to have some basic differences in their approach towards this common goal.

Dr. Besant, a woman in her sixties and Gandhi a man in his forties, had made their way up. Dr. Besant was an Irish lady where as Gandhi ji totally belonged to Indian soil. One was swadesi and the other a foreigner. They were two different personalities and were perceived as such by the people of that time. Despite having two great, strong and different from each other minds; they had a lot in common. Both had immense respect for each other and yet they were incompatible in their temperament. Both had faith in religion, were full of originality, universal outlook and an upright and honest view on society and politics. Both were strict vegetarians and spoke on the non-injury to animals and living beings. Gandhi ji in his letter to Jamnadas Gandhi on July 19, 1913 wrote, "If through ignorance or oversight, eggs have been used in Dr. Besant's food, she vomits it."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Gandhiji laid stress on simple diet of fresh fruits and nuts. Later Gandhiji formulated this into a principal theory of non-violence and negated any violence to man and animal alike. The same non-violence was to become the basis of all his political ideas, later on.

Gandhiji's faith in non-violence has its echo in Dr. Besant too, when we find her referring to cruelty towards animals in these words, "It is the daily duty of you, whenever you see an act of cruelty, to stop and remonstrate with the man who has done it, and try to persuade him rather than threaten him".<sup>2</sup> Not only this, she made the theosophists take a pledge every morning that they will stop or do their best to stop any act of cruelty towards animals.<sup>3</sup> Gandhiji also refrained the people from cruelty towards animals by saying that, "the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by men from the cruelty of man."<sup>4</sup>

Search for Truth was a common goal for both Gandhiji and Dr. Besant. Both stood for truth. Dr. Besant gave up her family and her comfortable life for truth. For her there is no religion higher than truth "I R; kLukfLr i j kke%" or Truth is the highest religion.<sup>5</sup> For Gandhiji too Truth was God. In his 'My experiments with Truth' (Ahmedabad, 1948, p.6) he says, "I

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worship God as truth only. . . . . as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth, as I have conceived it.”<sup>6</sup>

Both were believers of simplicity in life. Gandhiji’s austere living, simple food and dress made him common man’s guide and mentor. He talked to people in their own language and transacted his messages in terms of their daily needs.<sup>7</sup>

Gandhiji’s *dhoti* represented the country’s poverty and it gained him a lot of popularity, as Churchill called him ‘Half naked fakir from India’. Similarly Dr. Besant clad in a white sari, won for herself, the adorable title of ‘Vasant Mata’ or ‘Maa Vasant’.

Both left their countries. Both started their battle against British imperialism on the soils of the countries other than their own. While Gandhiji went to South Africa and revolted against the apartheid practiced by British there; Dr. Besant chose India to take up cudgels on behalf of the Indians struggling against the imperialist Britain. Although Gandhiji returned to his home to carry on the struggle; Dr. Besant stayed in India and made it her home. Both fought the British but at different platforms and in different countries, in their early political career.

However, in early 1920s, Gandhiji twenty two years younger to Dr. Besant, was in a more advantageous position as a national leader in his motherland. What Annie had done in Ireland before coming to India, was not known. Whereas what Gandhiji had done in South Africa before his return to India was certainly well known to Indians and highly admired by them. This helped Gandhiji to gain an early foothold in Indian political arena. However, Gandhiji kept away from Home Rule Movement in 1916, as first, he was travelling through India and secondly, he was not in favour of agitating for home rule when British empire was in trouble due to first world war.

Gandhiji and Besant shared their fascination for theosophy. Gandhiji too was attracted towards theosophy. At the end of his second year in England, two of his theosophist friends, who were brothers and unmarried, pressed him, to become a theosophist. They even introduced him to Dr. Besant. Gandhiji wrote, “I never became a member, as I had my differences, but I came in close contact with almost every theosophist.”<sup>8</sup>

Gandhiji & Dr. Besant both were of firm belief that Indians need to be reawakened to their glorious past. Dr. Besant said, “I am an Indian tom- tom who has come to wake up the sleeping Indians.” Dr. Besant in her two articles – The work of the Theosophical Society in India”; and “Theosophy and the Raising of India”; compiled in the *The Birth of New India* had said that we all know that ancient India was a mighty nation, prosperous and wealthy, with arts and manufacturers, with the practical science of life..., with lofty intelligence. . . . . Along with mighty religion and magnificent intelligence, there was a vast material prosperity.”<sup>9</sup> She

further says, „If India is to rise again, if she is to stand high taming the nations, how shall that be conducted? By retracing the past. . . . She must begin by reviving the spirituality, the root source of all. Then she must build and revive education. . . .”<sup>10</sup>

Gandhiji too reminded the Indians of their glorious past. He observed, “My resistance to western civilization is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumptions that Asians are fit only to copy everything that comes from the west.”<sup>11</sup> Gandhiji was an exponent of cross-cultural borrowing. He considered Tolstoy and Ruskin as his gurus.

The difference between Besant and Gandhi emerge when it comes to Hinduism. Gandhiji’s Hinduism acquired a deep Christian orientation. Dr. Besant on the other hand was a traditionalist who shared the belief that nothing discovered by the European nations, be it in science, politics, ideology or religion, was in fact unknown to the ancient Hindus. There was a basic difference in their approach towards religion and culture. Gandhiji was highly moved by the dedication of the Christian missionaries and had deep faith in Christianity. Gandhiji himself says that he often took inspiration from Bible, particularly, the New Testament.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Annie Besant, however made no secret of her aversion for Christianity. Her personal experience estranged her from Christianity especially after her marriage to Frank Besant.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly Gandhiji who was moved much by the Christian faith did not adopt and embrace Christianity, for he explains that there was nothing which was in bible and not in Hindu scriptures, and to be a good Hindu, also meant that one would be a good Christian.<sup>14</sup> He further held that “Jesus cannot be the only begotten son of God.”<sup>15</sup> He admitted that Jesus was a great teacher of humanity but not the only begotten son of God. Both found Christian missionaries most ruthless and Hinduism most tolerant and did not agree with the methods, manner and motives of these missionaries. Both were ardent believer in the Karma theory.

Gandhiji and Dr. Besant both were great believers in Bhagavadgita. Gandhiji claimed Bhagavadgita as the spiritual reference book in his daily life, “It has become for me a key to the scriptures of the world and it unravels for me, the deepest mysteries to be found in them.”<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Besant was also greatly moved by Bhagavadgita and felt that its teaching embraced the sense of social duty which she was determined to arouse in the Indians. According to her, the central lesson of the Gita was that, spiritual man need not be a recluse, “that union with the divine life may be achieved and maintained in the midst of worldly affairs.”<sup>17</sup>

In the field of education both had a lot in common both realized that foreign conquest had brought to an end the creative past of Indian educational thought. Both, he and Dr. Besant laid stress on broadening the mental horizon of students. Dr. Besant contributed substantially to the revival of Hinduism through Theosophical school and colleges, translation of Hindu

sacred texts into English. Her matchless eloquence and writings were remarkable. This was of special importance in South India where there was an absence of revivalist organizations like the Arya Samaj or the Ramakrishana Mission.

Dr. Besant was searching for a 'golden age' of the past, for India. She urged the people to "look back to the past, and regain from the past knowledge and experience."<sup>18</sup> She was a traditionalist and strove to maintain "the immemorial customs and follow the immemorial traditions, instead of trying to look as little Hindu as possible."<sup>19</sup> Gandhiji was emotionally a simple theistic Hindu, with absolute faith in God. He wrote "I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting on this rock."<sup>20</sup> He was more concerned with reinterpreting traditions in the light of the needs of the modern age. For Dr. Besant, Hindu tradition was a binding structure of beliefs, deriving its authority from its ancient lineage; for Gandhiji it was a "scientific theory, the authority of a tradition was located in its experimental validation and was subject to revision."<sup>21</sup>

Both Dr. Besant and Gandhiji hated the caste system. Gandhiji hated untouchability. He said "I think we are committing a great sin in treating a whole class of people as untouchables and it is owing to the existence of this class that we have still some revolting practices among us."<sup>22</sup> In Dr. Besant's opinion, caste system was a harmful institution, which should be destroyed, not merely reformed and advocated practice of inter-caste and inter-racial association-dining and wedding. She sympathized with the cause of untouchables and their education. She made a great effort to educate the people, to treat untouchables as equals. But while Gandhiji worked to breakdown caste system, Dr. Besant worked to reform the caste system and not for its total breakdown.

Gandhiji viewed some of the social customs as means of oppressing women. Child marriage, child widows, purdah, sati, dowry, and prostitution he believed were the products of customs. Regarding the question of women, the custom of child marriage was, according to Gandhiji, one of the glaring social evils. Oppressing the Indian widows in any society was a serious menace. It was like "sitting on a mine which may explode any moment."<sup>23</sup> He felt that widows should be allowed and encouraged to remarry. Dr. Besant, too, was in favour of remarriage of widows and felt the lot of widows (unwilling to remarry) might be 'changed by making them willing helpers of their own sex, by training them as teachers and as nurses, and by thus making widowhood a consecration to the service of humanity'.<sup>24</sup> Both saw "voluntary enlightened widowhood" as a great social asset and believed that a real Hindu widow was a treasure. Like Gandhiji, Dr. Besant also attributed the increase in the number of child widows to the custom of marriage at a very tender age.

Since the question of women's oppression was linked to social and national health, Gandhiji

felt that the age of consent in the Sarda Act should be raised to 16 or even 18. Here again both shared common views on this issue. According to Dr. Kannan, one of the committed theosophists, Dr. Besant, in 1925 made all the theosophists take a pledge called the 'Stalwart Pledge' that they would not marry their daughters before their attaining 16 years of age. They also pledged not to take any dowry and not to waste money through ostentatious expenditure. Gandhiji too told the girls to remain spinsters if they failed to get a suitable match "rather than to be humiliated and dishonoured by marrying men who demanded dowry"<sup>25</sup>

Needless to say, Dr. Besant created awareness among women and also an organizational structure which could provide a forum for their interaction and also expose them to associational activities and finally lead them onwards towards their emancipation through the Women India Association. Dr. Besant created awareness among women for their rights. Gandhiji helped them to find a new dignity in public life, a new place in the national mainstream, a new confidence, a new self view and a consciousness that they could themselves act against oppression. The women's movement in India was an integral part of the nationalist politics of Gandhiji. Gandhiji pushed away all opposition and encouraged women from lower segment too, both in urban and rural areas, to participate in the national struggle. *The Bombay Chronicle* dated 07.04.1919 wrote about Gandhi's speech at Bombay that "the Indian body would not be able to do its work properly if one half of it, namely, the women, remained inactive, and so he would appeal to his sisters of India to join the Satyagraha movement in large numbers." Dr. Besant initiated the entry of women into politics by making them aware of their political rights and also felt that women should participate in the Home Rule Movement. The strength of the Home Rule Movement she felt: is rendered tenfold greater by the admission to it of large numbers of women, who bring to its help the incalculable heroism, the endurance, the self sacrifice of the feminine nature.<sup>26</sup>

Both these national leaders had their different views on the relative importance of English and Indian vernacular languages. Gandhiji's advocacy of the use of vernacular languages, instead of English could be traced to the year, when he returned from South Africa. Gandhiji said, our language is the reflection of ourselves and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thoughts, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence, the better for us.<sup>27</sup> Once Dr. Besant showed her regret to Gandhiji on conducting Indian National Congress Proceedings in Hindustani. Gandhiji answered that it was better to use Hindustani than English. Dr. Besant stressed that English should be "learnt as a language only and not used as a medium of instruction"<sup>28</sup>

Annie Besant in a lecture, delivered in Bombay in 1903, said "Education must be founded on a knowledge of the past of the country, as well as of its present. It must be designed in accordance with the ancient traditions and national habits and adapted to modern necessi-

ties....”<sup>29</sup> She further said that “education founded on the needs of western life is mischievous.”<sup>30</sup> She established a number of national schools all over the country apart from the colleges like the one at Madanapalle and, of course, Central Hindu College in Varanasi. Even Gandhiji, at a very early age, realized that education was the only remedy for all ills and evils with which India has been afflicted for centuries. He found that education was the only means for India’s salvation. The present system of education in India was of foreign import and was not suited to the genius and culture of the people and hence a radical overhaul to suit the needs of the society was overdue. He believed further, that individual should be educated by means of vocational manual training. This is the most important feature of Gandhiji’s educational philosophy. He believed that the child’s education should be started by teaching him a useful handicraft and enabling him to produce from the moment he begins his training. For, according to him, the highest development of the mind and the soul was possible only under such a system of education. Moreover he stressed on the adoption of “mother tongue as the medium of instruction.” He felt that Hindi should be included in the “curriculum of school for the simple reason that it is spoken by about 220 million people” and it would further reduce the financial burden of the people as English books were very expensive.<sup>31</sup>

Both Dr. Besant and Gandhiji shared views about educational philosophy i.e. free and compulsory education for seven years, emphasis on mother tongue; to afford opportunity to practice civic virtues in school. In order to be a member of a democratic state, the students must learn the art of discipline and self-government. Both laid more emphasis on the cultural aspect of education than the literary. Gandhiji believed that the highest aim of education was knowledge of God and self-realization. Religious education of the youth should be held as necessary as secular instruction. Dr. Besant was also very mindful of the educational needs of the rural people. She conceived of a village school which would cater to the needs of the poor village community. In her scheme of education, the rural basis was quite evident, when she asserted that the village school must reflect the rural surroundings. She said “Teach in the village school, handicraft and agriculture.” Dr. Besant felt that all subjects taught must be duly co-related to the flora and fauna of the place. She advocated the introduction of village craft such as agriculture, carpentry and weaving in schools according to the local needs of the community. She underlined the need of establishing different types of High Schools such as Commercial, Technical, Arts and Agricultural High Schools.<sup>32</sup> She felt that “..... a generation of really educated people will change the face of India.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly Gandhiji also said that the school should “Create an attachment for village life, for village crafts, for open air, independence and for service among our own.”<sup>34</sup> Both Gandhiji and Dr. Besant collaborated with each other for some time. On May 14, 1917 Dr. Besant sought his help in formulating a comprehensive scheme of education to substitute the British Government’s education system which was crushing people’s patriotism and their sense of pride in the country.

