

DUTIES OF THE
THEOSOPHIST

ANNIE BESANT

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DUTIES OF THE THEOSOPHIST

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DUTIES OF THE THEOSOPHIST

*Being three Convention Lectures delivered in Lucknow
at the Forty-First Anniversary of the Theosophical
Society, December, 1916*

BY

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THEOSOPHICAL CONVENTION LECTURES

THE DUTY OF THE THEOSOPHIST TO RELIGION

FRIENDS :

Come back with me down the long road of one-and-forty years, come across land and ocean to the city of New York, where a small band of people were gathered together, and there, in 1875, founded the Theosophical Society. The Society at that time, with its Life-President, Henry Steele Olcott, with its great occult teacher, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, represented the uprising of a great spiritual force against the dominant materialism of the day. That materialism was largely scientific, and among the great masses of educated working people, it was a materialism that followed the thought of the scientists of the time, the thought of the philosophers of the day. The materialism was one of those phenomena in human history which from time to time arise

when religion has forgotten its life, and when it has become too largely a matter of the letter and of form. It had its justification in the long struggle between Religion and Science, which arose on the claim of Christianity to be the only true religion in the world, which claimed the sword of the State as well as the crozier of the Bishop, and tried to compel the human mind to submission by force instead of by reason. The terrible conflict in Europe between Religion and Science is familiar to every one of you: on the one side a small, scattered set of thinkers, men of heroic mould, men of keen and piercing intellect, who claimed the right of liberty of thought, of conscience, who claimed to speak the truths they had discovered. Efforts, as you know, were made to silence them, to silence them by prison, by torture, by the death of fire at the stake; but one thing no power can do is to trample out the Truth by force, by persecution, even by death itself; for Truth is immortal, and from the ashes of one slain messenger of Truth arise hundreds of others to re-echo the message that was brought; and so persecution failed against the growing knowledge, but left behind it a legacy of bitterness that made the terrible antagonism between Religion and knowledge. There you have the reason why—as knowledge grew, as scientific men became more numerous, as they began to hold their own and exercise their right of thought and speech—they were prejudiced against the religion which

had tried to crush them, and sought for arguments in Science against the truths of Religion. We who know that in Religion is the hope of man, we who realise that on man's knowledge of immortality rests the future progress of the race, we must remember that ours is the fault—the fault of religionists—that Science became our enemy, and that for the first time in the long history of the world the University and the Church were set over against each other.

So, in modern Europe, Science became materialistic. It sought, in the partial truth it knew, arguments against the religion which had tried to silence it; it endeavoured by a partial view of Nature to prove that man was only a passing embodiment of consciousness, and that when the body died the consciousness went back into that vast ocean of consciousness in which all individuality is lost. Such was the condition of the modern world when the Theosophical Society was born. The leading intellects of the day had shaken off belief in Religion. They proclaimed themselves agnostic, without knowledge; and against that proclamation, ringing through every country in Europe, from the homes of science, from the mouths of great thinkers, against that mighty power, this small group of people in New York ranged themselves, proclaiming the re-establishment of the Gnosis, proclaiming the knowledge of God. It seemed a hopeless strife: a little group of unknown people against the embattled intellect of Europe; but on

the side of these unknown people was the deathless intuition in the human heart ; on their side the knowledge of the ages against the new growth of Science ; on their side, the force which has built civilisations, and which has shown in the history of the world that materialism is only a passing phenomenon of knowledge, of imperfect and partial knowledge, which had not grasped the synthesis of religion.

Now, when we look over the modern world after these one-and-forty years, what do we see ? We see that Science and Religion again are clasping hands. We see that materialism is discredited, and that the leading men of science no longer use the name of agnostic. We find that the intuition of the heart has asserted itself so mightily that the knowledge—the partial knowledge—of the head has had to give way before it ; that science is coming back to religion ; that those words of Bacon are true, spoken with knowledge greater than normal, that “ while a little knowledge inclineth men to atheism, a larger knowledge bringeth them back to religion ”. That is true ; and the position of Theosophy in the world shows how the Theosophist has striven in the past to do his duty to Religion. Materialism, we may say, is conquered. Science has entered on the borderland of higher knowledge. But the great Gnosis that was again proclaimed in New York—that is far more than the knowledge which Science can win by the study of that garment of God which we call the natural world,

for the heart of man who is thirsting after God is not satisfied therewith; it demands knowledge of the Divine Nature, and the greatest service that Theosophy has done to Religion in the past has been to declare, and once again to prove, that man can know God and not only believe in Him, that he can realise God, and not only hope that He is. That has always been the Royal Secret of the East. Here it was—that in the elder times of our race, the great proclamation was made, so familiar to all of you: when the disciple asked the teacher: “What is knowledge?”—knowledge was divided into two. There is lower knowledge, the knowledge of all sacred books, the knowledge of all sciences, the knowledge of everything that the brain can compass or, to put it in what sometimes seems to me the most explicit way, the knowledge of every thing that the mouth can speak to the ear, the knowledge of everything that the teacher can give to the pupil, the knowledge of everything that man can give to man. That is the lower knowledge, however splendid it may be; that is the lower knowledge, however magnificent may be its range. What I can teach you, what you can teach me, what the loftiest Deva can teach to man—all that is the lower knowledge. What then remains? What is the higher? What is that Parā-Vidyā that is to be apart from all else? That is “the knowledge of Him by whom all else is known”; the knowledge that none can impart, the

knowledge that none can give, but the knowledge that every one of you has hidden in his own heart; there is the place where shall be found the Reality, and the God within shall illuminate the world without. Here, no teacher is wanted, here no guide is necessary; the Light shines within "every man that cometh into the world," and that Light shines in the heart of every one of you. There is none who is born without it; there is none who cannot find it. Look not for the Light outside, but look for the Light within you; and when that Light is found, which is the essence of your nature, then you obtain that Knowledge by which all else is known. But even to call it "Knowledge" is an accommodation to the weakness of human thought; for knowledge implies the knower and the object which is known, and knowledge is the link between the knower and the object. But here there is no knower, there is no object; the seeker realises God, he does not know Him; it is Realisation and not knowledge, and that is the real Gnosis—the Royal Secret of the East. And so it is written that "those who say, 'I know Him,' they know Him not". He is not to be known, but to be realised; He is not to be seen outside, but to be entered within; *there* it is realisation of identity; the known and the knower are one, and the man realises himself, and feels that he is God. That was the great proclamation that Theosophy made in the midst of the sceptical and materialistic

West ; that the great Secret which the Sages have taught, which every God-illuminated man has ever proclaimed ; and Theosophy came to re-proclaim the ancient truth, and to tell men once again that all might find the Highest by realising the Self within. That is the great message of Theosophy, and that message comes once more from the source of all Scriptures and all Revelations, that mighty Brotherhood of the Lovers and the Guardians of men, who ever guide our faltering steps, who ever overshadow the world with Their protection and Their love. The Theosophical Society is only the latest messenger from that same great Brotherhood, only the last of many messengers, and looking forward to a greater Messenger that shall come ; for this Society, charged with the treasure of the ancient Gnosis, charged to spread the message which since has overrun the world, has inspired into every one of the great religions the same intensity of belief, the same realisation of Divinity. I have mentioned often those lectures on Mysticism given in London by the Dean of S. Paul's not so very long before the War, and you may remember how in those lectures he lifted Mysticism up again to its high place as the loftiest form of Religion. Mysticism, he said, is the only scientific form of Religion. Curiously enough he almost repeated the words of Shri Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, where you may remember that He said that all the Vedas to an enlightened Brāhmaṇa are as useful

as a tank in a land covered with water. No man wants a tank where water is everywhere. The enlightened Brāhmaṇa—the knower of Brahman—he needs no revelation of written words, for God has revealed Himself within; and so the Dean of S. Paul's, re-echoing that idea, declared that to the Mystic no sacred books were of any value, no scriptures were of any use, for he had the knowledge within himself, and of what use to him a knowledge from without? So unto Christianity Mysticism has returned—Mysticism, which in the elder days of the Churches was the same knowledge that the Indian calls the Parā-Vidyā.

At that time it was wisely declared that no proposed Bishop of the Church should be made Bishop unless he had reached that Realisation which alone is the highest knowledge. And Christianity weakened as the knowers, the Gnostics, disappeared, and as men began to repeat by rote, to accept an authority, to receive from tradition, instead of letting go their vessel into the depths of the well of Divine Wisdom, and bringing it up to the surface for their own drinking. This we find: wherever there is Mysticism, or Theosophy, or Parā-Vidyā—call it what you will—there, men are at one; they are not disputing about the truths of religion. We fight over dogmas, because they are partial intellectual presentments of Truth; but none fights over religious experience, which is the same for every one in the East or the West, the same for every one in Asia, or in Europe, or in America, like the light of the

one Sun that shines on all. The knowledge of the Mystic is one, and illumines the human heart with the same light and not another, and that is why it is called scientific. It is based, as is all science, on human experience. The facts of science—do you really know *them*, or do you only know the impression that those facts make upon yourself? You have no knowledge beyond your own experience, and the voice of experience is that which none can deny. A scientifically proved fact is accepted, because an identical impression has been made on a large number of competent observers, and they agree in the testimony of consciousness; and so, the great facts of Divine existence, of man's life in God, those facts are established by the testimony of expert witnesses, whose own experience has been identical, and the many identical experiences are accepted as the voice of human consciousness. There is no proof that science has, outside the physical proof of the laboratory, which is not relevant in intellectual and spiritual matters, which Mysticism—the true Science of the Soul—is not also able to furnish. And so the Mystic stands on a foundation that nothing can shake. Every scripture may be torn into pieces, but the inner Light can reveal them once again. Every temple, every church, every mosque, may crumble into fragments, but the Prophets who made those temples, churches and mosques can have them rebuilt on the old foundations. The essence of

Religion is eternal. The Veda, the true knowledge, is ever said to be eternal: not the written parchment, not the printed books, but the knowledge that is behind them. The Veda does not belong to the Hindū alone; it belongs to every religion, every race, to the future as well as to the past humanity: it is a deathless fount of spiritual inspiration which will flow as long as man himself endures.

Now, the duty of the Theosophist as regards the destruction of materialism is practically accomplished: that lies behind us. What is our duty in the years that lie in front of us? In order to answer that question, you must try to realise where humanity is standing at the present time. The world is rent with a frightful War. Man is battling against man with every assistance that science, turned to the most demoniacal ends, can furnish for human destruction. Some of you may perchance remember that in the very early days of the Theosophical Society—somewhere about 1881 or 1882—Mr. A. P. Sinnett, then the Editor of the *Pioneer*, pressed for information which should help the more rapid growth of science. A man of keen intellect, a man of great culture—he desired to recommend the teachings of Theosophy by giving proofs to the then sceptical world. He did not realise that the proof of Religion is within and not without, that Religion rests on spiritual and not on

material bases, that it is the great Tree whose roots are in Heaven and whose branches spread abroad below in the world of men; and when he pressed one of the great Teachers for some light on science that would prove indubitably that the Brotherhood held knowledge not yet attained by men, what was the answer? "We will give no proofs for the helping of science until the human conscience has developed to a higher point than it has reached at present." When those words were spoken, they were thought to be somewhat harsh. Why should They not give the knowledge They had? Why should They not share the secrets of science They possessed? Look abroad on the world to-day, and you will see the wisdom that dictated that refusal, for science is turned to the vilest of purposes, because it has not a conscience behind it; it seeks new instruments of destruction; it endeavours to make liquid fire to burn; it tries to make poisonous gas to torment and slay; it makes new explosives which will kill more men than the latest explosives of the enemy. Why should a science turned to the service of devils, be helped by the Brotherhood, by the Elder Brethren of mankind? Very well has it been that the secret powers remain in hands that use them for love and not for hate. Take one power that was almost discovered, the power by which the atom is disintegrated, a power so tremendous that the disintegration of a single atom would spread

widespread destruction on every side. Is that knowledge to be placed in the hands of men who seek to destroy, who are full of hatred, who seek to oppress and to tyrannise, who care not what hearts are broken nor what homes are ravished, if only ambition may be satisfied and the crown of the world be placed upon a single brow? Are such people fit to know? Nay, it had been better that science had not progressed as far as it has progressed to-day; and until the social conscience grows, until men learn to love and not to hate, until they realise that the brain must be the servant, not the master, it had been better that they should have remained more ignorant than they are to-day. So knowledge, happily, was refused.

In this world-wide War, many of you will realise what is at work. We are in one of those transition times in which an old civilisation is dying and a new civilisation is being born. This civilisation to which we belong stands condemned, because knowledge is turned to evil and not to good. And so on the battle-fields of Europe, men are perishing, slain, mutilated, literally by the million. The youth of the Nations has been cast into the pit of slaughter. Those who ought to have been the fathers of the coming generation lie as corpses in bloody graves, or they crawl on the surface of the globe, mutilated, blind, deafened cripples—the hope of all the Nations involved in one common ruin. When the War is over, when the Nations again are

at peace, will not the problems to be dealt with be more difficult than the problems of the War? Out of that shattered civilisation, out of those broken Nations, who shall come as re-creator of the world to build up once again on a surer foundation the broken lives of Nations and of men? The answer comes in that message proclaimed but a few years ago, that just as in the past, just as in ages gone by, just as when older civilisations were decaying and newer were coming to birth, just as then, a great Messenger came from the Brotherhood of R̥shis to speak words of peace, words of reconstruction, so shall it be again. Very different is the duty of the Theosophist to-day towards Religion from the duty that was his in the years that lie behind. Then you had, as I said, to restore that knowledge of God which the West calls Mysticism and the East calls the Parā-Vidyā. Then you had to take to the West the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation, which the West had forgotten and which to some extent were ignored in the East. To the West they were practically new, although in their ancient writings. In the East, they had grown overlaid, and to some extent were wrested from their meaning. What has Theosophy done with regard to the doctrine of Karma in the East? You had the doctrine, had it in several forms, had it in the Hinḍū faith, had it in the form of destiny in the faith of Islām. When Theosophy began to deal with the great doctrine of Karma—the very law of the

evolving life of man—then it was that the Theosophists called back the Hindūs to the old conception of Karma, and away from the modern sense in which it was taken as fate to be endured instead of conditions to be understood. We found Indians at that time dealing with Karma as an ignorant man might deal with some other law in Nature, not understanding that every law in Nature is only a set of conditions that work out an inevitable result; not understanding that if you change the conditions you change the result; not understanding that Karma is ever in the making, and is not only an inheritance coming over to you from your past. We take up again that great teaching of Bhīṣhma, the master of Dharma, who declared that “exertion is greater than destiny”—destiny, to-day made up of the exertions of the past, but the exertions of the present are able to grapple with the result of the past exertions, and very often to overpower it and to change its course; so that now, you no longer find the Hindū sitting in front of Karma folding his hands and saying: “It is my karma and I cannot help it.” That is gone. What you see is the Hindū facing his karma and saying: “Yes, that is my karma; I made it in the past, and I will change it in the present. I am the one that made it; I created it by my thought, by my wishes, by my actions; I am still the thinking, the willing, the acting Self; and that which I made I will change, that which I made badly I will re-make

well to-day." And so we do not find men saying: "Oh! yes, we have a National Karma, and so must lie down on the ground and be rolled over as much as others choose." They say now: "We have a National Karma; we have worn out the worst of it, and we will stand on our feet as men." Karma is no longer a paralysing force: it is an inspiring strength. We realise that we are the creators of the present, can re-model it with our larger energy, our stronger will, and with the suffering of the past changed into the power of the present. That is the way we look at Karma now, and that is very largely the work of the Theosophical Society among you. So, although in India we had not to do what we had to do in the West—to bring truths utterly forgotten to the surface—still there were many mighty truths in the Scriptures which had become overlaid by the dust of ages, and so were practically hidden. Theosophy for India has made that sense of the dignity of man, which realises that, because man is God, there is nothing that the will of man cannot eventually do. So it has become a reviver of the realities of Religion. I grant we have nothing to add to the great faiths of the East. But we have to win people to realise that the western knowledge of Religion is less than the eastern, and that the Easterns must justify themselves. That revival of Religion is necessary for all future progress; and the message of the Coming of the Teacher—the Jagad Guru, or any

other name that you like to call Him by—that Coming of the Teacher is the latest message that the Theosophical Society has given to the world.

You might have found it out without us. When you see the world in the chaos it is in to-day, you might know from past history that it is a sign of a new birth for the Nations, and you know if you look back to history that catastrophes like those of to-day have always heralded a great new birth of civilisation ; for each of the branches from the root Āryan stock spread out westwards, and every one of those had to struggle for its life, and had its Teacher with it. Now that this terrible convulsion is shaking our world, there is none strong enough to restore it save the highest Teacher of the world. For Him we are looking, for Him we are striving to prepare ; and the duty of the Theosophist in Religion to-day is to try to spread the knowledge of the Coming of the World-Teacher, knowledge which is gradually permeating the world of men to-day.

The religions of the world are beginning to realise that there must be a coming of some supreme religious Teacher. The Christian begins to talk in these days of agony about the returning Christ ; the Musalmān is speaking in his feeling of sorrow—I will not say despair, for Islām never despairs—but feeling the pressure of the terrible conditions of the time, he also speaks of a Coming Helper who will strengthen and preserve their faith. Among the

Buddhists you will find in Burma tens of thousands who are looking for the coming soon of the Bodhisattva—the Buddha-to-be. And among the Hindūs also there is spreading the belief, out of the knowledge of their own Scriptures, that the gathering up of the forces of evil prophesies the coming of the embodied force of good. They have not forgotten Rāvaṇa, who called down Shri Rāma; they have not forgotten Shishupāla, who made the coming of Shri Kṛṣṇa a necessity; and they realise that in the anguish of the world there is an appeal to God—an appeal that never goes unanswered, that is never left without a Messenger from on High. The special work that we have to do for Religion, beyond the spreading of the message of the Coming of the Teacher, is to proclaim with all the energy that we can the unity of religions, to live it as well as to speak it; for what is true Religion, of which all religions are only the outer forms? It is the realisation of the Oneness: that we are one with God, and therefore we are one with every child of God, with every son of man. That is our special religious duty to-day: not only to say it, but to live it; not only to talk about it, but to practise it; that the Hindū and the Musalmān shall join hands as sons of a common Father; that the Brāhmin and the Pariah shall join hands as sons of one God; that whatever we have of larger possessions, whether it be of knowledge or of anything else, we shall share them with those who are poorest in the

things of which we have the most; to realise that Brotherhood does not only go upwards seeking equality with our superiors, but it goes downwards to lift up our inferiors until they stand on the same level as that on which we stand ourselves. That, then, is our great duty—the unity of all religions, the unity of men.