Being a great admirer of ancient India, rich in her great traditions of education system of Ashrams and Gurukuls, Dr. Besant wanted to revive all those traditions so that the youth of the country may be sensitized to the great cultural past. While she encouraged people to transmit the spiritual treasures for the benefit of the troubled humanity, she was equally conscious of the needs of modern society. As such she emphasized the need of educating Indian youth in such a way that they might stand on their own legs and meet the challenges of various life situations. Both stressed on the need of religious education. Gandhiji said, that religion in education will give direction, purpose and goal to human life. He said, that religion was necessary as it was the necessary basis for morality, art and literature.<sup>35</sup> Dr. Besant also advocated religious education when she says teach them their religion so that they can respect the religion of others. Both Gandhi and Besant believed that the English had not taken India; the Indians had given it to them.

After the First World War, Gandhiji's mind changed from a loyalist to a rebel. Many factors were responsible for this change like, Japan- Russia War, Bengal agitation, Rowlatt Act, Jalianwala incident etc. As for Dr. Besant's perception of British rule and her strategy of achieving self-government, within the empire, in the beginning of her career in India she criticized the British, saying "Do not suppose that England can make you either great or free. You alone can make yourselves free."<sup>36</sup> She further fanned the spirit of Nationalism by saying that the British rule in India was unjust, that India was held down and could only be held down by a mass of coercive legislation, by deportation of Indians and by their imprisonment without trial. She even remarked that "England's agents use all the methods of autocracy in India, in order to deceive the world into the idea that India is well governed and content."<sup>37</sup>

However after 1917, her attitude towards British rule was modulated for various reasons. This was the time which saw Gandhi turning a rebel and non-cooperative from being cooperative to British rule. Gandhiji launched the Non Co-operation, movement against the British in 1920 after being dissatisfied with Montague Chelmsford report. Dr. Besant's first reaction too was to denounce the Report as unworthy of those who had produced it. India would be a conglomerate of separate and powerless states under a foreign autocracy, New India declared. The Moderates, who wanted to make the proposal work, withdrew from the Congress while the Extremists wanted nothing but complete independence. Dr. Besant who had started with the opposition of the British, mellowed down in their favour in the last lap of her Political life, while Gandhiji started with hope in the British government and eventually ousted them out of India.

Dr. Besant gave a practical Idealism and agitational fervor to Indian politics. Referring to her fervent nationalism and commenting upon her role in Indian politics, Gandhiji remarked in his autobiography "Home Rule has become a household word all over India". He felt that it

was only by her initiation that the movement was set afoot in every nook and corner of India. He said "Mrs. Besant had inculcated the mantra (religious recitation) of Home Rule into the minds of Indians". Her perception of the British rule made her a mixture of an Extremist and a Moderate. Gandhiji's perception of the British rule made him change his attitude towards them after 1919. He evolved a new strategy, Satyagraha, to combat the British. '*Satyagraha*' defines Gandhiji, "is not physical force. It is pure soul. Truth is the very substance of the soul."<sup>38</sup> It employed boycotts and strikes as weapons. It called for colossal self-control. He found it most difficult to educate ignorant peasants in Satyagraha.

While, Dr. Besant on the other hand, evolved a different strategy to fight against the British. She put forth her call for Home Rule for India. In her politics she was strictly constitutional in methods. When Gandhiji was determined to carry on a campaign of passive resistance, by breaking other laws, she opposed him. To break a law, which one has hitherto obeyed, because a new tyrannous law had in it no clause that one could righteously disregard, was not her way of Political agitation. Such a policy was sure to give rise among the ignorant and the criminal, general lawlessness, destructive of Government system and fatal to society.<sup>39</sup> It was for this reason that she opposed Non-cooperation.

After 70 years of freedom, India still presents a dismal picture-there are threats to wreck the constitution from within; Kashmir issue; militancy; the technique today for all is hunger strike hartal, bandh or mass demonstration or destruction of property. Warnings uttered by Dr. Besant 100 years ago, seem to be more valid today.

The process of parting ways between Gandhiji and Dr. Besant was on the issue of extending or withholding the support of Indians to the British war efforts, during the First World War. Their difference lay chiefly on a few marked points. Firstly, Dr. Besant was not in favour of supporting the British during war, while Gandhiji felt at that time that the Indians should support British in order to win its respect. He felt "the surest method of an honourable victory is to fight for the British Victory."<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Gandhiji felt that the time for constitutional reforms would come when the war was over. Dr. Besant argued that, only a Britain, hard pressed by the exigencies of a World War, could be made to give freedom to India, as England's difficulty is India's opportunity. She further warned the Indian masses that unless there was steady, firm and continuous agitation for self-government before the war was over, the freedom of India would be put off for generations"<sup>41</sup> But Gandhiji was not convinced by her assessment of the British character and the possibility of their conceding freedom to India under duress. Viewing this situation from a totally different perspective, he maintained,"the British government feeling grateful for India's help during the war would without difficulty introduce the necessary reforms and give power to Indians."<sup>42</sup>

But after 1919 his views changed and he prepared every Indian to fight against imperialism in its various forms by building up his inner strength and moral courage. When Gandhiji was still advocating favour for British, his contemporaries did not react positively to his call. Motilal Nehru, Bhagwan Das, M.A. Jinnah, Ramaswami Iyer, Sarojini Naidu, Lajpat Rai, Subramania Iyer, Srinivasa Sastri and others, were all behind Dr. Besant. However they knew that Gandhi's appeal was to the masses, whereas Dr. Besant's was confined to the elite. Gandhiji was a man of the masses. Being an Indian, it was easy for him to understand the rural environment and the people. In spite of sympathy for the under privileged, Dr. Besant could never acquire a hold among the masses.

Gandhiji felt that spinning and weaving were for women, the first lesson in the school on industry." Khadi was designed to bring in every home a spirit of nationalism and freedom. Wearing Khadi meant :.....opposition to colonial rule, identification with the poor and the exploited and an assertion of the spirit of self-reliance, of freedom.<sup>43</sup>

While Gandhi's popularity rose, N. Sri Ram, a former President of Theosophical Society explained in London in 1954, that the decline of people's gratefulness to Mrs. Besant was due to her conflict with Gandhi and to the fact that Indians preferred to get their independence through one of themselves rather than through a white person. Her popularity further declined when "after her Presidency of Congress, Montagu published his proposals for Indian reform. She declared them outrageously inadequate. Later she suggested that with modifications they might be acceptable but this was not forgiven."<sup>44</sup>

Both Dr. Besant and Gandhiji had differences in their political thinking, concepts and application to the political struggle. Gandhiji's strategy was to mount attack on British imperialism from various angles. While Annie Besant boycotted his Non-co-operation movement on the basis that it was revolutionary and stirred hatred. It would lead to violence. While Gandhiji defended himself by indicating his preference for choosing violence rather than cowardice for he averred that cowardice is impotence. Dr. Besant's methodology was based on the ideology of non-violence, non-cooperation, but sternly active and never passive. All her agitations were non-violent. She treated her opponents as friends, and would inform the authorities about her future course of action or agitation. She devoted herself to selfless service and suffering. Her method of civil disobedience was in line with true Satyagraha movement, but she never reconciled to it fully because of the violence it inevitably brought with it.

In England Dr. Besant and her associate Charles Bradlaugh fought social and political battles till 1891, applying the same principles. They saw that persuasive means and not the coercive methods were best suited to the cause. Both, Bradlaugh and Dr. Besant remained Satyagrahis, without the word Satyagraha being in circulation at that time. Gandhiji went fur-

ther ahead of her. He was perhaps first to realize that social development could not gain real momentum unless the elite gave up its false values and its sense of alienation from the wretched and the poor. He realized that “salvation can come only through farmers.”<sup>45</sup>

Dr. Besant followed Bradlaugh’s policy that defiance of the Government was in order as long as she directed it, otherwise it was dangerous. So, when Gandhiji initiated the first Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bill in February 1919 she opposed and criticized it. She argued that “Gandhi might be a Mahatma, a great Saint, but he was no politician; power was not safe with him. Satyagrahis might be saint but their example could betray the ordinary man into disregard of the law . . . . .”<sup>46</sup> She was proved right when Gandhiji called a hartal in Delhi against the Rowlatt measures. When his followers tried to force the shopkeepers to join in, a riot began and soldiers fired on the crowd, killing many. Seeing this, Dr. Besant in order to emphasise that Gandhi’s methods were wrong, hastily responded that “a Government’s first duty is to stop violence before a riot becomes unmanageable, brickbats must inevitably be answered by bullets in every civilized country.”<sup>47</sup>

When politicians of Bombay urged Gandhi to launch Satyagraha against Rowlatt Act, observers debated on Gandhiji’s success as he had no political party behind him then. Dr. Besant in *New India* wrote that it would mean bloodshed at home and invasion from abroad.

It is worthwhile to note that the pre-existing network of Home Rule League provided for Gandhiji an important organizational base for conveying information of action against Rowlatt Act.

Non-Cooperation movement faced an early and severe test during the elections to the provincial councils. Dr. Besant, said Geoffrey Ashe, had a knack for being on the opposite side of Gandhi. In November, the month of the elections, Dr. Besant published a counterblast – a sheaf of articles by herself and colleagues entitled “Gandhian Non-Co-operation : or Shall India Commit Suicide?”

She repeated her belief that India’s permanent Government must not reproduce Western forms, but evolve from its ancient institutions. She put forward her proposal for a Bill to establish within the British Empire a Commonwealth of India, which sought to give India the status and power of a self-governing Dominion.

She continued her work for India and worked on The Commonwealth of India Bill for three years. The Bill was published in 1925. It got a mixed response. The Press did not welcome it. Whereas, most Moderates and Liberals favoured her view point. She put forth her Bill which was favoured by Ramsay MacDonald, the then British Prime Minister. Back home, Gandhiji reacted negatively to the bill as it recognized the King Emperor as sovereign.

This attitude of Gandhiji surprised Dr. Besant, because the Congress had always rejected the separation of India from the Empire. However, she continued to mobilize support for the enactment of the Bill.

A survey of the newspaper of 1929 indicates that the Indian press conceded that Dr. Besant had been chiefly responsible for creating a new atmosphere of optimism through her work, i.e. Home Rule Movement and her earnest efforts for the legislation of Commonwealth of India Bill. It goes to her credit that since her arrival in India, since her address to the I.N.C. in 1894 (for the first time) she remained an ardent champion of India's cause. The case for full freedom for India was made by Dr. Besant, A.O. Hume, William Wedderburn and other European friends of India, long before the mass-based movements on this issue were launched by the Indian National Congress under Gandhiji's leadership. Only difference, after 1920 was that instead of the anglicized leadership, there was a change when Indians took over and people began proclaiming 'Swaraj is our birth right'.

In the early 1930s she withdrew from politics and resumed her work in Theosophical Society. Dr. Besant passed away in her sleep at four in the afternoon of 20 September, 1933.

Glowing tributes were paid to her by the press all over the world. For three days, the daily newspapers of India were filled largely with tributes to Annie Besant and her unforgettable service to India. The Benaras Hindu University, which owed its existence to Dr. Besant, suspended its teaching work as a mark of respect. Her activities and services, which had covered a very wide field throughout the civilized world, in both the hemispheres, were highlighted. In religion she was a *Yogini*, in politics she was an uncrowned empress, in theosophy she was a world messenger, as a social reformer she was Joan of Arc, Nightingale, Gargi—all in one imbued with emotion, sincerity, humanism and the spirit of a warrior. She was world renowned in those days when there was lack of publicity media and was admired by all those who had known and heard of her activities. One of her earlier biographers and admirers A.H. Nethercot remarked:

If India had followed her advice “in 1929 the country would probably have obtained Dominion Status seventeen or so years earlier than it did, it would probably have retained Pakistan and there would have been no Kashmir problem. For in 1929 Jinnah and the Muslim League had not yet grown strong enough to demand partition- or to have thought of it”.<sup>48</sup>

Evaluating Dr. Besant's pioneering and multifaceted contribution, Sarojini Naidu rightly remarked—If there had been no Dr. Besant there would perhaps have been no Mahatma Gandhi. She had sponsored Swadeshi, if not Khadi proper, for long years. She had pleaded with great force for communal peace and harmony. All this programme was taken up by

Gandhi later. Under her inspiring lead there was a terrific upsurge of emotion for the freedom of the country from all bonds, but in a way the path had already been paved for him by Dr. Besant.<sup>49</sup>

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P.S. PANCHAKSHARI\*

## **EDUCATION : BESANT SPIRIT : BESANT EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP**

H.P. Blavatsky gave Theosophy and Col. H.S.Olcott established Theosophical Society in 1875. They came to India in 1878. International Headquarters shifted to Adyar, Madras, in 1882. The Theosophical Society was formed at New York on 17 November 1875, and was incorporated at Chennai (Madras), on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1905. It's three declared Objects are :

To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.