The last duty that I want to lay stress upon is one which is essentially Hindū, but has been in modern days forgotten: namely, that there is nothing, nothing in all our activities, which can be separated from religion.

It was said of the old Hindū that he slept religion, ate religion, thought religion, lived religion—Max Müller said it. That is true, and that must come back, not only to the Hindū but to every religious mind. In the West they have a Sunday—the “Lord’s day”; one day in the week belongs to the Lord, and to whom do all the other days belong? “This book is sacred, and all the others profane; this thing is religious, everything else is secular.” To believe and to live that, is to eat the heart out of every human activity. If in God we live, move and have our being, if God dwells in your heart and in mine, what can you and I do that is not divine activity, and that ought not to be penetrated by the spirit of Religion? You are religious in the temple; you must be religious in the market place. You are religious in the pūjā room; you must be religious in the court: as vakil, pleading;

as judge, giving judgment; as doctor, healing; as soldier, fighting; as merchant, trading. You must be religious right through, or else you have no true religion. Nothing is outside Religion. They say: "Mrs. Besant is a religious teacher; she must have nothing to do with politics." But I assure you that just because Mrs. Besant is a religious teacher, therefore she has everything to do with politics. It was not without meaning that in the elder days the King had the Brāhmaṇa as his chief councillor. The Ṛṣhis visited the courts of Kings, and asked them how they were ruling their subjects; did they see that the agriculturist had seed? did they give the artisan materials for his manufacture? did they look to the widow, to the orphan? did they pay their soldiers' wages? did they see that justice was done in their realm? All very "secular" questions. But man is one: he cannot divide himself into water-tight compartments, and give a little bit of himself to his merchandise, another little bit of himself to his politics, another little bit of himself to his religion, another little bit of himself to his home. The whole man must be in every place, and the duty he does at any special moment is the duty that the circumstances around him call upon him to fulfil. The religious man should work at that which the world of the moment needs most. The religious man should seek the Divine Will for the Nation as well as for the individual, and follow out that Will as

best he may. Only when we are thoroughly religious, when Religion permeates every activity, when Religion permeates every thought, when Religion permeates every word, only then will the Theosophist do his duty to Religion; and the duty of the Theosophist is the duty of every religious man.

THE DUTY OF THE THEOSOPHIST TO SOCIETY

FRIENDS :

In yesterday's discourse we came to the point that religion must permeate every activity of a truly religious man, that nothing could be outside his religion, that he could not divide himself up into separate compartments, partly given to God, partly given to business, partly given to the ordinary paths in life. The man is one whole, complete, spiritual Intelligence. The whole of him belongs to God and to man ; and religion—which we saw meant the realisation of the Self, the realisation of God, the realisation of Unity—in its manifold aspects must necessarily imply service, help in every direction of life where man can need the assistance of man. That is our foundation. Whether we call it Theosophy, or Brahma-Vidyā, or, as in the West, Mysticism, there is no difference in the essential meaning of those terms. And so, to-day and to-morrow, we are to try to work out into the practical, outside life of man that which is to flow from his union with God. We are to try to

see how the Theosophist, the truly religious man, will act in his outward activities and duties : his duty to Society, his duty to his Nation and to Humanity. Those are the two lines of thought that we are to follow to-day and to-morrow.

Now, when I say the Theosophist, I am thinking of the man of any faith who has realised what his religion means to him by seeing it rooted in the one Divine Wisdom, in that Parā-Vidyā of which yesterday I spoke. Sometimes, in fact very often, the religion that a man is born into, that surrounds him in his childhood, that surrounds him in his life, in the home, in the country, becomes too much a matter of form, too much a matter of course. Man belongs to his religion because he is born in one country or another, in one family or another ; his faith comes to him like his ancestral tradition and is taken, as they are taken, as a matter of course which colours his thoughts and his life. Whatever the religion may be, to some extent that is true : the child grows into it before he has power of thought and discrimination. A child is born in a Hindū home, he grows up in Hindū life and among Hindū ceremonies ; he hears his father and mother talk of their faith and observe its rules, and so he is moulded outwardly into that form of Hindūism. As he goes to school and college, it takes a less prominent part in his life, his mind is turned outward ; his home influence is less and the school and college

influence more ; and when he grows to manhood, unless the home be a truly religious home, he is a Hindū more in name than in reality, more in outer form than in the inner life. So, again, with the Christian : he is born a Christian, he grows up among the Christian habits of thought, he lives in the Christian environment ; and when he comes to be a man, the religion is again a matter of form rather than of life, and, save in the minority, it does not to any extent influence the outer life of the Christian Nations. So, again, with Islām : the child grows up to reverence his great Prophet, to be proud of his faith, to breathe in its traditions, but with him also, as he grows to man's estate, there is apt to be a conventional acceptance more, perhaps, than real living faith. If any of these come across Theosophy, what does Theosophy do for them, how does it make them Theosophists ? It begins with the man's own religion ; it deepens his love for it ; it widens his view of it ; the religion becomes more real to him because he has drunk of the Divine Wisdom, and sees before him the path of the realisation of God. It makes the religion more spiritual, and brings a more living and individual acceptance of it instead of a hereditary belief ; and that is the great service Theosophy does to the men of every faith. The Hindū becomes more Hindū when he is a Theosophist, and not less. It widens him, it spiritualises him, it fills up what were sometimes empty forms

with the life of the Spirit Himself. The Musalmān, again, realises more than before the greatness of his own Prophet, and His place in the Hierarchy of Teachers. He realises what Lord Muhammad came to teach, what he added to the knowledge of the then world. The Christian realises, when he becomes a Theosophist, that religion is not a matter for this day or the other, for this place or the other, but the all-pervading power in the life which makes it a living reality. He breaks down the walls of separation, he realises the unity of religions, but he is a better Christian, a truer follower of Christ, when he has accepted the Brotherhood of religions, and sees his brethren in every faith that uplifts and consoles human life; so that really, if I may put it so without offence, a Theosophist is a man who takes his religion in earnest. He wants to live it, not only to proclaim it. He wants to identify himself with the spirit of his own Great Prophet.

But now, there is something more that a Theosophist must recognise: he must bring religion into every part of his life; he must see that nothing stands aside from it; but in every activity he must realise that activity is to be an act of service and not an action which seeks for fruit. Unless the Theosophist can do that, he is no true Theosophist. The great teaching of the Lord's Song—the *Bhagavad-Gītā*—what is the whole of that except a repetition of the same statement?—Act, work, but remember that action

binds, save action which is done for the sake of sacrifice. That is the central truth of action. Every action—good, bad, indifferent—binds you to the wheel of births and deaths. As long as you look for personal gain, as long as you look for individual profit, nay, as long as you work in order in any way to serve yourself, that action binds you, that action holds you firm in the grip of karma. How can you be free? I have just given you the word of freedom: Sacrifice—that which is done for the sake of carrying out the Divine Will in the world, that which is done because you feel yourself part of One Life found in every one around you equally dwelling. That which you do for the whole, not for a part, that which you do as living in God and doing God's work—that action alone does not bind the man, for it is an action that is sacrifice, and has no binding power; and that sort of action is what we call Service. Service is that which is done for love's sake for another. It is not true service which is paid with wages. I know you call a man a servant, whose time, whose body, you buy for so many rupees a month; that is the lower service, the service of those souls who are in the stage symbolised by the Shūdra—the younger souls. But the higher service which reproduces in the spiritual world the position of the Shūdra here—the Sannyāsī, the man who has given his life to Service, he is the highest because he is willing to be the lowest—that service unpaid for, unrecompensed, done for the welfare of the world, that is the

true service, and that is the service that the Theosophist must give. Service, then, is his note.

What, again, said Shri Kṛṣṇa about liberation? "Our forefathers, seeking liberation, were intent upon the welfare of the world"—not going away to cave or jungle, not isolating themselves in order to find Self-realisation. That is an earlier stage. But when the Self is found, when a man realises, however imperfectly, his unity with the Supreme, when he begins really to break the bonds of the heart, then it is that, seeking liberation, he becomes intent upon the welfare of the world. That is the great truth. Liberation does not mean that you do not return to this mortal world. It means that you are not obliged to return. It means that you have become immortal, and that you choose your own road. It means that if the world wants you, you are willing to live in it. It means that wherever the world wants you, thither you are ready to go. It means that you are tied to nothing external; only the will of God is your directing force. You may live in this or in another world, but wherever you live, you are a liberated Spirit; there is nothing that can bind you; there is nothing that can hold you; there is nothing that can soil you; you are God, living in the human form and carrying out the Divine Will among the activities of mortal men. That is real Service; only then can you give a perfect service, because you want nothing for yourself. You know how the world

changes, when you begin to give up the desire for everything it can give. Perhaps in the past you have worked for money ; you give up all care for it, you only think of usefulness, you empty out your hands, you keep nothing in them ; but those empty hands become vessels to receive everything that is wanted for the welfare of the world. Sometimes people say to me : “ Where do you get all your money from ? You are poor ; we know your income ; we know how little you have. How is it you can do this, that and the other, for this school and for that ? Where does that money come from ? ” And the Government suspects me for it. (Laughter.) The Income-tax Collector is always coming round and asking : “ What is your income ? ” I show my books and say : “ Here is all ; you can see exactly what I earn, which is not much.” “ But where do you get it from ? ” First the Revenue man comes, then the District Magistrate comes, then the neighbouring Collector comes from the town of Madras, and over and over again : “ Where do you get it from ? ” I say : “ People give it to me.” Then they do not understand. I believe sometimes they thought that I got it from the Germans. (Laughter.) So they shut me out of Bombay and they shut me out of the Central Provinces. (Cries of “ Shame ”.) It is rather funny when you come to think of it. What does it matter where I work ? Wherever I am, I do my own work, which is God’s work. No Governor, no Chief Commissioner

can hinder one who only works for God. People give me money, and to me they are God's agents. Money comes because I do not want it for myself, and it is only the empty hands that are filled by God. As Shri Kṛṣṇa said: "When I have stripped a man of everything, then I give him Myself." And where Shri Kṛṣṇa is, there is power, there is wealth, and there is victory. That is what I mean by a life of Service.

Do not think that I mean that my own life of service is perfect; it is not. I am but a learner in the Divine school; but the lesson has gone far enough for me to be able to tell you that, by my own personal experience, I know that the promises most high are true. All of us can, better or worse, live that life.

I have said duty in Society and duty in the Nation and Humanity. What is the distinction? The distinction is rather vague, but I will tell you what I mean. I mean by Society those social customs, that social environment which is not dependent on the force of a definitely established law—the religion, the traditions, the habits, the ways of life; and I include in that all those social arrangements by which men live when they draw themselves together into groups which are larger or smaller. By the Nation, I mean that body politic, in the wider sense, which is in the framework of human law, where the powers of compulsion are exercised, where you have

an organism recognised as a separate entity, informed by a National Spirit who gives it its shape and its characteristics.

To-day, then, under the head of Society, I will try to put to you, however roughly and imperfectly, how the Theosophist should act in his own social environment. It will differ in different Nations. I am thinking of India especially, because I am speaking to Indians. In Europe the social problems after the War will be different from our problems here. They will have to try to reconstitute on a different basis the relations of labour and capital. The soldiers, coming back from the larger life, will no longer be content with the cramped environments in which in the past they had led their lives. There has been a terrible dislocation of trade. All human industry has been turned to destructive activities instead of constructive. Only as much is done constructively as is wanted for the carrying on of the life of the Nation: its food, its clothes, its shelter. Some of the men must still give their labour to these. Women have taken the place of men; women are working in the fields; they are working in the factory; they are working where munitions are produced—a terrible work for women's fingers to make the bursting shells which shall kill the children of other mothers, and carry desolation into the homes. It is inevitable; there is no blame on any. The Nations are in the grip of a terrible fate, and they are working out the natural fruit of

materialism, which had put God outside human life, and had tied Him into a steel framework of religion. The whole of that, then, has to be reconstituted. They will have to deal with the terrible disproportion of the sexes. They will have to deal with woman's labour and child labour, which has taken the place of men's. They will have to deal with that complicated relationship between capital and labour, that had already almost brought England to the verge of destruction, you may remember, before the War broke out. They will have to deal with the whole question of criminality, and on that I have something to say for India. They have found one striking fact in the War; *viz.*, that the young men who tended to criminality, who were rough, who were what they call "hooligans," who recognised no social ties and no social duties—those have very often turned into men of courage, of vigour, who have distinguished themselves in this terrible War. There were some men set free from gaol who had been punished for offences against Society, who have won distinction on the field of battle, and that is valuable as showing that very often the nature which does not fit into a frame of rigid conventions, fails to fit into it not from any kind of sinfulness, but from over-abundance of life and energy, which are not under the control of the conscience and the mind. That is what has been too much forgotten. They are beginning to recognise it in England now.

I read the other day in a great paper that the naughty boys, the boys whom nobody could manage, the boys who were always getting into mischief, were captured largely by the Boy Scout movement; those who were sometimes sent to reformatories, because they could not be managed—they had made very good soldiers, and the paper said that their high spirits, their physical vigour, their insubordination, are priceless National assets for the building up of the citizens of to-morrow. Oh! that that idea might spread through our schools and colleges in India. Oh! that men could see that boyish uproar, the boyish tendency to tumult, is very often nothing more than the overflow of animal spirits, without the sense and the reason to keep them within bounds; that our teachers would understand that the high-spirited boy is not to be broken but to be trained, that we want those boys to make our Indian future, and to be the brave citizens of to-morrow, when they have learnt self-control and self-discipline; that is the Educational Ideal of to-morrow.

Three things you must remember as guiding principles, when you deal with social matters. Karma must never be forgotten. Reincarnation must never be forgotten. Brotherhood must never be forgotten. Let us apply those principles first to the large numbers of our people here, whom we call the submerged classes. People call them the depressed classes. *Submerged* is my word. I do not like *depressed*; it sounds so

dull, so sad, so miserable. I prefer *submerged*. They are down below the surface of happy society, and we have to lift them up. There lies the first great Indian duty of service. Every Nation has the same problem. Do not imagine that it is only you whose society is built upon a struggling mass of helpless people who are sacrificed for the sake of the rest. It is the same in England, wealthy as England is—though there are not so many of them. In England we speak of a submerged tenth, here of a submerged sixth. We have more. In England, we say that in every ten human beings in the population of London, there is one who will die in the workhouse, in the prison, or in the hospital. They are men and women who are always on the verge of starvation; a little push and they fall over the precipice. Every Nation from the far-off past has been built upon that mass of suffering humanity. The great Empires of Babylon, of Nineveh, of Persia, nay of Rome and Egypt—they were all built upon what was practically a slave class—generally chattel slavery, but always slavery. They have fallen because they were built against Brotherhood. They have fallen because they tried to go against the universal law of Love; and just as you might make a building and build it without regard to the law of equilibrium and gravitation, and it will fall because you disregarded the law, so the Empires of the past have perished one after another, because they denied the law of

Brotherhood, and built their security on the bondage of man and not on his liberty. Law is vindicated by destroying what is against it quite as much as by protecting that which is done in accordance therewith. And they have passed. Now, one thing has saved India, older than the oldest but living, while they are only skeletons in the far-off sepulchre of history, dug up by excavators through the surface of the earth, who, burrowing below the surface, bring up fragments, showing how glorious were those civilisations, how mighty their power, how deep their learning. And what is it that has saved India—India that traded with Babylon, that traded with Persia, that traded with Egypt, that traded with Rome? The one thing that has saved her is that she has never quite lost sight of the great principle of Brotherhood, for, as Manu taught, let the Shūdra be the younger son in the household—a member of the family and not outside the family pale. And although India has sinned grievously in this matter, she has not sinned unto death; although she has forgotten, she has not quite lost the memory of a more brotherly past; and through many tribulations she has purged away her transgressions; through many sufferings she has paid the debt of her National Karma, and she has finally expiated the debt by being made the servant of another Nation, and thus has paid to the uttermost the debt that she owed to the Karma that she had made. That is all.

Now our duty is to lift our submerged brethren on to the level of National consciousness, so that they may know themselves as part of a living Nation. Sometimes I think that we may do that best if we realise that we owe to them everything that makes our physical civilisation clean and pure and comfortable. We look down on these submerged men and women, but we are standing on their shoulders, and they keep us out of the mire in which otherwise our feet would be plunged. It is they who keep us clean, they who make our civilisation possible, they who make our homes healthy, they who by their sacrifice make our lives such as they are, refined, clean, and cultivated. Shall we despise them, or shall we not rather honour them? Shall we look down upon them, or shall we not rather be grateful to them, and shall we not realise that we owe to them the culture that we possess, because their hands keep our civilisation clean by doing all those lower functions which we should have to do for ourselves were it not for them? That is how I would ask you to look at these submerged classes. If they were not there, your brains would have found out forms of machinery by which all the more repulsive kinds of labour might be worked out. If they did not help you, intelligence would have made that labour unnecessary in a highly cultivated Society. And so at least to them you might all, from mere gratitude, do that which you can do—every single

one of you. You must treat them with respect, and not with contempt. You must speak gently to them, instead of harshly. I have heard good men but thoughtless men, of noble instincts and pure life but not realising what they were doing, by the force of habit, by their ordinary ways of speaking, speak to a scavenger, to a Chaṇḍāla, to a Pariah—call him what you will—in a tone, in a manner, with an air of superiority and of pride, that wounded the sprouting self-respect in that man and made his uplift more difficult. No class can rise until self-respect begins, and how can a man, always treated with contempt from childhood, respect himself? It is no good your saying: "Let him respect himself and we will respect him." You must begin, you on whom the duty of the higher is thrown, for the higher is responsible for the lower, as the elder brother is responsible for the bringing up of the younger. These are our younger brothers and sisters. If we neglect them, how shall God think of and take care of us? We are more below the Highest than they are below us. We share a common body, we share a common flesh and blood. Shall we not see the Self in the Chaṇḍāla, and honour the One Life in the embodiment of the Pariah? That is a duty of the Theosophist to the submerged classes—to begin with those he meets in his daily life, to say a kind word, to answer a salute. Sometimes one of these poor men bows humbly as his master passes, and his