To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

Education does not appear in the objects. Col. Olcott founded the school for Panchamas (Harijans) one of which is Olcott Memorial School at Adyar. However, the Indian Section Council in its meeting held on 2 March 1939, passed a resolution to undertake educational work which comes within the purview of the three declared objects.

Annie Besant came to India on 16 November 1893 and made her home in Benares in 1895, where she started her religious, educational and social work for India. She opened Central Hindu College (CHC) in 1898 along with Gyanendra Nath Chakravarti and Bhagwan Das and others. In 1907 Col. Olcott, the Founder President, passed away and then Annie Besant was elected as President. She theosophised the various life, religious, social, economic and political.

Let us consider the views of our founders and others on education :

HPB in *The Key to Theosophy* has this to say :

“ Educate, educate !! the children are our salvation. .... Nation can work its own re-generation by educating. .... its children. ... the child is father of the man.”

“Real object of modern education is to cultivate and develop the mind in right direction.”

“Education is the attempt to realise the harmony between the nature and man.”

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\* Treasurer, Besant Education Fellowship.

“If we had money, we would found schools which would turn out something.....children should be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity....to think and reason for themselves....we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by proper and truly theosophical education.”

In the compilation of *Besant Spirit* Vol. 1. on Education by G.S. Arundale, Besant says: “By National Education, I mean an education which is under National Control...”

(From ‘Education as the Basis of National Life’.)

“Education of the young must help the inspiring life to unfold itself and must train the organs of intelligence, emotion and activity....”

(From ‘Principles of Education’)

“Every child born into the nation should be educated without cost to the parents; for the state is going to be profited by the child....”

(From ‘Problems of Reconstruction’)

Sri Prakash in his 1952 convention lecture at Adyar has given these remarks. ( ‘Besant and India of Tomorrow’.) “The one great characteristic of Mrs Besant’s scheme of Education was that it must be independent of Government control and that was only possible...when not dependent on Govt. assistance... He who plays the piper calls for the tune....so long not a shell was asked from the Government...She collected subscriptions and contributions for Central Hindu College.” “Never touch king’s penny” was her principle.

We are familiar with *At the Feet of the Master* authored by J.Krishnamurti but not the other work *Education as Service* of 1911. He laid out and developed several schools run by KFI. J.Krishnamurti says ‘what I am interested is to awaken the mind of the child and can be kept alive through knowledge....a mind that functions on knowledge dulls the mind....but a mind that is extra ordinarily alert.....’ (from *Talks with Students*).

Dr. G.S.Arundale served in C.H.C and was the Principal of National University and Minister of Education to the H.H. Maharaja Holkar at Indore. Dr. Arundale became President of the Theosophical Society in 1933. He compiled nine-part booklet ‘Besant Spirit’ in 1938; prepared ‘Scheme of National Education for India’. The scheme covers Primary, Secondary and High School education. He opines that ‘education is the basis of National Life, the foundation of National Prosperity’.

N.Sri Ram, groomed by Dr.Besant, worked at Rishi Valley School and was President of T.S. from 1953-1973. He comments: ‘What is Theosophical Education?’ “It is education

which should enable boy or girl to continue to educate oneself, after they have passed out of the portals of school.....it is education which brings out of each one the best within him.”

(‘Madanpalli-Valley School Magazine’).

Smt Radha Burnier, President of T.S. & President of BEF from 1980 to 2013, mentioned in ( ‘Besant Spirit’, Oct.1996): ‘Besant was against one sided education, which stresses only one part of the human being.....mind & intellect...fortunately the Besant Spirit has not all together died out and there is a public interest in re-examining the basic principles necessary for creating a righteous and healthy society.’

According to Maria Montessori ‘He who works for the regeneration of education works for the regeneration of the human race’.

Here, a brief history of formation of the educational institutions and the Besant Education Fellowship (BEF) may be worth mentioning :

“After her arrival in Varanasi, Dr. Besant was able to impress on the minds of Hindu leaders the need for the establishment of institutions where religious instruction should be provided; and a small school with the two highest classes was started in a small house in the city of Banaras in 1898. Among the pioneers who helped Dr. Besant were Babu Bhagavan Das, Babu Upendra Nath Basu, Babu Gyanendra Nath Chakravarti, Pandit Cheda Lal, Mr. Bertram Keightley, Dr. Arthur Richardson, Miss Lillian Edgar and a few others.

“Within a year of the establishment of the school i.e. in 1899, the Maharajah of Banaras donated a big block of buildings and a large piece of land, to the value of over Rs. 50,000, in the outskirts of the city. The school was then transferred to these palatial and beautiful buildings, and the new classes were opened in the school and two intermediate classes were also opened. Dr. Richardson was the first Principal, and Mr. Harry Banbery, the first Headmaster. To evoke an interest in the essentials of Hinduism, Dr. Besant herself gave a course of lectures in the autumn of each year on some aspect of Hindu ideals, ethics and philosophy. The first course of lectures was delivered in the autumn of 1899, and the *Mahabharata*, *Hindu Ideals*, *Shri Ramachandra the Ideal King* were among the subjects taken up in the following years.

“From 1908 to 1913, the institutions grew in strength and influence, and the movement for the establishment of the Hindu University was inaugurated. It was during this period that a large number of young Indian workers gathered round Mr. Arundale and the spirit of Theosophy and true Brotherhood was strongly felt in the Central Hindu College. The institution was in due course handed over to the authorities of the Hindu University.

“To carry on the work of Theosophical education, the Theosophical Educational Trust was established in 1913 as a registered body, with Dr. Besant as the President and about twenty other members. Under its auspices a Theosophical School for boys, and a Theosophical School for girls were established at Banaras, and several other schools, which were being conducted in various parts of the country by Theosophists were handed over to the Trust. Mr. Ernest Wood, who was Secretary of the Trust, did very valuable work in collecting funds and in supervising the working of these institutions.

“In the meanwhile, the movement for Home Rule of Swaraj had grown in strength, largely due to the vigorous work of Dr. Besant, and it was felt that the Universities, which were dominated by officials of the Government, interfered too much with the methods of education of the young. The Society for the Promotion of National Education was established, and the Theosophical Educational Trust handed over most of its institutions to the S.P.N.E. for management, although ownership of the lands and buildings remained with the T.E.T. Although the S.P.N.E. was a Society which included many non-Theosophists, the largest part of the real work of education was done by Theosophists, both in the field of administration and instruction. The S.P.N.E. established a National University at Adyar, with literature, science, agriculture, commercial, and teachers’ training departments, and the work flourished for six years. Its Vice-Chancellor was Rabindra Nath Tagore, and the Pro-Chancellor, Sir S. Subramaniya Iyer (formerly Vice-President of the T.S.). During its brief life-time, it sent out graduates fully imbued with the spirit of service and sacrifice.

“The Besant College, now at Rajghat, Varanasi, originated on 7 July 1913 as the Theosophical Collegiate School for Boys and was located at “Gyan Geha” within the estate of the Theosophical Society. It was on the same auspicious day that the Theosophical Society started its Collegiate Girls School with Miss Palmer as Principal. The names of both these schools were changed to the Theosophical National School for Boys and Girls, Banaras, in 1917 on the starting of the S.P.N.E. The schools were affiliated to the National University at Adyar. Later on, since 1923, when the National University ceased to function, the schools and colleges sent pupils to the Allahabad and Banaras Hindu Universities. The management then reverted to the Theosophical Educational Trust. Later when the Rishi Valley Trust came into being and when these institutions were transferred to it the Girls College became known as the Vasanta College for Women, and the Boys’ School and College was redesignated the Besant College. Later, both these institutions were moved to Rajghat, on land acquired there. But the need for a Theosophical institution for boys and girls within the compound was keenly felt. In 1938 the Indian Section Convention approved of the then General Secretary’s proposal to resume Dr. Besant’s educational work at the Banaras Headquarters.

“On 1 July 1939, the Besant Theosophical School was established within the campus of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society. They aimed at a full development of the child by providing scope for physical, mental and moral education, thereby assisting the child in unfolding the inherent splendour and latent faculties within him.

“In 1950 the Indian Section decided to create an Educational Trust for the better management and more efficient control of its different expanding educational institutions in Varanasi. Hence a registered body was created under the Societies Act called ‘The Besant Education Fellowship’.

“With the shifting of the Vasanta Colleg for Women to Rjaghat there was a great demand by the public of Varanasi for a good girls’ institution in a central place like the beautiful compound fo the Indian section. Consequently, a decision was taken to start the Vasanta Kanya Mahavidyalaya and the inaugural ceremony was performed on 10 July 1954.”

The Indian Section of the TS transferred the Besant Theosophical School to be managed by BEF. All the schools and college premises are the property of the Indian Section..... and institutions have lease agreement. The BEF functions as a Registered Society w.e.f. 31<sup>st</sup> January 1955 at Varanasi.

The object for which the BEF was established is the imparting of such education as will bring out the best that is in the child or youth giving in the most favourable condition for his growth and progress. It also has responsibility of establishment and maintenance of educational institutions and application of such institutions concerning for the object.

The fellowship is managed by an elected Governing Body which appoint President, Secretary and Treasurer to carry out the administration. The following members were the President of BEF during different years : Dr. N. Sri Ram, Dr. Radha Burnier and Prof. P. Krishna. Sri S. Sundaram is the President of BEF since October 2014. The Secretary of BEF were Smt. Gyan Kumar Ajit, Dr. Indra Gupta, Sri P. S. Panchakshari, Sri P. K. Jayaswal and Dr. T.K. Nair. The present Secretary is Sri Pradip Mahapatra and Treasurer is Bro. P.S. Panchakshari.

Members like Dr. I.N. Gurtu, Dr. I.K. Taimni, Sri Rohit Mehta, Dr. Jaidev Singh, Sri Harjeevan Mehta, Dr. C.V. Agrawal, Dr. A. Kannan, Sri. K. Rajagopala Chari, Ms. Ahalya Chari were there in the previous Governing Body.

The members of the present Governing Body of BEF are : Prof. Rimpoche, Prof. P. Krishna, Prof. R.C. Tampi, Prof. C.A. Shinde, Prof. Sushila Singh, Dr. Pushplata Pratap, Prof. Ashok Kaul, Dr. Jannavi Tandon, Smt. Manju Sundaram, Sri Shashi Nandan Lal Dar, Dr. T.K. Nair, Sri. P.S. Panchakshari, Sri Pradip K. Mahapatra and Sri S. Sundaram.

### **Affiliated Schools and Colleges :**

A) In Varanasi :

1) Besant Theosophical School, upto class X, only for boys, 473 students, Govt. aided, U.P. State. Classes are held in Gyan Geha and Vasant Geha. Manager- Sri Shashi Nandan Lal Dar.

2) Annie Besant School – Co-ed English Medium KG to VIII std. 231 students, un-aided, Manager- Dr. Kamla Rai, Principal – Dr. Abha Srivastava.

3) Vasant Kanya Inter College – upto class XII, U.P.Board, only for girls, 740 students. Manager - Sri J.P.Mishra, Govt. aided, U.P.State.

4) Vasant Kanya Mahavidyalaya – a PG college for Women having 1651 students which include 45 Ph.D students. Affiliated to BHU, UGC Funding, ‘A’ grade by NAAC. Manager- Prof. Sushila Singh, Principal – Dr. Rachna Srivastava

5) Vasanta Balika Vihar , Hostel for girls of VKM Inter and Degree College, having 106 inmates. Board and Lodging fee collected, soon going to have new building.

All these institutions hold inter institutional meet to celebrate Dr. Besant’s birthday, and organize debate, cultural programmes, sports, regularly. These institutions implement Besant Spirit; the educational *yajna* started in 1895 continues till today.

B) Affiliated College at Hospet, Karnataka State: the Hospet Theosophical Lodge runs the Women’s Degree College, Primary School, Intermediate College, Women’s P.G in M.B.A. which was inaugurated on 1984 by Dr. Radha Burnier. The Lodge manages the Colleges, having its own buildings. President is Babulal Jain and Secretary : Ashok Jere, BEF Representatives are Prof. C.A. Shinde & P.S.Panchakshari.

This, in short, is the Educational Movement started by Col. Olcott and Dr. Annie Besant in India. Their spirit inspires us.

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- 4) *The Key to Theosophy*
- 5) *Talks with Students* by J.Krishnamurti, KFI
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eMe CySv/Ldh usnfu; k dksfQykw kndh nh] duzy vkw/dkw usfFkvkd kIQdy l kl kbVh nh vks , uh cd sV usml dk ipkj&i d kj djrsgq ml sykdfiz cuk; kA 16 uoEcj] 1893 dks , uh cd sV us dMh uked LFkku ij Hkjr dh /kjr rh ij dne j [kkA ml fnu mlgayxk tS os vi uh tUeHkie dh xkn ea vk x; h gkA ; gk; vkus l s i wZ gh mlgkaus dgk Fkk ^Hkjr ejh vk/ ; kfred tUeHkie gA\*\* okLro ea mlgkaus Hkjr dh l rku dh rjg gh bl nsk dh thou p; kZ dks vi ukdj nsk dh thou lk; Dr gj {ks= ea l ok dhA os Hkjr dks i q thbu nsusokyh Fkha bl /kjr rh ij dne j [kus ds i wZ l s gh Hkjr dh vks vkdf"kr gkausokyh , uh cd sV us 1878 eagh , d i qrd fy [kh Fkh ft l dk uke Fkk ^bxySM bf.M; k vks vQxkfuLrku\*\* vks 1885 ea , d

dgkuh cPpkadsfy; sfy [kh ^xak , .M n fjoj eM\*\*A Hkkjr dsfy; sgj {ks= eafd; sx; smuds  
dk; kã ds dkj .k egkRek xk/kh dh rjg gh mlga Hkh fd l h , d {ks= ea l hfer ugha fd; k tk  
l drkA

Hkkjr vkrsgh mlgkaus dM/h V; w/h dkj u] c&ykj] cstokMk] cukj l ] vxjk] ykgk] cEcb]  
enkl vkfn LFkkuka ij fFkvd kQdh ds i pkj & i d kj ds fy; s i Hkko'kkyh Hkk" k. k fn; A vM; kj ea  
^cãk.M dh l j puk\*\* fo" k; ij mlgkaus vnHkq oDr0; fn; kA 0; k[; ku dyk ea i kjær , uh  
cd sV fo' o ds dqky oDrkva ea l s , d Fkha 1893 ea os ^f' kdkxks l oZkeZ l Eesy\*\* ea  
fFkvd kfQdy l kd kbVh dh ifrfuf/k ds : lk ea x; h Fkha bl vol j ij fn; k x; k mudk  
i Hkko i wkZoDr0; 'The Universal Life' uked i l rd ea l ægr gA , uh cd sV dh oDrk]  
mudh ys[ kuh vk] muds 0; fDrRo us fFkvd kQdy l kd kbVh dks ykd fi z; cuk; kA vkt Hkh  
vf/kdkak yxs fFkvd kQdy l kd kbVh dks , uh cd sV ds uke l s gh tkurs gA

duzy vkWydKW dh eR; q ds lk' pkr~1907 ea fFkvd kQdy l kd kbVh dh vlurjkZVh;  
v/; {k cudj thou lk; Dr bl in ij jgusokyh , uh cd sV us vM; kj dh l hek dk foLrkj  
djrs gq ogk; l u~1925 ea ^Hkkjr l ekt i ut k\*\* dh LFkki uk dh] bl ds fy; sefj dk fuekZ k  
dj k; kA ; g i ut k on ea k] xk; =h ea ka ij vk/kfj r gA bu ea kads i Hkko dk 'kksk] ts d" .kefirZ  
vk] l h MCY; w yMchVj usfd; k Fk rFk ea kadk p; u ia egkn0 'kkL=h usfd; kA rc l svkt  
rd ; g ^Hkkjr l ekt i ut k\*\* Hkkjr l fgr fo' o ds vU; ns kka ea Hkh gks jgh gA 1893 ea Hkkjr  
i gprs gh dSMh uked LFkku ij fFk; kd kQdy l kd k; Vh ds l æak ea mlgkaus i Eke 0; k[; ku  
fn; kA ml ds ckn yxkrkj vyx&vyx LFkkuka ij Hkk" k. k dj yxska ea bl ds ifr tkudkj h  
c<hbA vM; kj ea l æFk dk fodkl djrs gq ogk; bl dk vlurjkZVh; e[; ky; cuk; kA okj k. kl h  
ea Hkkjr h; 'kk [kk dk e[; ky; cuk; k] tgl; vkt Hkh mudk d{k i gkus rjhds l s l j f{kr gA

Hkkjr ds tkrh; Hkko dks txkus ds fy; s Lokh foodkuln dh rjg mlgkaus i ns kka dh  
; k=k dh vk] vi us v/; kReLQwZoDr0; ka }kj k u; h tkxfr mRi é dhA Hkkjr ds l exz vH; RFkku  
dh fpUrk us mlga vud l jf. k; ka l s l gt gh tkM+fn; k vk] mudk i Hkko h uk; dRo gj {ks=  
ea l Eekfur gvkA ykd & tkxj .k dh vi uh vHkh l k dks eirZ djus ds fy; s mlgkaus ykd & eu dk  
vlurjæ v/; ; u fd; k] Hkkjr ds ykd fo' okl dks cgeku fn; k] ykd & /kj .kk vk] l onuk ds  
i fr ^vi s{kr l Eeku\* i dV dj ykd dk fo' okl vftZ fd; kA Hkkjr ds 'kkL= vk] ykd dh  
l Vhd fHkKrk vftZ dj vud epk&ekxl l segh; l h , uh cd sV us Hkkjr dh vud e[ kh l ok  
dhA f' k{kk} 0; kogkfj d jktuhr] i =dkfjrk] v/; kRe] l ædfr fo" k; d foopu] /ke&v/; kRe  
l k/kuk ds vk; kst u&, d sgh t: jh l k/ku Fk] tks mudh l k/kuk dks : i kf; r djrs jgrs FkA Hkkjr  
dh l ukru i gpku vk] Lodh; rk dks mtkxj djus dk y{; mlga fo fHkÉ Hkfedk vka eaf0; k' khy  
cuk, jgrk FkA

ftu fnukaHkkjr eavæsth f'k{k k dk l Hkh xqkxku dj jgsFKs , uh cd sV usvuttko fd; k fd ; g Hkkjr ds bfrgkl & Hkkksy ds ctk; ; jki ds bfrgkl o Hkkksy dk Kku Hkkjrh; ka dks ns jgh gR Fkk væsth f'k{k dk døy jksth jksh/h dk l k/ku ek= cu x; h gA , uh cd sV usHkkjrh; ka dks ; g l e>k; k fd f'k{k dk mîs ; døy iurdh; Kku ikr djds vktthfodk t/kuk ugha gScfYd euq; ds vlnj fNih 'kFDr; ka dks ckgj fudkydj mudk ijh{k.k djuk gh f'k{k dk mîs ; gA

bl hfy; smlgkausHkkjr dh f'k{k&iz kkyh ij tlg nrsqg f'k{k ds eny rûokadh 0; k[; k dh vks crk; k fd jk"Vh; f'k{k l jdkjh fu; æ.k vks jktuîrd gLr{ki l sijsjgdj ns kHkFDr] jk"Vh; , drk] l cy vks l q<+pfj=] vuqkl u vkfn xqkka dk fodkl djrh gA euq; ds l okh.k fodkl dsfy; svkRek] fopkj] Hkkouk o 'kjhj & bu pkjka dks l rfy: l l sfodfl r djus ij mlgkaus cy fn; kA ns k dh vkfkd dfBukZ l syMæus dsfy; sjkst xkj id f'k{k dks eglo fn; kA mu dk fopkj Fkk fd 0; fDr dh Lorærk dk fodfl r : l jktuîrd Lorærk gS vks Hkkoh jk"V<sup>a</sup> dk Lo: l vrhr ds vkn'kka ds vuq l gkuk pkfg; A MKW cd sV us ijs ns k ds fofHké oxkã dsfy; soñ-f'k{k iz kkyh rS kj dh] i k B; Øe cuk; k] l kFk gh efgyk vks gfj tuka dh f'k{k ij fo'kSk tlg fn; kA

f'k{k fo"k; d mudh tksvi uh n"V Fkh ml eaf'k{k dk , dkr y{; os l ldkj & tkxj.k dks ekurh Fkha Hkkjr dh ij kru f'k{k&n"V dks mudk tkx: d food cgr l Eeku nrk Fkk] l kFk gh i k' pkr; f'k{k&iz kkyh l s l ehi h ij p; ds dkj.k mueankuka ds l E; d-l ello; dh vnHkr ifrHk n"V Fkha /ke&cf) vks /ke&l ldkj dks osftruk vijgk; Zekurh Fkhamruk gh vkxg mudk vk/kfud rdudh fo | k vks foKku l s i k B; ppkZ dks l e) djus ds ifr Fkha f'k{k fo"k; d viuh vo/kkj.k dks Hkkjr eawZ djus dsfy; smlgkaus l w/y fglwLdny\* ds: l eai gyk iz kx dk'kh eagh fd; k Fkha bfrgkl l k{kh gSfd mDr iz kx }kj k Hkkjrh; f'k{k {ks= ea tscht&oi u , uh cd sV usfd; k Fk mlgadh R; kx Hkkouk ds dkj.k og fglwfo' ofo | ky; ds: l eai yfor gqk vks egkeuk ekyoh; th dh gkfnZ l k/k dh : i & j puk dk graqcukA

nks n'kdka rd Hkkjr ds vk/; kFRed vks 'k{kf.kd {ks=ka ea dk; Z djus ds l k' pkr-MKW cd sV us jk"V&fuekZ k dsfy; s Hkkjrh; l ekt dsuofuekZ k dk dfBu vks tfVy mlkjnkf; Ro l EHkkyA 'Wake up India' 'kthZd 0; k[; kueyk l s l ekt&l qkkj dk dk; Z i kjhk fd; kA mlgkaus jk"VfuekZ k o mRFkku dsfy; sukjh mRFkku dks vijgk; Z crk; kA cky&fookg jkdu\$ fo/ kokvka dks Lokoyach cukus rFk Nq/kNur ds HknHkko dks nij djus dsfy; s vFkd iz kl fd; A fi NMh tkfr dh cFp; ka ds mRFkku dsfy; s blgkaus vM; kj ea ^vkYdkWZ ipe\* uked Ldny [kkykA bykgkcn ea^, uh cd sV Ldny\* dh LFkki uk & blghadh ij.kk l sgpA L=h&mRFkku ds fy; s L=h&f'k{k dh vy[k tyk, j [kus dsfy; sol ur efgyk egkfo | ky; dh LFkki uk bl h

i fjl j eamlgkaus dh Fkh tks 1954 eajkt?kkV LFkkukUrfjr gksx; k , oaml h o"zMKW jkfg egrk  
th ds iz, kl ka l s 15 fo | kffkzu; ka dks yd j vkt ds bl ol ur du; k egkfo | ky; dh LFkki uk  
gbl tksoraku le; eai jkLukrd Lrj rd dh f'k{kk nrsgg i fro"z 1500 fo | kffkz ka dsHkfo";  
dks l dkjrs vksj ifjof) r djrs gq u dny dk'kh eacfyd i js in sk o Hkkjr ds vl; i kUrkaea  
fur u; sdhfraku LFkfi r dj jgk gA bl o"z jk"Vh; eW; ka du , oai R; k; u ij "kn-1/4 NAAC" 1/2  
us bl egkfo | ky; dks bl ds mRd"V in'ku grq^, \* Js kh inku dh gA

I ekt I qkkj ds: lk eafL=; ka ds mRFkku ds dk; ZAI India Women's Associa-  
tion dh LFkki uk dh vki ij .kkl kr vksj I g; kfxuh jghaftl ea Jherh I jkftuh uk; Mw Hkh  
mudsl kfk jgha bl I LFkk }kj k NirkNir dks nj djuk] L=h f'k{kk] fL=; ka dksokV dk vf/kdkj  
tul q; k fu; a.k] cky&fookg ij jkcl] fon sk ; k=k ij yxs fu"sk dk fojksk vkfn egloi wkz  
dk; Zfd; k x; ka I ekt I stMoj I ok ds dk; Z dks thou dk vak cukus grq Qojh] 1908 ea  
blgkaus "ffkvd kMOdy vkMj vkM I foZ \*\* dh LFkki uk dh tks vkt Hkh i kf.k ek= dh fu%okfkz  
I ok dh , d I 'kDr vUrj kZVh; I LFkk gA