master walks with his head up in the air and gives no answer to the salute. Is that brotherly, is that Theosophical, is that following the command of Shri Kṛṣṇa, that says that the man who sees the One Self in all *equally dwelling*, that is the man who knows? I would ask you in your personal dealings to introduce the affectionate human factor that teaches a man to respect himself by showing respect first to him. My Hindū brothers, our brethren of Islām are in this respect better than Hindūs. Once let a man embrace the faith of the great Prophet Muhammad, and he is a brother to every other son of Islām, no matter what his birth was, nor what his upbringing may have been. That is one of the great lessons, I think, that Islām was sent to India to teach—a real brotherhood, and that is a lesson we must learn from Islām. I might put it on a more selfish ground that, if you do not treat them as your brothers as a Musalmān does, you are building up those who ought to be Hindūs into followers of another faith; but I do not want to put it on that ground, because that savours of selfishness. You know that a Pañchama who becomes either a Christian or a Musalmān has privileges among the Hindūs that a Hindū Pariah does not share. That surely is foolish, silly, as well as criminal, for you are stabbing your own great religion in the back when you give to a Christian or a Musalmān outcaste more courtesy than you give to a man who still clings to

your ancient faith; and I know nothing more pathetic, nothing that more touches the heart, than to see the way in which these ill-used outcastes cling to the ancient faith of their ancestors, although it treats them with more contempt and ignominy than the rival religions that live on the soil of India. There then lies your first social duty. Treat them kindly, helpfully, and make them understand that they are brothers—younger brothers, yes, that I grant—but the younger brother is more kindly treated than the elder. If anybody goes short in a household, it is not the baby that goes short—it is always the elders. Apply that to our social life and realise that those who are—many of them—children in soul have a claim upon you, their elder brothers, as we have claim on those Elder Brothers of humanity of whom yesterday I spoke. Respect is the first step, then education, then training in trade or profession, giving them every opportunity of rising.

Pass from that, for I have but brief time, and take another point which I must address again especially to my Hindū brethren. The social custom here is very early marriage. It is weakening. The marriage age is not as a rule as young as it was a few years ago; but still we have, down in Madras, widows who have not yet seen the last day of their first year of mortal life—babies who are widows because married in their babyhood. None of you would approve of that I know, but the point you have to consider from

the standpoint of the Theosophist—the man who really tries to live religion—is that you should see written in the body of a boy and girl those laws of God that cannot be interpolated, that cannot be miscopied, that cannot be changed, as can written manuscripts or printed books. The girl who is married before she is physiologically fit to be a mother—now that does not mean what is called puberty, it means that she is not sufficiently developed to bear a child normally, without special danger to the child, without special danger to the mother, and that is not the case with any girl until she has completed at least sixteen years of life—is married in disregard of those laws. You may say: “How do you know it is dangerous?” The census shows it; it is quite easy to see if you take the trouble to look. You will find that the death curve in Hindū married girls rises suddenly at the age of fifteen and drops again at the age of twenty-five. Between those ten years, from fifteen to twenty-five, your daughters die more rapidly than at any other age, because you have married them before they are fit for marriage, and put on them the burden of maternity before they are ready to bear a child. It is murder—that preventible death. You have no right to be fathers, if you throw your girl children into that likelihood of early death. God gave you those girl children to be the lights of the Hindū home, to be the

companions of their husbands from youth to old age ; you marry them too young, you force them into the anguish of Motherhood before their tender frames are fit to bear it, and they die under the strain that you put upon them, and you say it is karma. Yes, karma that they are born of men so ignorant that they put them in the way of death before their time. That is not the way to deal with these problems. You are the makers of karma. You create the karma of early death. It is the same with your boys ; but there you have orthodoxy clearly against you, while it is doubtful on the question of the girl. I have not dealt with the question from the shāstraic point of view. I am not competent to do it ; but I find that great Paṇḍiṭs are on both sides. Great Paṇḍiṭs say that girls must be married before puberty, but others equally great say no, and that marriage after puberty is not against the Shāstras. I leave that for the Paṇḍiṭs to settle, but I say that the law of God written in the body cannot be forged, while the Shāstras may be. If the two clash, it is the natural law—God in Nature—that should overbear every law which has been at least spoken by human lips and written by human fingers. That is the ground on which I put it. I know that with regard to the boy it is clear. You have no right to marry a boy until he is out of student life. Brahmacharya is the rule for the student, and it has always been a puzzle to me why men, who are so rigid in their orthodoxy

will not practise the rule of Manu, but simply tear him to pieces and throw the rule aside when they are dealing with their boys at school, forcing them into the Gṛhasṭha Āshrama. What is the good of talking about Varnāshrama Dharma, if you disregard the Āshramas ? The Āshrama of Brahmacharya is the protection of your sons. But you run into one the Āshrama of Brahmacharya and the Āshrama of Gṛhasṭha ; you use the brain of the boy to pass crushing examinations, and the nervous forces of the boy to generate unhealthy children ; and then you wonder why your physical frames are unfit, why your educated men find nervous diseases so prevalent among them, why they suffer from early heart-disease, why they pass away from diabetes and heart-disease in what should be the splendour of their manhood, and why they are superannuated when the wisdom of age wants a strong body to enable it to be useful to the Society in which they live. Look at our students, anæmic, so tired out at the end of their college course that they are not ready to take up the burdens of the world. Those boys ought to be full of vigour, strong, healthy, eager to take up the world's burdens, but you have crushed them under early fatherhood and bound upon the shoulders of a schoolboy the responsibilities of the father of a family. I know that things are changing. Let the Theosophists among you hurry the change, make it go quicker, make it go forward rapidly, for your National

life depends on later marriage for your sons and daughters.

Pass from that to another point. I told you that I must run over them rapidly. Take the treatment of criminals in this country. Now, there is one thing which is done here which is not done now in any other civilised Nation, and that is the flogging of a man for a petty, contemptible theft. Take the coolies who have to do with the storing of goods. A man steals a few ounces of tobacco—I do not say that he should steal, but I know that these men are often hungry and I am told, although I do not know from personal experience, that if you are hungry tobacco will partly dull the craving of the nerves. The man is caught, the tobacco is there, and he is sentenced to be flogged; but that is a scandalous thing in a country that pretends to be civilised. Do you suppose that an Englishman would be flogged for stealing tobacco? They say that it is degrading for an Englishman, but that which is degrading for an Englishman, who is often in the lowest ranks of Society, drunken and brutal, is quite as degrading and more degrading for an Indian, who for the most part is gentle, docile, and has an understanding of life that you do not find in the western Nations of the world. He submits, I grant, but what else can he do—poor creature? That shameful punishment of flogging, also the brutal punishment of the stocks, are punishments that you should raise your voices

against until you have absolutely swept them away. They have been swept out of other civilised Nations, and you are more civilised as a Nation than any other Nation in the world.

You think that is a strange thing to say with all the long lists of illiteracy ; but reading and writing do not make civilisation. I tell you from personal knowledge that your ordinary peasant, unable to read, unable to write, knowing nothing of the larger world around him, has been cultivated in the real sense of the word by teaching, by singing, by wandering Sādhus and Sannyāsins, by training in the great doctrines of reincarnation and karma that make him understand life better than many a man with letters of a University Degree after his name. I heard some few years ago in Benares of an Englishman walking along with an Indian, and the Englishman, seeing men carrying bricks for building a house, spoke with some contemptuous kindness as to the misery, poverty and ignorance of these men. "Yes," said the Indian, "let us stop and have a talk." They went up to the bricklayer and a question was asked : "Why are you laying bricks and poor and hungry, while this white man is comfortable and well off ? Is it not very unjust ?" "No," said the bricklayer, "it is my own karma ; I made myself a bricklayer in this life and he made himself a sahab ; if I do my work well, I shall be better off in another life, and if he does ill, he will be worse off." When Colonel Olcott

died, my own servant, who only learnt to read and write some little time ago, looked at the dead body lying there, with crowds around it, throwing flowers on the ice-cold corpse, and looking at it and touching himself said: "Little man, great man"—he was speaking of course in Hindi—"if a little man does his dharma, he will become a great man"—no jealousy, no envy, no unkind feeling. He is a servant with little duties to do, but doing them well; he knew from his religion that he will rise in the social scale as the result of dharma well fulfilled. People who think like that, who face the world like that, are not savages, however illiterate they may be. They are men with understanding, who have touched at least the skirts of wisdom, and are capable of rapid acquirement of the ordinary tools of knowledge. I say that to strike, to beat, to flog such a man is worse degradation than if you flogged the ruffian of the London slum, and there ought to be one cry of antagonism in India against this abomination of flogging a man, because his skin is coloured—and coloured skin does not feel as much, I suppose, as white skin. These are some of the things which require change. Something can be done by going to these men in gaols, as many Theosophists are doing, and helping them when they come out. When a man has suffered for the crime he has committed, when he has gone through his imprisonment and the law sets him free, it is not right to leave on him a social brand which makes

him a continued criminal, where he ought to be helped to rise to a higher and better life. In Burma it is said that people are very immoral because they treat the released prisoner exactly as one of themselves. But the Burman says to you : " The man did wrong and he has paid the penalty ; why should he be punished after he comes out as well as when he is in the gaol ? " Remember the tie of Brotherhood when they come out to a life of freedom in a world that looks on them coldly and with suspicion, and help them back as you would help a younger brother who has fallen, and do not keep them in the criminal class because they have fallen into it in the course of a difficult and very hard life.