I ekt & I qkkj ds fy; s vki us djhc 15 I LFkk, i cuk; ha ftuea 'I UI vkM bf.M; k']  
'MkM I ZvkM bf.M; k'] 'ohel bf.M; u vl kfi , 'ku' 'ffkvd kMOdy vkMj vkM I foZ \*] 'Hkkjr  
LdkmV , sM xkbM\* vkfn ied[k gA

blgkaus 1913 ea 'The Brothers of Service' uked I LFkk Hkh cuk; h tks jk"Vh;  
, drk vksj Hkkjr dh gj fn'kk eaméfr ds fy; s dk; Z djrh Fkha , uh cd s V us, d I ektokn  
ds: lk eavi uk thou vkjHk fd; k Fkka mlgkaus 0; fDrokn dh ; q qI q i dfUk dk fojksk fd; ka  
os tle I s vbfj'k Fkha vksj , d I e; fcM/s ds ied[k I ektokfn; ka eamudh x.kuk gkrh Fkha  
mudh n bf.M; u vbfM; YI \* uked i qrd Hkkjr; I ekt'kkL= ea, d egloi wkz ; ksnku gA

bXySM ea I keftd vksj jktufrd dk; ka ea vxsc<dj fgLI k yusokyh , uh cd s V  
ffkvd kMdh I stMaus ds ckn jktufrd fO; kdyki NkM+poph Fkha i jUrq Hkkjr; jktufr dh  
n; uh; n'kk I snq[kh gksdj Jherh cd s V 68 o"z dh voLFkk ea 1915 eavfuPNki wZd jktufr  
eadin i Mha Hkkjr dh vktkn dh ekx djrs gq 1916 ea 'Lojkt\* 1/4 Home Rule' 1/2 vknsyu  
i k jHk fd; ka ykdeku; xak/kj fryd us Hkh mlg [knc I g; kx fd; ka os Hkkjr ea xg'kkl u  
pkgrh Fkha Hkkjr dh vktkn ds i {k ea Hkk" k. k nsus vksj yq[k fy [kus ds dkj .k vaxst I jdkj us  
mlga Hkkjr I spyst kus dks dgk] yfdu muds bl dkj djust ij 1917 eamlgaut jcln dj fy; k  
x; ka bl I s Hkkjr earks [knc rgydk epk gh] bXySM ea Hkh Hkkjr dh vktkn dk i {k eteW  
gq/k vksj 'kk; n bl h dk i fj .kke Fkk fd ^eka/x; ir dks 1917 eavi uh i fl ) ?kkSk.kk djuh i Mh  
ftl ea /khj & /khj s Hkkjr; ka dks mUk jnk; h 'kkl u dh vksj c<us dk opu fn; k x; ka 1925 ea  
mlgkaus vi us 'Hkkjr; dktuoyFk vf/kfu; e\* ds fy; s vklnsyu pyk; k ftl dk 1925&26 ea

blySM dh l d n ea ikBu gyaA

, uh cd sV usHkkjr dh vktknh dsfy; sog l c dN fd; k vksj bl rjg l sd"V mBk; k ftl rjg l sHkkjr ds ykx mBk jgs FkA mlUgkaus vius dk; ka l s; g fl ) dj fn; k fd okLro eaHkkjr gh mudh ekrHkfe gA vUr ea vaxst+l jdkj dksfoo'k gksmlUgafjgk djuk i MhA mudh egku-l okvka ds dkj .k 1917 dh bykgkckn dkaxl eamUga dkaxl dk v/; {k cuk; k x; kA ml l e; dk mudk v/; {kh; oDr0; cgr gh eeLi 'kiz FkA Hkk" .k ds vUr eamUgkaus dgk Fkk fd ^ejs ikl tks dN Hkh gS vksj Lo; ae tks dN Hkh gji l c Hkkjr ekrk dspj .kka i j j [k nrh gya\*\* , uh cd sV dh egUkk dks j s [kkadr djrs gq ^MkWi VVkfHk l hrk jeS k\*\* usfy [kk gS & ^oS s rks pYI ZcMlyk ds l e; l sgh Jherh cd sV dk l epk thou xjhcka vksj Hkkjrokfl ; ka dh l ok ea0; rhr gya k] yfdu dkaxl eaos l u-1914 ea gh l feefyr gya mlUgkaus vius l kFk u; s f'k [kj] uohu ; kx; rk] uohu l k/ku] u; k nf"Vdksk vksj l xBu dh fcYdy vfhkuo 'kSyh ydlj dkaxl {ks= ea inki Zk fd; kA mudk 0; fDrRo rks igys l sgh l kjs t xr-ea egku-FkA i wZ vksj i f'pe ds ns kka ep u; s vksj i jkus xksyk) Z ea yk [kka dh l d; k eamuds HkDr rFkk vuq k; h FkA bl fy; s ; g dkbZ fo'kSk vk'p; Z dh ckr ugha gS fd vius i hNs brus icy HkDrka , oa vuq kf; ; ka rFkk vFkd dk; Z kfDr ds gkrsgq Hkh mlUgkaus Lo; a l pSV gkdj Hkkjrh; jktuhfr dks , d uohu fn'kk inku dhA\*\*

mudsfoJr opLo vksj fo'otuhu l Qyrk dk jgl; Fkk & l r qfueZk dyk eamudk i wkZ i dh.k gksuka Hkkjrh; thou p; kZ ds ifr mudh fu"Bk&f'k{kk} l ekt l qkkj vksj jktuhfr gh ugha cfYd thou ds vU; kU; {ks=ka l s tM/s-dk; Z 0; ki kj l s i ekf.kr gkrh gA /keZ ds {ks= ea mlUgkaus l Hkh /kekads l koBkkE emy dks i j [kuk fl [kk; kA ; g l koBkkE /keZ i e vksj i kK l s tM/k FkA l keftd fO; k'khyrk ds dk; Z ks= eamUgkaus /keZ dks Hkfo"; dkyhu l H; rk dk i e d k y {k.k ?kks"kr fd; k] ftl ea drD; igys vksj vf/kdkj ckn ea vkrk gA f'k{kk ds l d kj ea MkW cd sV us fopkj] l onuk , oa bPNk' kfDr dh l dfr vksj ml ds ifj"dkj dk i {ki kSk.k fd; k ftl l s 0; fDr] l Ppfj= vksj mnkjeuk cu\$ l R; kUoSkh cuA /keZ vksj f'k{kk nksukagh dk mIs ; l R; dh i kflr gh mlUgkaus crk; k] fcuk l R; dks igpkus bz oj dh i kflr vl Hko gA ; fn 0; fDr i jh fu"Bk ds l kFk f'k{kr gkdj rFkk /kekZuq k; h cudj l R; dh [kks t ea l ayXu gkrk gS rks ml sbz oj dh i kflr vo' ; gh gkrh gA MCV; w Vh- LVHM us viuh i qrd 'Annie Besant: A Character Sketch' ea i- l d; k 56 ij bl l mHkZ dks Li"V djrs gq fy [kk gS & "Remember our God is the God of truth and that therefore, the honest search for truth can never be displensing in His eyes." jktuhfr ep mlUgkaus gea egku-fl ) kUrka i j pyuk fl [kk; kA Lorærk vksj HkkrRo dk i kB i <krsgq l dh.kzjk"Vbkn o l Ein; okn l s Å i j mBuk fl [kk; kA

dyk ds l kekT; eamllgkaus ml dk n0Ro l sl ã dz inf' kã fd; k vks dykdkj dks, d  
 nonir dsLFkku ij ifr"Br fd; kA , uh cd sV usiR; cd 0; fDr ds vUrI ~eafNisdykdkj dks  
 tkxr djus dk iz kl fd; k vks egkure dyk&dkS ky fuekZk dk if'k{k.k fn; kA foKku  
 txr~eamllgkaus tho dks /kjkry ij fu; eka dh vuq irk fn [kk; h vks l we ea fojkV dh  
 i frPNk; kA , d egku-v/; kRe f'kf{kdk ds: lk eamllgkaus eut; dksfopkj d o fpUr d dh vkRek  
 dk] 'kjhjka dh HkfDr o l kgl l sl ello; djuk fl [kk; k ftl l seut; ckgjh l ã kj ea l f0;  
 gksdj xgu vkt; kUrfjd thou dh vks c<+l dA ftl l s qdk mllgkaus brus jkt 'kgh <x l s  
 fuekZk fd; k og i wZ vks if'pe ds chp l ello; dk l s qFkA mllgkaus i nf' kã fd; k fd fo' o  
 dsfy; si wZ dk if'pe l sfeyu fdruk eW; oku gksk vks ; g fd i wZ ds v/; kRe }kj k l gk; rk  
 i klr dj if'pe fdruk l e) gkskA

rRi 'pkr-o"Kz1921 ea, uh cd sV Hkkjr LdkmV dh i Fke dfe'uj cuhavks bl h o"Kz14  
 fnl Ecj] 1921 dsfnu dk'kh fgluhfo' ofo | ky; dh vks l smllga 'MkVj vkW yV l Z dh ekun-  
 mi kf/k l sfoHkfr fd; k x; kA o"Kz1922 eamllgkaus l kolkke i kFkZuk 'O Hidden Life' dh jpuk  
 dh] ftl dk fgluh vuokn bl izdkj gS &

gs xqr thou! Li flnr d.k&d.k e]j  
 gs xqr T; kfr! Tlxex i kf.kek= e]j  
 gs xqr iæ! fi jkrk l cdks, d e]j  
 i R; d tu] tks vuHko djs, dRo dk rpe]j  
 ; g Hkh tkusfd og , d gS l ceA

bl izdkj os Hkkjr ds thou ea ijc&if'pe dk l aryu pkgrh FkA mudk dguk Fkk  
 fd rpe nã jsjk"Vka l sog l c dN yk tks nã gkjsfy; smi ; ksch gS ij ml ij Hkkjr dh Nki  
 yxk nã mudk Li "V fopkj Fkk fd Hkkjr jk"V" dh egkurk jk"V" ds l arkukadh 0; fDrxr egkurk  
 ij fuHkj gA

Hkkjr dh l kekftd] 'k\$kf.kd] jktu\$rd] vkfFkd vks l kã dfrd xfrfof/k; ka ea u; s  
 v/; k; tkM usokyh Jherh cd sV usftnãwd".kefirZds: lk ea, d vuks[kso'ox# dk mi gkj  
 l kjs fo' o dks fn; kA o"Kz 1909 ea vM; kj ds l ep&rV ij [ksyrs gq , d ncy&i ry]j  
 i <u&fy [kuseadetlg] fcYdy l kekU; l sckydh vks fc'ki yMchVj dk /; ku x; k vks  
 Jherh cd sV dh i kj [kh nf"V usmueafNis i Hkk&e.My dks n\$ k fy; kA okRI Y; i wZ ekrk ds  
 : lk ea ckyd d".k dk ikyu&iksk.k djrs gq bãYSM vks i fjl ea muds v/; ; u dh futh  
 0; oLFkk dh vks ; jki ds JSB l ekt ea mllga LFkku fnyk; kA vksx pydj ts d".kefirZ us

fo'ofol[; kr nk'k'ud] Loræ fplrd o f'k{kfon~ds : lk ea n'kzi] fplru vks f'k{k dks u; s  
vk; ke vks eksyd n'V l s l Ei é fd; kA

, d h vnHkr l ekt l fodk] jk"V&fuek=h] f'k{k&'kkL=h vks vk/; kfRed x# MKW , uh  
cd sV l pep , d fo'o foJr foHkr Fkhaftudk u'oj 'kjhj 20 fl rEcj] 1933 dks vM; kj ea  
i prÜoka eafoyhu gks x; k yfdu Hkkjr vks fo'kSk : lk l sdk'kh ij mudk Hkkjh \_\_.k vkt Hkh  
gSvks vullr dky rd jgskA , d h egku-vkRek vks fo'o&ekuork dh xksj] iq; 'ykdsk MKW  
, uh cd sV dks eã vi us Hkkoi wkz 'kCn iz wka }kjk 'kr' k% iz kke] dksV&dksV ueu vks gkfnZl  
J) katfy vfir djrh gw &

gSolnu , uh rfgkjk & 2  
rhuka ykdka l smft; kjk  
vkykdo"khZ 0; fDrRo rfgkjk  
gSolnu , uh rfgkjk &2 AA1AA

fn0; rk dh noh gks ræ  
fple; rk dh gks fpuxkjh  
l kexhr tks fudyk eqk l s  
gqk ugha vul qk txr l s  
iz ka k gpz rfgkjh Hkkjh  
dy&dy fuukn l q l kjk  
gSolnu , uh rfgkjk &2 AA2AA  
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S. SUNDARAM\*

## ANNIE BESANT : SOME REFLECTIONS

There have been some dynamic thinkers in human history who always thought, lived and worked for a major change, nay transformation in human nature. They understandingly realized that the purpose of life is in not just having amusement but to think and work for developing and creating a meaningful society based on moral strength. “They shared their knowledge and noble experience with the whole society. They instantly and simultaneously felt the intensity and urgency to bathe the whole humanity in the light of the Divine Wisdom. Their wisdom and enlightenment were not for their own individual upliftment. They tried with all their might to share it with all.”<sup>1</sup> Such brave thinkers and activists were not perturbed by the challenging situation. They set an example before others that one must adhere to what one believes to be true even if one has to stand alone or has only a few sympathizers to support. Annie Besant is one such sage thinker whose monumental service to humanity remains unparalleled.

Annie Besant’s contributions in several fields are of incalculable value and India will remain indebted to her for the yeoman service which she did for this country. She tried to build a social order on “spiritual and moral strength”. Her tremendous energy, great organizing capacity, extraordinary gift of eloquence helped her immensely in implementing her ideas into action and her vision into reality. The perfect harmony of all her faculties of mind and body for Greater Mission made people realize that she was a person who had the solution to every problem and could work out suggestions and plans for the occasion. With undaunted courage she fought against the adverse circumstances and set examples for others as to how a person should endure pain, hardships and perform his *dharma* in a sincere, dedicated and true manner. Her sincerity and accountability to herself, to the social surroundings, to Nature and above all to Truth distinguished her from others.<sup>2</sup>

A number of distinguished people have spoken and written about the great qualities of Dr. Annie Besant. Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer writes, “She was ever firm and strong and her long life was one dauntless search for Truth regardless of consequences”.<sup>3</sup> As observed by C.Y. Chintamani, “Religion, and philosophy, literature and education, social and political reform – everything has been within her sphere of activities”.<sup>4</sup> According to Jamnadas Dwarkadas she was “a great leader, a great inspirer, a great world server, a great seer, a great thinker, a loyal friend, and a brave fighter. Annie Besant is what she is, because she is the follower of the great ideal of Truth”.<sup>5</sup> While recounting a few of her activities, Dr. V.S. Trilokekar said, “She

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\* Former General Secretary, Indian Section, TS.

is ever ready to take up any work, where injustice is being done.... Wherever there is distress, oppression and injustice, there she is ever ready to render all possible help in remedying the evil.”<sup>6</sup> Gandhiji’s observation was, “It was Dr. Besant who bridged the gulf between religion and politics.... To Dr. Besant there was nothing impossible in this world. Determination, simplicity and penance – these were the chief characteristics in her life....”<sup>7</sup>

While stressing the aim of ‘Education as a National Duty’, Annie Besant explains in detail the development of “intellectual and moral power of the student and to strengthen him physically, emotionally, mentally and morally”. Here I would like to mention one significant aspect of her scheme of education. Along with other subjects, emphasis was given on games, scouting and music as well in the educational institutions started by or named after Dr. Annie Besant. She explained the purpose behind it. Games and scouting make the student physically strong and stronger he is the longer he will be able to serve his society and the nation. “....to take up the burden of the work of the world .... He should be trained to regard his body as an instrument for working in the world. His duty to his body is a part of his duty to his country and to himself.”<sup>8</sup>

In every game there comes a time when the player has to immediately take a decision and act on the spur of the moment. The boy learns and develops the following qualities on the playing fields: ‘quickness in understanding of thought’, ‘alertness in understanding the situation’, ‘swiftness of decision’, ‘promptitude of action’, and ‘accuracy of judgement’.<sup>9</sup> If this practice of taking decision at crucial moments is properly developed, it will immensely help the student to take decision at critical moments when after a few years he enters into social service. Besides, games and scouting encourage and develop team-spirit which is necessary to bring about unity and harmony among various groups. Music helps one to develop the aesthetic sense and to express oneself in a very refined and harmonious manner. The individual characteristics are strongly linked with his social responsibility. Every action performed, whether in private or in public, has to be done with this great sense of responsibility. Thus, Annie Besant visualized these traits for the benefit of student in the context of the welfare and betterment of the country, the world and the society at large.

Progress and development must bring about change in the inter human relationships and standards of conduct. It must elevate people’s moral and intellectual level and elevate their mental make-up. In this regard, Annie Besant put in tremendous effort to generate an atmosphere to create a feeling of community belongingness among the people who were divided into a number of interests and ethnic groups representing caste, religious and economic sections. She tried to make people of India understandingly realize the difference between the ‘power to vote’ and the ‘ability to vote’.

For most of the people even one or two activities which were initiated or carried out by Annie Besant would have been a mission of the life time. Besides, to think, live and work with the same dedication, determination and devotion of that level may not be possible for everybody or the common people. A common man may not be able to work out a plan or think in terms of starting a great movement. But at least in day-to-day dealings he can practice the example set by great thinkers who practiced what they preached.

Annie Besant showed her disagreement with the Non-Cooperation Movement. We should not look at it only as one of the major incidents of the freedom struggle. We should give deep and serious thought to it in the context of our day-to-day living. Most of us, in our daily life, sometimes, instead of trying to ward off the wrong and evil thoughts or ideas from our minds associate with them for our immediate personal gain. Similarly, sometimes we non-cooperate with the good and noble thoughts which come to us and in this process we get encouraged to do wrong things. This results in making us more and more insensitive, aggressive, violent and morally weak. In order to make positive contribution we must be strong in ourselves.<sup>10</sup>

The differences which occur between great personalities are altogether at different levels. They are able to disagree with each-other without being disagreeable. And, in this context I would like to recall the following instance. Every year a public meeting is organized at the Indian Section Headquarters, Varanasi, on 17 November, to celebrate the Foundation Day of the TS where one or two distinguished speaker(s) are invited to express their views. In 1966 the distinguished speaker was Mr. Chandrabhal, second son of Dr. Bhagvan Das. During the course of his talk he mentioned that when Dr. Annie Besant passed away in September 1933, her ashes were brought to Kashi. Several members of the TS, teachers and distinguished citizens of Varanasi assembled at the Indian Section HQ. The urn containing the Holy Ashes of Dr. Besant was carried by Dr. Bhagvan Das to immerse the ashes in the Holy Ganga. A huge procession followed him. After that people proceeded to the Town Hall of the city where a public meeting was organized in order to pay homage and tribute to the Departed Soul. At the meeting, Chandrabhal's elder brother Sri Prakash narrated the following heart touching incident: Once when *Babuji* (Father) was seriously ill, Mrs. Annie Besant used to work for the Indian Section and the Educational Institutions at Varanasi during the day time and at night she, along with our mother, used to attend to our father.

After the meeting when we were returning home, Mr. Chandrabhal said, *Babuji* seemed to be in a very pensive mood. We thought that he is remembering the days which he had spent with Dr. Besant and the events associated with her. We did not disturb him. Then he slowly asked my elder brother : "Is it a fact what all you narrated in the public meeting about Dr. Besant taking care of me during my illness?" We (both the brothers) were at first surprised

with the strange question raised by our father. Then, in a flash, we realized that till date father did not know about it, nobody informed him. Then, my brother said that it is a true story. To which our father's response was: "And I have come to know about it only after immersing her ashes in the Holy River".

In his article entitled 'Some Memories of Dr. Annie Besant' Dr. Bhagvan Das mentions:

Once I fell very ill with malaria. She was, as usual, very busy with all kinds of work, and, besides, was preparing to leave Benares for England for the summer. One morning, on coming back to my senses after a night's mind-wandering, I was astounded to learn that she had passed nearly the whole of the night on a sofa, near my sick-bed, taking turns with my wife in trying to soothe my wretched worthless mind and body. What wonder that we all regarded her as veritable mother! <sup>11</sup>

I do not know whether Dr. Bhagvan Das and his son Sri Prakash refer to the same incident. But, it clearly shows the mutual respect which Dr. Besant and Dr. Bhagvan Das had for each other. And as stated by my friend Bro. Pedro Oliveira in his letter (dated 7 Feb. 2017): "It helps to clarify, to a great degree, the existing misconception that Dr. Bhagvan Das and Dr. Annie Besant had broken up their contact and friendship".

Many people are not able to establish proper, decent and respectable relationship or contact with a person belonging to another caste, class, community or religion. Seeing through the glasses coloured with prejudice create a negative image about the person belonging to the other group. Instead, we must listen to our conscience, to our inner voice. Our every thought and the step taken must mean 'dynamism and progress towards greater human unity'.

Here I would like to quote Prof. B. Sanjiva Rao:

Events happening are not important psychologically, but how one reacts to it is most important.... On one occasion Indian leaders met Mrs. Besant during her Home Rule for India campaign, and they said to her: 'Mrs. Besant you have worked hard for India, but all the same we suspect that you are a British imperialist spy'. Swift was her characteristic reaction. She said: 'Friends, I know that and it is natural that you do not trust me, but will you allow me to trust you and work with you?' I consider such a response a beautiful gesture of goodwill.

That to me is the test - the aesthetic quality of your reaction. It is egoistic reaction that is ugly. By reaction I mean the thoughts that arise in your mind in response to a challenge. Absence of egoism gives to an act a beauty and dignity that is unmistakable. It is that which is the surest touchstone of right action. <sup>12</sup>

The life of great people show that a radical and fundamental change can be brought about provided we set about it the right way. In order to make positive contribution we must be strong in ourselves. Let our thoughts and actions be such that they may help in the restructuring of society from its base. In this regard, Dr. Besant's pioneering work in the sphere of education and Wake Up India Movement can provide a good guiding force. The relevance of her views on character building and 'man making mission' have grown more relevant with the passage of time. The life and work of such great people, who were dedicated to the cause of humanity, remind us always to combine theory and knowledge with practice and action.

So, let us examine our own self if there is any lack of commitment on our part? What prevents us from gathering strength to show our disagreement with the thought and the action which would cause social, moral and spiritual harm to individual, group or society? What prevents us from taking initiative and acting spontaneously and voluntarily when situation demands such actions from us? What are the factors and forces that overpower us and prevent us from taking right action at the right moment? Being concerned members, giving serious thought to these and several such questions may inspire, help and guide us to proceed on *The Path* and that perhaps will be our meaningful and fulfilling tribute to the Great Soul.

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What is the duty that we owe to each? It is the definite payment of.. debts; the duty of reverencing and obeying those who are superior to us,... the duty of being gentle and affectionate and helpful to those around us, on our own level; the duty of protection, kindness, helpfulness and compassion to those below us. These are universal duties.

**ANNIE BESANT**

All religions have one origin and one goal; this Theosophy is ever proclaiming and proving; why then dispute about secondary differences? Live your own religion, it urges, and let your neighbour live his, and turn your attention to the great truths in which you agree, rather than to the minor points on which you differ.

**ANNIE BESANT**

## NEWS AND NOTES

### Gujarat

Rewa Lodge of Vadodara organized Madam Blavatsky Vyakhyan Mala on 11-12 February, 2017. The programme started with the Prayers of All Faiths. The speaker was Mrs. Ranjanaben Vaidya- a well-known educationist and administrator who has studied in depth the works of Sri Aurobindo, HPB, J. Krishnamurti, Capra and other serious thinkers. The subject chosen for the occasion was HPB's book *Isis Unveiled* so that the members may have sound information and knowledge regarding the topics dealt with in the book. The guest speaker's style of presentation created great impact on the listeners.

A programme of a talk on Giordano Bruno was organized at C.N. Vidyalaya, Bhavnagar, on February 16. The speaker was Bro. Harshavadan Sheth, Editor of *Theosophical Jyoti*. The programme was arranged by Bro. Darshan Modi, Secretary of Gujarat Theosophical Federation. Mr. Bhaktibhai, Principal of the school, welcomed the guests. The students recited prayer and rendered a few devotional songs. It was followed by Garba dance presented by the girls of the institution. Then, on behalf of the Managing Committee of the school, teachers and the students, the Principal welcomed the guest speaker and the Secretary of GTF. Bro. Darshan Modi introduced the guest speaker Bro. Harshavadan Sheth. Bro. Sheth explained the significance of Adyar Day and then he spoke on the life and work of Giordano Bruno. The whole talk was presented so effectively that the students listened to the speaker with rapt attention. The Principal thanked the speaker and Bro. Darshan Modi for having arranged such an inspiring and thought provoking programme.

A youth leadership camp was organized on March 5 at Vijapur in Mehasana district. The theme was Golden Stairs and a great number of young members from various Theosophical Lodges participated in it. The participants spoke on different aspects of Golden Stairs like 'a clean life', 'an open mind', 'a pure heart', etc.

Bro. H.K. Sharan conducted the study of Dhamma Pada at Vijapur in Mehasana district. It was held from 5 to 8 March in which Bro. Yogendra P. Desai, Bro. Nareshbhai Trivedi, Bro. Darshan Modi and 74 members participated. Besides, some Jain monks also attended it for some time.

### Karnataka

Bro. G. Dakshina Murthy, Vice-President of K. T. F & National Lecturer, directed a day-long study camp during the Adyar Day Celebrations at Hosadurga on 19 Feb. and he

spoke on 'Can diseases be controlled by Spiritual Remedy?' Bro. M. S. Sridhara, Bro. H. Mahalingappa and Dr. Gopalkrishna spoke on 'How spiritual remedy works?', 'How diseases give warning?', 'Earlier & Spiritual awareness regarding the type of treatment' respectively.

Sis. K. Parvathamma, Secretary, KTF, directed a study camp at Chitradurga on 19 March. The theme was 'Many Portals to reach Divinity'. Sis. N. Shashikala, Sis. A. N. Puttamma. Sis. K. Parvathamma spoke on 'Action with detachment', 'Satsanga' and 'Surrender' respectively. Thirty-five members participated in this camp.

Prof. C.A. Shinde, National Lecturer, spoke on 'The significance of Theosophy' on the occasion of the Annual Meeting of the Theosophical Lodge of Kottur. Bro. M. S. Sridhara and Bro. H. Mahalingappa also spoke on Theosophy. This meeting was held on 25 March. Prof. C. A. Shinde visited the Theosophical Lodge at Bellary & Koppal as well.

Bro. H. Mahalingappa, South Zonal Organizer, directed Adinarayana Betta study camp from April 10 to 12, 2017. The book taken up for study was *Self Culture* by I.K. Taimni. The study camp was inaugurated by Sis. K. Parvathamma by lighting the lamp. Bro. C. Rajashivashankar, Bro. K. L. Nanjunda Setty, Bro. A. Subba Reddy, Bro. M. Ramakrishnappa, Sis. K. Parvathamma and the Director spoke on various chapters of the book *Self Culture*.