But it all comes back to Brotherhood, and I would say to you with regard to your general principle, to remember this for our Society, our Indian Society—Hindū, Musalmān, Christian, Jain, Buddhist, taking all the religions—that so long as our younger brothers, so long as our lower classes, are not tenderly cared for, trained and nurtured, so long our Society cannot take its place in the comity of Nations. More is expected from you than from the younger Nations of the West. In a kind of rough and tumble way they have claimed their citizenship, but you are an ancient people ; you have thousands of years behind you ; God expects more from you than He expects from the western Nations, and He is calling on you

to take your place as leaders in the civilisation of the world. India is destined to take the highest place in the advancing ranks of Nations, and I hope and pray, as I have hoped through all my Theosophical life, that England and India may go forward hand in hand as the leaders of the highest civilisation in the East and West together. I hope that the wisdom of the East may permeate the rougher mind of the West, that the spirituality of the East, no longer dreamy but practical, as it was in the old days of India, may show that the spiritual man is not a sluggard, is not a dreamer, is not a visionary, but is the greatest force in the world for the uplift of Nations and for the uplift of man; and this is because I know something of what India is. I do not pretend to know her thoroughly—for who shall know the mother of Nations, the mother of civilisations, with her thousands and tens of thousands of years behind her?—but I know her by twenty-three years of loving life among her people, I know her by my own incarnated past, and by the love of India, that makes me reckon nothing worth having in comparison with her service. I know her, I love her, I worship her, as I know and love and worship no other country on the surface of the earth, and therefore I would fain see her what she can be, what she is in reality, what she must be in the lives of the men and women born of her; and because I believe that Theosophy is but your own Parā-Viḍyā come back to you in a

modern phase, therefore I call on every Theosophist—whether a member of the Society or not—to yoke himself to the service of Indian society and put it in the place in which it ought to be—an example, a model, which Vaivasvata Manu gave for the great Āryan Race, and which will be perfected in you, if you will add your ancient knowledge to the modern thought of the world in which we are.

THE DUTY OF THE THEOSOPHIST TO HIS NATION AND HUMANITY

FRIENDS :

We are to deal this morning with the third division of the duty of the Theosophist. You remember that in the first lecture I defined the duty of the Theosophist to religion as beginning in that realisation of the Self which is the foundation of all religion, and its correlative service of man which is only the other side of the realisation of the Self. I reminded you then that, as we had been taught in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the right and true service was the service which was of the nature of sacrifice, that the only actions that do not bind us to the wheel of births and of deaths, those actions, as the *Gītā* tells us, are the actions of the nature of sacrifice, and that the true object of liberation is not to change one's habitat from this to another world, but is a liberation of the immortal Spirit, who, knowing himself as one with God, devotes himself to the service of the Divine Will, to carry it out, as far as it is possible to carry it, and to live as God's agent in whatever world he

is, seeing to the welfare of the world, devoting himself to that highest form of sacrifice which asks for nothing, which seeks for nothing for the separated self, but serves as the One Life in the world in the carrying on of humanity to perfection. Then, yesterday, I tried to show you how the duty of the Theosophist to Society, depending in its details on the special environment in which he found himself, must be animated by that spirit of service which grew out of Self-realisation, that then he was to look around him to see what were the evils in the social system which formed his environment, and set himself to a redressal of those evils. You may remember that I made what may be perchance a somewhat artificial distinction between Society and the Nation, by taking within society all that rested on custom, on tradition, on religious beliefs and the accretion of any abuses in those directions, whereas I defined the Nation as an organism expressing its will by law, where the elements of compulsion came in—compulsion from the Nation as a whole and not from the special society which might form a community within the Nation.

To-day, we are to take the last section—the duty of the Theosophist to his Nation and to humanity. Now, in dealing with that, friends, I will ask you to remember the general principle that wherever there is a human need, which a Theosophist is able to supply, there lies his duty, and to the supply of that

need the voice of the Supreme calls him as the work of the time. It is clear that under these conditions of duty we cannot, in a world-wide Society like our own—a Society which exists in all the civilised Nations of the world—lay down a common duty in detail, because the detail must vary with the Nation to which the Theosophist belongs. The duty of the Theosophist nationally in England, in Russia, in India, will necessarily be conditioned by the state of his Nation, and the only one thing that we can say as common to all is that which I just put to you—that wherever there is a need that a Theosophist can supply, there he must spring forward in order to offer his services. Naturally, living here in India, talking chiefly to Indians, I now take the duty of the Theosophist to the Nation in which he is, to the Indian Nation. That is the particular environment where we must find our duty—and I do not really distinguish here in one sense between the coloured and the colourless, for all who live within the limit of a Nation have their duty imposed upon them to that Nation, no matter whether they come from abroad and are living among the people, or whether they be born in the Nation and belong to it by their heredity, by their traditions, by their family. The duty to some extent must differ, and you know well enough that, in putting forward any opinion I express, I put it forward not as a dictation to any other, but as the expression of my own belief, and it is for every one of you to judge

how far my definition of the duty of the Theosophist agrees with your own view of your duty; for never forget that, as I quoted to you in my first lecture, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty, liberty of judgment, liberty of opinion, liberty of speech, so that in speech, in thought, in action, you may express the determinations of your own intellect, you may follow the promptings of the Spirit within you. But inasmuch as all human thought has its value for the study of others, I put to you what I believe to be the duty of the Theosophist in India, and so far as anyone of you agrees with me, that thought may act somewhat as a signpost along the road on which you travel. In every Nation, one great duty lies upon the Theosophist, to help, to improve, to supply the deficiencies in the education of the Nation to which he belongs. In this country, as elsewhere, one of your primary duties is the duty of the education of the people, and I want you to realise that it is an individual duty, that it is not exhausted by good wishes, that it is not exhausted by a speech on the platform, that it is not exhausted by writing in the papers. The Theosophist's duty is a personal duty, and that duty must be discharged according to the environment in which he lives. Now, this duty of educating people is closely bound up with the political life of the Nation. I am separating them artificially, but I will tell you at once why I say that without political freedom no really National

education is possible. My reason is this: how can you deal effectively with the education of the people unless you are free to work at it, unless it is in the hands of the Nation itself, and of yours as part of the Nation? No one else knows the needs of the people as the people themselves know them, intimately and conclusively. You know, my friends, how Indian I am in heart. You know that my love is with the Indian people, and the one object of my life is to help and serve the Motherland. But I recognise that wherever education is concerned, my duty, not being Indian born, is to work with the Indian and under Indian control, and not to force my own ideas. I realise that I may help by my experience, that I may help by my advice, and this is not a matter of theory but of practice with me. When we built up the Central Hindū College, which has now developed into the Hindū University, we had a large majority of Indians—only three colourless people on the Board, *viz.*, Colonel Olcott, Mr. Keightley and myself, all vowed to the service of India. The whole of the rest of the Managing Body, the whole of the rest of the Board of Trustees, were Indians and not foreigners, because where one who had not the privilege of having been born here desires to serve, one must remember that India knows what she wants for her sons and daughters, and one must follow and serve, and must not dictate and claim the right to command. So I am not speaking by theory but

by my own practice, and I think it was justified in its results.

The object of the Indian Nation must be to educate its own sons and daughters, so that they may be good citizens of their Motherland. The education must be based on the needs of the people. I speak from observation of history when I say that until people can make their voices heard in the laws of the land, you cannot get full education, and I appeal to English experience. In England political freedom came before popular education. Even after the first great Reform Bill of 1832, the masses of the people were left in the grossest ignorance. The talk about education as necessary to political freedom is not a talk based on experience, but is directly against it. It is an excuse and not a reason; it is a sophistry and not an argument. It was only after the later Reform Bill of 1867, that household suffrage was given to the people: only from that does the great advance of education in England date; before that, no free and compulsory education, before that, a very limited elementary education. Those who were enfranchised were masses of ignorant people, and as Robert Lowe said with absolute truth: "We must educate our masters." What was the result of the enfranchisement of the householder? Education began to go forward; only now in England is free and compulsory education the law of the land, and no parent is

allowed for his own selfish purposes to deprive his child of the benefit of education which is the birth-right of the child. There we have a right to stand. We cannot in India obtain free and compulsory education, as you know, under present conditions. How do you know it? Because Mr. Gokhale brought forward or tried to bring forward a Bill—a limited Bill, a cautious Bill, a Bill which only took effect where a certain number over a certain area desired to apply it; yet he was not able to do anything with that Bill in the Supreme Legislature. With all the weight of his authority, with all the respect which the Government professed for his statesmanship, with all his personality and popularity among the people, he was absolutely helpless when he asked for education for his people. There is a need that a Theosophist must try to supply. You will not get it—I admit you will not get it—until the political system here is changed. While that is true, we can do something in that direction. We can try through our Municipalities to encourage them to open schools which shall be free, though even there the Government often steps in to prevent. England is a wealthy country. India is the poorest civilised country in the world. If England can give free education to her sons and daughters so that there is no burden on the parents, when the children there are taught their duties to the Nation, cannot we here in India also give that education to children of parents too poor to pay fees, and whose