Dr. L. Nagesh, National Lecturer, directed a study camp at Malleswaram Lodge on 14 April. Bro. A. V. Subramanyam (from Mysore) spoke on 'We and our life' and Dr. L. Nagesh spoke on 'We are pilgrims'. Sis. Manorama Mehta, President of the Lodge, gave a music concert along with Sis. Nirmala Bharath and Sis. Chandrika Mehta. In all, 100 members participated in the camp.

Bro. G. B. Nagana Gowdar directed a study camp at Hosadurga on 16 April 2017. He gave a talk on 'Theosophical view in folk songs and different literatures'. Bro. H. Billappa, a Retd. Judge of Supreme Court, gave a talk on 'Contributions of God', Kum. Sushma (Medical student) spoke on 'Theosophy in Karnataka Music' and Bro. B. K. Nagarajappa spoke on 'Theosophy in different literatures'. The director concluded with how literature and music support Theosophy.

Bro. B. V. Thippeswamy, President of K. T. F., directed the study camp at Srinivaspura from 23 to 27 April. The theme of the camp was 'Many portals to Divinity'. The director spoke on main portal. Later Bro. C. Rajashivashankar, Sis. K. Parvathamma, Sis. R. Madhvi, Bro. K. L. Nanjunda Setty, Bro. M. S. Sridhara, Bro. H. Mahalingappa and Bro. A. Venkata Reddy spoke on 'Self Knowledge', 'Mindfulness', 'Detached Karma', 'Surrender', 'Service', 'Satsanga', and 'Silence' respectively. Bro. B.C. Narasingappa, Rtd Joint Director, conducted Vipassana Meditation. More than 200 members participated in it.

Dr. Gopalkrishna (Srirampura) directed a study camp at Huliyaar on 14 May. Bro. H. B. Gopal Krishna Setty and Sis. D. J. Premaleela spoke on this occasion on Theosophy.

Bro. K. L. Nanjunda Setty, Lodge Organizer, directed a study camp on 14 May 2017 at Chitradurga. The book studied was *Way of Wisdom*. Bro. T. Thippeswamy, Bro. Onkarappa and Bro. Yogeesha spoke on the theme of the camp.

Bro. B. V. Thippeswamy directed the Lecturers' - Workers' - Training Camp from 19 to 26 May at Gavirangapura. There were 50 participants. Ten speakers gave 14 main talks and 14 model lessons. The following books were prescribed for study: *First and Last Freedom*, *First Principles of Theosophy*, *The Key to Theosophy* and *Self-Culture*. About 50 trainees spoke on topics selected from the aforesaid books. All the speakers and trainees put lot of efforts for their nice presentation.

Sis. G.S. Lalitha directed a day-long study camp on 16 July 2017 at Gowribidanur Theosophical Lodge. The subject studied was 'Teaching of Gowtama Budha- Dhammapada'. Bro. G.K. Nataraj and Bro. A. Subba Reddy also spoke on the aforesaid theme.

Central Zonal Organizer Bro. M.R. Gopal of Huliyaar directed a study camp on 23 July 2017 at Hosadurga. The theme of the camp was 'J. Krishnamurti's Teachings'. Bro. H.C. Jagadeesh, Dr. Gopalkrishana, Bro. Narayanappa were the resource persons.

Bro. B.V. Tippetwamy directed the study camp at Tumkur from July 20 to 23, 2017. The subject taken up for study was 'J.K's special teachings'. Bro. G. Dakshina Murthy, Vice-President of K.T.F., Bro. R. V. Vastrad, North Zonal Organizer, Bro. Veeranna, West Zonal Organizer, Sis. K. Parvathamma, Secretary, KTF, Bro. M.S. Sreedhar from Bengaluru, Bro. H. Mahalingappa- South Zonal Organizer, Bro. H.C. Jagadeesh from Huliyaar, Sis. Lakshmi Govind- former South Zonal Organizer and Bro. Y.A. Vasudeva from Bangalore spoke on various topics of J.K's teachings – namely, J.K's life sketch, 'Truth is a pathless land', 'Dialogue between P. Krishna & Radhaji on J.K.' & 'Who am I?', 'Is there any path to 'Truth', 'Awareness?' 'See as it is' and 'Dharmic Life & Intuition in view of J.K.' About 150 members participated in the camp.

Sis. K. Parvathamma directed a study camp on 30 July at Guruprasad Theosophical Lodge at Jayasuvarnapura. The theme was 'Practical Theosophy'. Bro. H.C. Jagadeesh, Bro. M. R. Gopal, Sis. K. Parvathamma delivered talks on 'Life after death', 'Theosophy in Schools & Colleges' & 'Theosophy at home' respectively. The study camp was to commemorate the passing to G.L.E. of Bro. B. Ramappa, founder president of the lodge. Two hundred members participated in the camp.

### **Annual Conference of Karnataka Federation**

The 108<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Karnataka Theosophical Federation along with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Gavirangapura study camp was held at Gavirangapura from 8 to 10 July 2017. The theme of the conference was 'Human Regeneration' and Bro. Pradeep H. Gohil, General Secretary of the Indian Section, was the chief guest. Bro. Gohil inaugurated the study camp and spoke on 'Regeneration & the Objects of the Theosophical Society'. He delivered the inaugural address in the annual conference of the Federation on 9 July and the subject of his talk was 'The Source of Spiritual Energy'. Then he released the following four books which have been reprinted: *The Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path*, *Science of Yoga* and *Talks on the Path of Occultism*. Dr. L. Nagesh, National Lecturer, led a panel discussion on the theme "Origin of Problem & Solutions in the light of Theosophy". The participants were Bro. R.V. Vastrad- National Lecturer, Bro. S.M. Umakanth Rao- Manager of TPH, Adyar, Bro. G.B. Nagana Gowdar- Lecturer from Harappanahalli and Bro. H.C. Jagadeesh- Lecturer from Huliya.

Bro. B.V. Thippeswamy, President of KTF, delivered a talk on July 10 on 'Brotherhood: Inner Transformation'. Prof. C.A. Shinde, National Lecturer, spoke on 'Change is the basic truth for transformation'. Mrs. Heena Gohil presided over the programme of TOS in which some books were distributed to school children. Sis. K. Parvathamma, Secretary of the Federation, conducted a symposium on 'Individual & Group Work for Regeneration'. The speakers were Sis. P.Bhuvanewari from Huliya, Sis. D.J. Premaleela from Gubbi and Sis. K.M. Vanishree from Tumkur.

Bro. B.V. Thippeswamy presided over the meetings of the General Body of KTF and TPSS and the valedictory programme. The valedictory address was delivered by Bro. Pradeep H. Gohil and the subject he spoke on was 'Theosophical Society's Work & The Fundamental Change in Man and Society'.

In all, 281 delegates from 35 lodges of the Federation attended the conference.

### **Rayalaseema**

Col. H.S. Olcott's birthday was celebrated at Bellary Sanmarga Theosophical Society on August 2. About 48 members attended the meeting in which Bro. Basavaraja Reddy gave a brief talk on the first International President of TS.

The birthday of Madam H.P. Blavatsky was celebrated at the same venue in which 47 members were present. Bro. Vastrad, National Lecturer, spoke on this occasion on the life and work of HPB.

## **Utkal**

### **National Youth Camp and Study Class at Bhubaneswar**

A National Youth Camp was organized at Bhubaneswar by Pythagoras Youth Lodge in collaboration with Utkal Theosophical Federation from 13 to 15 August 2017. The first day of the camp was the day filled with various interesting and engaging activities in connection with the 22nd Annual Function of Pythagoras Youth Lodge.

The programme started with the Universal Prayer and a welcome address by the Secretary of Pythagoras Youth Lodge, Sis. Smitapragyan Patro, followed by the inaugural address by Bro. Sahadeb Patro, President of Utkal Theosophical Federation.

On this occasion the magazine SOPHIA was released by Bro. S. Patro and Sis. Bandana & Sis. Smitapragyan Patro (President and Secretary respectively of Pythagoras Youth Lodge) and also the e-version of SOPHIA was launched. The magazine included articles by some young theosophists of India. The anchoring of the event was done by Sis. Rinki Biswal.

Following activities were held on the first day of the camp: A symposium on the subject— “To live is to evolve”— and the participants were Sis. Dr. Varsha Patel, Sis. Bandana and Sis. Smitapragyan Patro. All the three speakers presented valuable thoughts on the subject. A debate of college students was organized on the subject— “Is discipline contrary to freedom?”—The certificate of participation was presented to all the participants in the evening. The children from class Vth to VIIIth made drawings on various contemporary issues. The certificate of participation was given to all. Tree plantation was done with all the young ones present. A public lecture on ‘Spiritual Life, Bhagavadgita and Theosophy’ was delivered by the National Lecturer of the Indian Section Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri. A public lecture was delivered by Bro. Parthasarathi Prasad Sarangi on “Truth, Beauty, Love and Theosophy”. A very memorable session turned out to be the one where everyone shared his/her thoughts on — “How Theosophy came to me?” A cultural programme was presented by children which included classical dance. A meeting of the National Youth Group Core Team was also held to discuss the future plans about conducting a youth camp in the Himalayan Centre of TS at Bhowali in May 2018.

A study class was conducted on the second day by the National Lecturer Dr. Varsha Patel. It was based on the book *Introduction to Yoga* by Annie Besant. The study was completed in four sessions with tea/lunch break in between. A very lucid and detailed power point presentation made the subject very interesting for all. The four sessions were on ‘An Introduction to Yoga’; ‘Nature and Types of Yoga’; ‘Yoga is a pure Science’; and ‘Yoga is a Sadhana’. This session ended with a question and answer session in which all the delegates participated.

On the third day a study class was conducted by Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri in which the following subjects were covered: 1) The Pilgrim and the Pilgrimage- Planes of Nature and Bodies of Man- Theosophical view; 2) Karma- Based on the book *A Study in Karma* by Annie Besant; 3) Thought Power-Man the maker of his destiny; and 4) Unity of Life and the objectives of the Theosophical Society. The study included lecture and power point presentation and question - answer session at the end of the study.

A session was organized for interaction between the young and the senior members of the Society. Basic point of discussion was, "What the youth of today wants and how to introduce theosophy to the youth to make it appealing".

Sis. Tapaswini Samantray gave vote of thanks in the concluding session.

The average attendance of delegates in the camp was about 25-30. Bharat Samaj Pooja was conducted on the morning of 14-15 August 2017.

The National Youth Group Core Team members who were present in this camp were: Sis. Dr. Varsha Patel, Sis. Smitapragyan Patro, Sis. Bandana, Sis. Rinki Biswal, Sis. Tapaswini Samantray, Sis. Sharmishtha Biswal and Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri.

### **Uttar Pradesh**

Nirvan Lodge, Agra, organized a seminar on 'Importance of Occult Powers in Theosophy' on 1<sup>st</sup> June in which Bros. R.P. Sharma, R.M. Malhotra, Mukesh Agarwal, Harish Sharma, Swami Devbharati and Dr. H.B. Pandey spoke on the aforesaid theme. The other seminar was held on June 8 in which Bros. Harish Sharma, S.K. Sharma, K.K. Singh and Devendra Vajpayee expressed their views on the subject of the seminar 'Expansion of Consciousness'. Besides, the following three talks were held at the same venue in June: 'Shrimad Bhagvad (10<sup>th</sup> Section)' by Bro. H.B. Pandey, 'Object of Man and Being' by Bro. H.K. Upadhyay and 'Timely relevance of Kabir' by Smt. Jyotsana Singh. A symposium on 'The significance of Prayer in Theosophy' was organized by the Lodge on July 27. Besides, the following three talks were held in July: 'Conscience' by Dr. Harish Sharma, 'Occultism' by Bro. Gyanesh Chaturvedi and 'Life means to remain lively and active' by Dr. Pratibha Sharma.

The White Lotus Day was observed by the members of Sarvahitkari Lodge, Gorakhpur, on 8 May. Dr. Radha Mohan, City M.L.A., was the guest speaker and he spoke on the life and work of HPB. The President of the Lodge Bro. S.B.R. Mishra and Dr. Ajai Rai, Secretary, as well expressed their views on the significance of the day. Besides, the following talks were held at Sarvahitakri Lodge in the month of May: Sri Raghurajji cited a few events from Ramayana. Sri A.P. Srivastava spoke on *Sankhya Yoga*. Dr. Ajai Rai explained Patanjali Yogasutra and in this context he especially explained Dharna, Dhyan and Yoga. Dr. S.C. Tripathi- a Retd. Professor-explained the importance of Yam and Niyam without which medi-

tation cannot be done. Dr. V.K. Dwivedi's subject of talk was 'Six Darshan' - Nyaya, Vaishashik, Sankhya, Yog, Karuna Mimansa and Vedanta Darshan. The speaker briefly described each philosophy giving their outline and explaining their significance. The last talk of the month was delivered by Dr. V.K. Rai on 'Nyaya Darshan'. Dr. Ajai Rai and Bro. A.P. Srivastava also presented their views on the subject of the talk.

A talk on the occasion of International Environment Day (June5) was organized by the Institution of Engineers, India, in Gorakhpur. Bro. S.B.R. Mishra was the guest speaker who spoke on 'Environment in Vedas'.

Keeping the 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sarvahitkari Lodge in view, Bro. S.B.R. Mishra narrated in a meeting organized at the Lodge about how it was established by Col. H.S. Olcott on 7 June 1882. Bro. Mishra read out the report giving details of how the Lodge came into existence and about the significant work done by it during the last 135 years. Besides, the following talks were held at the Lodge in the month of June and July: Bro. A.P. Srivastava spoke on 'Environment and its impact', Dr. A.K. Vajpayee spoke on 'Yoga' and it was followed by Yoga exercises in which all the members participated. In the same meeting Dr. V.K. Dwivedi explained the benefits one can get from Yoga and Asons. Sri Hafiz, Abdul Rahmani and Kazi of city spoke about Ramzan and Id. They stressed on charity and explained the importance of Id which is a festival of happiness and brotherhood. The subject of Bro. S.B.R. Mishra's talk was 'Quest for Truth'. Dr. Ajai Rai's talk was on 'Sufi view' in which he spoke about the life and work of some famous Sufies like Rumi, Gajali, Chisti and others. Dr. Anjoo Mishra spoke on 'Human happiness'. Dr. Sudhir Kumar dealt with the subject 'Control of Mind & Senses'.

Bro. U.S. Pandey delivered talks on "Awareness by Stomach Breathing to rejuvenate physical and emotional bodies" and "Spiritual outlook in daily life". These talks were held on 15 July in a gathering of retired persons and their families in Lucknow.

Bro. S.K. Pandey, National Lecturer, delivered R.B. Lal Srivastava Memorial Lecture on "Individualization" at Satyamarg Lodge, Lucknow, on 23 July. Besides, he delivered a public talk on "Reincarnation" in the evening on the same day.

Study of the Bhagavadgita was conducted at Gyanodaya Lodge, Barabanki, during its weekly meetings held in the months of May and June, 2017.

The following talks/activities were organized by Dharm Lodge, Lucknow, in July and August: 'Practical Theosophy' by Bro. B.K. Pandey; 'Five Hindrances' by Bro. Ashok Gupta; 'Importance of lodge meeting' by Bro. B.B. Lal; 'What is Yoga?' and 'The World is a Family' by Bro. U.S. Pandey; and 'Freedom of mind from mechanical thinking process' by Bro. B.L. Dube and Bro. U.S. Pandey; 'Spiritual Path' by Bro. B.K. Pandey; 'Occult functions of some

organs' by Bro. B.P. Shukla; 'Meditation-its purpose and types' by Bro. U.S. Pandey and 'Theosophical Life' by Bro. B.B. Lal. Besides, the annual meeting of the Lodge was held on 30 August.

Bro. U.S. Pandey delivered a talk on "Third Object of the Theosophical Society" in a meeting of Satyamarg Lodge held on 20 August.

Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri delivered a talk on 'Role of Prana in man's constitution'. It was held in the Education Department of Lucknow University on 30 August.

A study camp on the theme 'Rejuvenation and Transformation by Self-awareness' was organized in Dayanand Inter College, Lucknow, from 3 to 5 August. About 20 members from lodges at Lucknow and 50 students of the college attended it. The camp started with recitation of Universal Prayer. Bro. R.U. Shukla, Principal of the college, welcomed the participants. Smt. Vasumati Agnihotri introduced the speaker Bro. U.S. Pandey who conducted the study.

The topics like need and nature of transformation, its stages and approaches, scanning of physical body, emotional scanning, removing push buttons, handling relationship, conditioning and conflicts, values, love, minimizing worry and anxiety, intuition, effects of awareness, importance of health etc. were covered. Guided short practices of techniques were also carried out by the participants. The students and other participants expressed their appreciation for the programme in the concluding session. Smt. Agnihotri proposed vote of thanks.

A study camp on 'The Ancient Wisdom' was held at Kanpur from 11 to 13 August. About 25 members from Kanpur, Lucknow and Barabanki participated in it. The camp started in the morning of 11 August with recitation of all religions' prayers followed by the universal prayer. Bro. R.L. Gupta, President of Chohan Lodge, Kanpur, welcomed the participants. Bro. U.S. Pandey introduced the subject and inaugurated the camp. He also covered chapters Introduction, VI and XII during one session on each day. Other resource persons were: Bro. K.K. Srivastava (Ch. I and IV); Bro. S.S. Gautam, Federation Lecturer (Ch. II, VII and XI); Bro. S.K. Pandey, National Lecturer (Ch. III, VIII and X); Sis. Preeti Tiwari, Federation Lecturer (Ch. V and IX).

Two meditation sessions were held in the morning of 12 and 13 August guided by Bro. U.S. Pandey and Bro. Pramila Dwivedi. A devotional meet was conducted by Bro. S.K. Pandey on August 12. During the interactive and concluding session held in the afternoon of 13 August, questions raised by the participants were clarified by the speakers, and a few suggestions were made for camps to be organized in future. Participants expressed their appreciation for presentation of the content and also for board/lodging arrangement made. Vote of thanks was proposed by Bro. S.K. Pandey on behalf of the Federation and by Bro. S.S. Gautam on behalf of the lodge.

Bro. Jwala Pd. Mishra's talk on '*Bhartiya Parva*' and Smt. Uma Bhattacharyya's talk on 'Obstacles on the path of dhyān and the way to remove them' were held on 28 July and 4 August respectively. Bro. Pradeep H. Gohil, General Secretary of the Indian Section, explained in detail the 'Source of Spiritual Energy' in his talk held on 25 August. These three talks were held under the auspices of Kashi Tattva Sabha at the Indian Section HQ. In the study class held on every Tuesday, the members of KTS are studying the book *The Principles of Theosophical Work* by I.K. Taimni.

Smt. Baleshwari Gupta (Diploma. No. 97571) of Nirvan Lodge, Agra, passed to peace on 24 May, 2017.

Sri. Anand M. Kulkarni (Diploma. No. 41148) of Kashi Tattva Sabha passed to peace on 13 August. He was President of Annie Besant Youth Lodge during 1959-60 at the Indian Section HQ. And during the later years when he became a senior Geologist he used to come to Varanasi during the International Theosophical Convention to help in the work at the Indian Section HQ.

**Study Camp:**

1. A study camp on *The Voice of the Silence* is being arranged at Gorakhpur on 28-29 October, 2017. The study will be conducted in Hindi.

Members of U.P. Federation and also of other Federations are welcome to participate in it.

The persons coming from outside Gorakhpur will be provided board and lodging from 27 October (evening) to 29 October (evening), for which each such participant will pay a contribution of Rs.300/- on arrival at Gorakhpur. Each such person may inform his/her name to any of the following contact persons latest by 10 October, 2017.

Bro. S.B. R.Mishra, President, Sarvahitakari Lodge, Gorakhpur, Mob. 9415849939.

Bro. Ajai Kumar Rai, Secretary, Sarvahitakari Lodge, Gorakhpur, Mob. 9307279095.

2. A study camp on *A Text Book of Theosophy* is being arranged at Basti on 04-05 November, 2017. The study will be conducted in Hindi.

Members of U.P. Federation and also of other Federations are welcome to participate in it.

The persons coming from outside Basti will be provided board and lodging from 03 November (evening) to 05 November (evening), for which each such participant will pay a contribution of Rs.300/- on arrival at Basti. Each such person may inform his/her name to the following contact person latest by 20 October, 2017.

Bro. Prashant Kumar Pandey, Secretary, Basti Lodge, Mob. 8090061837.

## THE 142<sup>nd</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Theme: *From Teachings to Insight: The Altruistic Heart*

The 142nd International Convention of the Theosophical Society will be held at the International Headquarters, Adyar, **from 31 December 2017 to 5 January 2018**. All members of the Society in good standing are welcome to attend as delegates.

*Non-members may send requests for permission to attend, together with a recommendation from an officer of the Federation or the Section, to the Convention Officer (CO) before 25 November.*

From 29 Dec. 2017 to 6 Jan. 2018, inclusive

LEADBEATER CHAMBERS (LBC)	Registration fee	Full board
Overseas delegates	US\$ 70 *	US\$ 280 *
Indian and Less Developed Countries' delegates	Rs.200	Rs.8,500

(Includes sharing room, mosquito nets, sheets, no blankets, all meals at LBC dining hall) No reimbursement, if one eats at the Canteen.

Note: half rate for children of 3-10 years. \* or EUR or Pound equivalent

INDIAN STYLE Registration fee Accommodation

Indian and Less Developed Countries' delegates (Includes mat/cot or mattress, sheets, no meals) Rs.200 Rs.350

**Canteen** from 30 Dec. (dinner) to 5 Jan. (lunch)(breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner)  
**Canteen** Rs.1,100

Canteen will be run by the Karnataka Theosophical Federation.

Note: half rate for children of 3-10 years

### ACCOMMODATION CONSIDERATIONS

Factors considered in allocating Indian style accommodation are active membership, health, age, priority of registration, size of family, etc. Rooms and bathrooms cannot be made available for anyone's exclusive use. Young persons should be prepared to stay in dormitories. No special facilities can be provided for members who are ill or for women with babies. No kitchens are available. Ordinary medical attention will be available for minor complaints but there will be no provision for serious illness. Since accommodation is limited, especially ground

floor, availability will be subject to confirmation by the Convention Officer.

## **REGISTRATION AND PAYMENTS**

*Last date for registration: 1 December 2017.*

*Cancellation:* last date 15 December 2017; payment will be refunded, except the Registration fee. After 12 December there will be no refund of any amount.

**Delegates from India:** Send registration, accommodation and canteen charges together, along with the details as per the Registration form (available at <[www.ts-adyar.org](http://www.ts-adyar.org)>), to the Convention Officer before 1 December 2017. Remittance by **bank drafts, duly crossed**, should be **made payable to *The Treasurer, The Theosophical Society, Chennai***. For online bank transfers contact the CO.

**Delegates from other countries:** Make sure you take travel insurance. Send the Registration form preferably by email. For online bank transfers, and any other matters, contact the CO by email.

***Convention Officer, email: [tsadyarconvention@gmail.com](mailto:tsadyarconvention@gmail.com) or***

*The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India*

Marja Artamaa, *International Secretary*

**THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, Adyar,  
Chennai 600 020, India  
International Convention 2017-18  
REGISTRATION & ACCOMMODATION FORM**

[To be filled in Block Capitals and sent to the Convention Officer, preferably by email tsadyarconvention@gmail.com.

*Non-members may send requests to attend, together with a recommendation from an officer of the TS, to the Convention Officer before 25 November.]*

Name: ..... Nationality: ..... Email: .....  
 ..... Address (in home country) ..... Phone/Mobile: .....  
 Year of Joining ..... Section/Federation/Lodge ..... Special Request: .....

**PACKAGE RATES:**

A. LBC: Overseas delegates USD 350\* Includes registration fee, meals at LBC Dining Hall, accommodation sharing, sheets mosquito nets

B. LBC: Indian delegates Rs.8,700 Includes registration fee, meals at LBC Dining Hall, accommodation sharing, sheets mosquito nets

C. INDIAN STYLE: Rs.1,650 Includes registration fee, meals at Canteen, accommodation - sharing/dormitory, mat/cot or mattress, sheet

Note: half rate for children of 3-10 years

\* or EUR or Pound equivalent

No.	Name(include the main applicant)	Age	Gender F/M	Member Y/N	Package(A/B / C)	Amount
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Mode of Payment Cheque # or Online

Date of Arrival: ..... morning/afternoon Date of Departure: ..... morning/afternoon

Recommended by .....

Signature: .....

Signature of applicant: .....

Date: .....

Overseas delegates: Please make sure you are covered under overseas travel insurance

Last date for registration: 1 December 2017

For online payments and clarifications, visit <http://www.ts-adyar.org/event/142nd-international-convention> or email to tsadyarconvention@gmail.com

## **BOOKS ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION**

### **MAN, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE – Examples of Different Types of Men as Seen by Means of Trained Clairvoyance**

*C. W. Leadbeater*

The author examines different planes of existence, giving broad principles essential for the understanding of those not familiar with theosophical literature.

### **THE MONAD – And Other Essays on the Higher Consciousness**

*C. W. Leadbeater*

A collection of essays on the Monad, Consciousness, Time, Meditation and related topics. An important book for students of Theosophy.

### **GODS IN EXILE**

*J. J. Van der Leeuw*

This book describes a spiritual exercise that can be used to enhance our consciousness to the Higher Self and maintain it in day-to-day life. It describes this mystical journey starting with a change of attitude, and the use of the will to overcome an undisciplined imagination. Life on Earth takes a turn when the soul awakens to an ethical struggle born out of ignorance, and we embark on a quest towards realizing our true nature.

### **THE ASTRAL PLANE**

*C. W. Leadbeater*

A presentation featuring the astral plane and the 'dream-world' with descriptions of different entities that inhabit it as well as other fascinating and useful information for the interested student.

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