very bread depends upon the labour of their children? Remember what we know of Indian poverty, that half our agricultural population never knows what it is to have a stomach full of food. Knowing that, can we ask them to pay for education? Can we ask them to pinch the body yet more in order that the minds of the children may be fed? Nay, can you take those half-starved children and put on them the extra burden of education which their brain is too devitalised to accept and profit by? There comes up the question of feeding the children of the very poor. Friends, I was a member of the London School Board for one of the poorest districts in London—the East End of London. More than ninety thousand children were there under my care. What did I find in the poor schools? The children fell from their benches fainting on the floor, because they came hungry to school, and could not bear the strain of the school teaching. We find the same thing in our Pañchama schools; children cannot learn because they are too hungry. We have had a medical inspection, and 78 per cent of the children coming to these schools are suffering from malnutrition. There are other diseases which grow out of it, but 78 per cent of these poor little children are suffering from want of food. Is that a human state? We dare not teach them without first giving them a meal. If England with a fairly well-to-do artisan and agricultural population has now passed an Act for supplying meals to school

children who want them, do not our children here need that food more than they need it in England? And must we not think of the future of our country, growing up out of these half-starved little ones?

There then, I put it to you, lies your duty to education: first to try to get your Municipalities to act, to persuade them in their schools to make education free, and secondly, to prevent your local Government from refusing—as they refuse now—to allow the Municipalities to open free schools for their children. That is one of the points that from Madras we have sent up to our Education Member as we call him—Sir Sankaran Nair. We know he will sympathise, but he is only one man against the rest of the Council, and what can one man do? Still, he will speak and you can help him to speak. Remember that wherever you have the opportunity, you are bound to press the duty of free education for the children, wherever you can reach them.

The next thing you must do is to take it in hand yourselves, and make a National System of Education, running side by side for the present with the Government system. Now, it is true that it is a big task, but you are a big people. It looks very large if you talk about crores, but there are only a certain number of children round every one of you. You live in different towns—some of you in different villages. Wherever there is a Theosophist, a school should grow up round him voluntarily carried on by

those who are willing to help, and supported by the money of those who cannot give personal service but are able to give something from their purses. If you will take it in detail, if you will realise it, you are able to solve a large part of the question of free education; but the schools for our submerged classes are starving for lack of funds. In the great city of Madras our own five Pañchama schools are always in financial difficulties, and we only get help from Theosophists outside. The Depressed Classes Mission schools there are in the same grip of poverty, and that is a scandal to every one of us who is not trying to improve the condition; and I plead to you that where your boys and girls are attending schools, there ought to be in the neighbourhood a free school for the helpless and the ignorant classes of our population. While I say that the education of the child is a duty of the State, where the State does not do it, there the people must take it into their own hands, for the people and the State are not synonymous here as they ought to be, and the Nation is apart from the Government.

What should education be? I have spoken on this so often that I am almost ashamed to speak again, but I repeat that it must be that fourfold education which we have been trying to popularise in India. It must be religious, but there must be no proselytisation. You must not take the warm hearts, the plastic brains of boys and girls, and either leave them

without religious teaching or impress upon them a form of teaching that is not their own. The religion of the child should follow the religion of the father and the mother, should be his hereditary faith. The authorities will not give us a conscience clause, they will not say that a child shall be preserved from the danger of being turned aside from his ancestral faith; but a Theosophist must take care that the child of every religion is treated equally—that the Christian shall teach Christianity to a Christian child, the Hindū shall teach Hindūism to a Hindū child, the Musalmān shall teach Muhammadanism to a Muhammadan child—every child should be brought up in the faith of his father and not in an alien religion. That is a vital Theosophical principle. In our Theosophical schools, every child is taught his own faith. They join in common worship to that One without a second before whom we all bow in reverence. They are then taught their own faith by a member of their own religion, so that it shall be taught at its best by a man who loves it, and the child's heart shall have that fragrance of religion which alone can lead to real culture, and to righteousness of life in the outer affairs of the State. Religion is the foundation of all good. Without that, you train the intellect, that is, you train the combative side of man, and you leave the unity untouched. Men quarrel because in their boyhood they have learnt differences, and have forgotten the underlying unity; but the Hindū and

the Musalmān and the Christian have really more in common in their religions than they have of differences. The differences are external but the spirit of religion is the same. Differences are questions for men and women. They are not questions for boys and girls. Morality has its roots in religion, and morality is the training of the emotions. Out of emotions grow virtues and vices. All the emotions—and never forget it, my friends—all the emotions of the nature of hate lead to vice and not to virtue. All the emotions of the nature of love lead to virtue and not to vice. The emotions of the family, the bond of love between husband and wife, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, between the family and its dependents—what are these but the law of love expressing itself in mutual service, recognising mutual obligations, and needing no compulsion for the happiness, for the peace, for the tenderness of domestic relations? What should be the relations of the Nation save those of the same emotions to the elders, to the equals, to the youngers, those same emotions made universal and made permanent, not a passing emotion expressing itself spontaneously, but a settled principle of conduct expressing itself wherever the opportunity occurs? What else did Manu teach us?—that we were to look on our elders as parents, on our equals as brothers and sisters, on our youngers as our children. There is the principle of the Nation

built on the principle of the family—affections turned into virtues, and reproducing themselves in the National life. The children must be trained in this virtue. Love of country must be taught in every one of our schools. “The Mother and the Motherland are the dearest things on earth.” That is a lack in our education to-day. In England they say that you must teach boys patriotism, but in England it comes naturally. The books they read, the stories they hear, are all based on heroes of their own history and race, a pride of race and a sense of love of their Motherland. But here our boys are not taught to reverence the heroes of their own country, but heroes of a foreign land: they are taught the life of Nelson and not the lives of Akbar and Shivāji. How shall they be proud of India when they know nothing about her, except a list of stupid dates of battles, and nothing about the life of the people? How much have any of you learnt of old India, and what do you know of the great systems of law and of policy which ruled India when all Europe was in a state of barbarism? What do you know of the administration of men like Chāṇakya—Kautilya? What do you know of the old great irrigation works? I was listening the other day to a lecture which pointed out that in Tanjore all the great channels of irrigation to-day are those that were built in the ninth and tenth centuries after Christ. How can you have patriotism when the boys

and girls are taught nothing of their country? The duty of the Theosophist in India is to teach patriotism here as the Englishman teaches it—and rightly teaches it—in England. Boys and girls must be proud of their Motherland, and their warmest emotions must flow out to the Mother country, and their patriotism must be love of their own land and only secondarily of the Empire at large. You must next train their intellect, but you must train their intellect to Service. You must model your own intellectual education as you have never yet been able to do it, and it is part of our duty to draw the thoughtful educationists of India together, and let them plan out the education that we want. We do not want students to learn English in the way in which they teach it now, so that boys who can find out some roots in Chaucer cannot write a common letter in English. You want to teach in your vernaculars, and not in a foreign language. What right have you to put on the brains of your boys and girls an extra difficulty of understanding the words, when they ought to be grasping the facts? There is not a country in the world, except countries like Poland, trodden under the hoof of despotism, where the language of the country is not the language of the school boys and girls. Right up to the matriculation, you should make the vernaculars the medium of instruction. Certainly teach English, but teach it sensibly as a second language, teach it conversationally, teach it so

that you can communicate freely. Do not teach "Gothic," do not teach old English texts : let them learn those if they want them, after taking a degree ; but your boys and girls are not going to be philologists. When I was in my early days educationally, I learnt French so as to read modern French, so as to talk it and so as to write it, and if I wanted to read old French works, I should have had to take a special course of study in them : it did not come into the ordinary English education. But here you break our boys' brains over those old forms of English which they struggle over within the Examination room, and then throw away as useless lumber for the rest of their lives. So I ask you to consider that you want to teach facts, and if a boy's attention is fixed on a language which is not familiar to him, he cannot grasp facts which are made difficult by being presented in a foreign garb. Vernacular education then, with English as second language. Then, not early specialisation. You want an all-round culture for the boys and girls ; later, when the brain is growing stronger, then comes the time for specialisation. In your colleges and schools you want to add a modern side, as they call it, to the ancient. You must have arts, because you cannot leave the learned professions empty. You must also have commerce, you must have applied science, you must have industry taught. You must make your chemists, like the German chemists, the servants of your

manufacturers. Only in that way will you revive your dying industries and train your boys for the many vocations that the country needs, and not overcrowd the Government service and the learned professions, while you starve the industrial side, and so lose the sinews of wealth that you need for your Nation. Roughly along these lines your National Education should go, to be worked out in detail by the Indians. My advice to the boys here is to avoid Government service as much as you can. You want doctors, but you want people reared in your own country, equal with those who have gained their degrees in a foreign land, and trained in your own systems. You want lawyers—sometimes you have too many? Well, I must give you my twenty-three years' experience in India, and it is that wherever I have wanted men to work, wherever I have needed people ready to sacrifice, I have found them in the Vakil class. Why do the English sneer at them? Because they are afraid of them. I know that they scoff at politics: "Oh! yes, Vakils." But that is because they see in them their most dangerous opponents, because Vakils are clever, resourceful, law-abiding and constitutional agitators. While I am in favour of sending many of our boys into trade, industry and commerce, I also would not see the learned professions starved, for we need them for the carrying on of our work.

But there is one other point in education you must remember—the body. It is all very well to be clever,

to be educated ; it is all very well to be moral ; and it is best of all to be religious ; but religion and morality and intellect depend for their exercise in this world on a strong physical body, and if the body fails, all the intellectual and religious treasures practically are killed out for want of their physical habitation ; your men die too early. Run over the men whom you have lost in the last few years in the prime of life, when they should be at their best ; at the very time when their brain should be keenest, they get fossilised, because you do not train your bodies in your youth. You must remember that during the first years of life up to the age of fifteen and sixteen, the training of the body is the most important part of education. You can study later, but you cannot build up a healthy physical body when once you have passed the youthful period of adolescence. Make your boys play, make them exercise, make them train their bodies, feed them well—not with too many sweets and spices, because that means poor health—but remember that the duty to the body is as pressing as the duty to any other part of a boy's nature. Remember one other point, *viz.*, that while you have child-mothers and schoolboy fathers you will never have a healthy and long-lived Nation.

Friends, I must leave that, to come on to the last part of my subject—the Theosophist's duty to the Nation in its political life. Some people say : “ What has

Theosophy to do with politics?" Everything. I told you my reason the first day. Religion is either everything or nothing. If it is a matter of ceremonies, or of going to the temple, to the mosque, to the church, if it is a matter of days, like Sundays, while all the six days are given to the world and one to God, it is no true religion: it is a hypocrisy and a sham. Such religion is of no service in the National life. But the religion that permeates every thought of man, that permeates every act, that permeates every word, that is the religion we want, and that is the Ancient Wisdom which came down from the older days. I reminded you in the first lecture that the Hindū R̥ṣhis took part in politics, went round the country visiting the kings, asking whether the artisans had materials, whether the agriculturists had seeds, whether they looked after the widows and orphans of those who had died in the fields of battle. Was that politics or not? It depends on how you use the word. Party politics is the business of individuals, but the life of a Nation—true politics—that is the business of every citizen in the Nation, whatever his religion may be. Now, our people are Hindūs, Musalmāns, Pārsīs, and Christians, and they do not change their faith when they add to it the broad and loving spirit of Theosophy; and therefore their duty to the Nation becomes greater and not less, because they have drunk at the fountain of the Ancient Wisdom. So, if you say to

me: "What has Theosophy to do with politics?" I say that it has everything to do with them. It has to build up a State of which Brotherhood shall be the foundation; in which the rule should be accepted that every child born into a civilised Nation has a right to be surrounded by the conditions that enable him to develop to the utmost every faculty that he brings with him into the world. Until that is the rule of a State, there is no true civilisation.

There lies, then, the duty of a Theosophist: he has to deal with politics in order that a Nation may flourish. The question of the Liberty of a people—do you call that politics or not? I call it politics, because to me "politics" means the organised life of a Nation. It is not party politics, it is not a question of this man up and the other man down; it is not a question of quarrelling between different detailed views and methods; but the Liberty of a Nation is a point that no one, who feels the duty of a religious man to his Nation, can ever possibly put aside on any pretext. On the Liberty of a Nation depends its self-respect, its dignity, its life. I know that many lesser things depend upon it, but to my mind, the great reason why a Nation should be Free and Self-Governing is that because without these a man is not a man: he is only a half-man, and not a complete man, in reality.

You know that every civilised Nation—except the Indian—feels this. You heard how Mr. Asquith spoke of the possibility of German domination in

England. "What would it be," he said, "if all the highest offices were filled by Germans? What would it be if our taxes were levied by Germans?" He said to his English audience, and it was endorsed by their ringing cheers: "It would be inconceivable and intolerable." Do you feel that about yourselves? If not, the National feeling is not yet awakened in you. You cannot, I admit, say that it is *inconceivable*, because we conceive nothing else in this country. *Intolerable*? Yes. Is it not an intolerable thing that when your sons want to rise to high posts in their own land, they must travel across land and sea, in order to go through certain tests in another country, that they may come back to their own, and hold their own among their own people? Is it not an intolerable thing that in your Educational Service, you have two services—one when the man comes from abroad and is a colourless man, an Englishman, and begins with Rs. 500 a month and goes up to Rs. 1,000, while in the other—the really Indian Educational Service, miscalled Provincial Educational Service—which is yours, the coloured man has lower salary, lower position, lower retiring pension, a lower everything in his own country? I am not one of those who desire that the bond between England and India should be broken. I desire that the bond should continue, for England as much as I desire it for India, because I believe that it is best for both Nations to go forward hand in hand. While I say that, I say

that they must go forward as equals and not as rulers and ruled. I say that an Indian in India must have everything that an Englishman has in England, that he must have pride of race, pride of country, love of country; patriotism must not be labelled sedition, and desire for liberty must not be branded as rebellion. That is an intolerable condition of things, and it is a duty of every man to try to change that condition. So, the duty of a Theosophist here is to help in the liberation of India—not of the Theosophical Society, because our Society is international, everywhere, and you cannot ask a Russian Theosophist to help in the liberation of India. I speak only of the Indian Theosophists and Theosophists who are residents here. The duty is not imposed upon them by the Society, but by the principles of Theosophy. *There* lies the duty of the true Theosophist—a human duty, a National duty, a duty which comes from service to the Motherland, which none has a right to forbid. Your individual influence on the lesser political movements will be valuable, because it should be guided by the wisdom you have gained amongst us, and by the application of those great laws of Karma, Reincarnation and Brotherhood—the only sure foundation for the continued life of any Nation.

Friends, I have left myself little time to speak of your duty to Humanity. I need only add a few words about that. We who believe in evolution, we who realise that the world is marching

onwards, guided by the Divine Will, and by hands mightier than our own, we realise that every Nation is like an organ in the common body of Humanity, and that we want the perfect development of Nationality—the life of the organ—in order to be ready for the higher life—the life of Humanity as a whole. There is nothing contrary, antagonistic, between Nationality and Humanity, if Nationality is based on love and not on hatred, if the love of the country serves the country, but does not hate other lands, if the devotion to the country tries to rouse feeling, but for greater service, not to dominate, to rule nor to exploit. A Theosophist must be a citizen of the world at the same time that he is a citizen of his own country; he must love all other Nations, he must try to draw them together, he must treat them with respect, he must try to cultivate that feeling of friendship which alone can cover the differences between one race and another; he must be a peacemaker outside his Nation and also within it—within the Nation, drawing the communities together into one, outside the Nation, trying to draw Nations into a Brotherhood, so that there may be no more war, none of the misery through which the world is passing to-day. Therefore, in your life outside your Nation, do nothing to increase the spirit of hate, even towards those who are our enemies in the physical world to-day; remember that they also are our human brothers, separated now by a gulf of blood.

and of misery; but love can build bridges across the gulf and look forward to a future where the Nations shall be once more at one.

I pray you that no Theosophist shall cast fresh fuel into the fire of hate, and so make here the characteristic in which we see the evil of the Germans. I sometimes fear that in this great struggle, the spirit, the noble spirit in which the Allies began, may pass into the spirit of the Germans, where they desire dominance, where they had their hymn of hatred—a hatred which is now preached in some of our Anglo-Indian journals in India, and which no Indian should take part in, because it perpetuates the strife of race. I know full well that horrors have been committed. I know the history of the Germans as they grew up to their present position, that they have largely brutalised themselves. I know that things are taking place in their hospitals which those Germans learnt in the practice of vivisection, where they vivisected animals and made experiments on sick men, publishing their shameful experiments in their own medical journals. I heard the other day from a friend that a relative of that friend had one arm so injured that amputation was necessary, and that the other arm, perfectly sound, was barbarously cut off by the German doctor. (Cries of “shame”.) Aye, cry shame. But you have the beginning of that same spirit here, where you follow the vivisection principle, and where you torture

animals for the sake of saving men. It is against all your teaching, against all your past, but you are beginning to go along that road which Europe has trodden, and which made the German vivisectors of the past, with the Austrians and Italians, callous to human pain, and ready to experiment in human agony. Do not hate them but pity them; do not detest them, but avoid that line which has degraded them as a Nation, and remember—for I come back at the end to that with which I began—that true religion, Self-realisation, expresses itself in the unity of Humanity, and in the love of men for men. You cannot go wrong in love; you are sure to go wrong in hate; hating dulls the intellect and hardens the heart. Take due care that, in this terrible strife, in your struggle also in your own Nation for constitutional liberty, you remember also your duty to Humanity, that you work by love and not by hatred, that you try to raise all and not to degrade any. Let us draw our bonds together, let us approach each other, and not repel each other; for only thus will the Will of God be done, and the Brotherhood of Humanity be realised in our world.

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ANNIE BESANT

AUTHOR

DUTIES OF THE THEOSOPHIST

TITLE

