



ECONOMICS AND THEOSOPHY

C. JINARAJADASA

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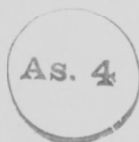
ECONOMICS AND THEOSOPHY

SUMMARIES OF THREE LECTURES TO
THEOSOPHICAL CONVENTIONS

BY

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

(Past Vice-President of The Theosophical Society, 1921-1928)



1944

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THE WORK FIRST AND LAST

We have to stand alone, seemingly ; it is in order that we may be utterly devoted to the Work first and foremost, and not to Personalities however great. Our highest aspect, the Ātmic, expresses itself as work. If karma leaves us lonely and isolated, it is in order that we may discover, through steady plodding on at a work, the Ātmic aspect in ourselves. No one who goes on working steadily and faithfully is alone, really ; the Masters are one with him in his most spiritual aspect, though barriers may exist between Them and him on lower planes.

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

Adyar, 1926

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INTRODUCTORY

THE summaries which I republish are of lectures that took each from fifty minutes to an hour to deliver. They were prepared for Indian newspapers that reported the activities of Theosophical Conventions, and for Theosophical magazines in various countries eager to publish all they could obtain regarding Convention activities. I had therefore to be brief, omitting all statistics and details of facts, often summarizing in a dozen words what took ten minutes in the lecture to expound clearly to my audience.

Three weeks after my lecture at Adyar in the Convention of 1941, I left for Australia, the United States and Britain. I have just returned to India in time for the Theosophical Convention of December, 1944 in Benares. If I publish these brief summaries, it is to show that we Theosophists are interested not only in problems of Soul and the worlds beyond death, but also very much indeed in the problems of this world and in its reorganization to be a juster and happier world.

Economics is a vast subject on which there are many conflicting analyses, theories and

solutions. I am only one Theosophist sailing out in a tiny boat into a vast sea. All the same, I think that my sail is set right and that I have a rectified compass. But my theories and solutions are not binding on any other Theosophist, and are in no way the declared doctrine of the world-wide Theosophical Society. Yet since all Theosophists are pledged to make Universal Brotherhood a reality, and since there can be no Brotherhood without a just economical order, everyone must come forward with his solution, even if of it only ten per cent (perhaps even less !) is found to be true in the end.

C. J.

December 9, 1944

I

THEOSOPHY AND THE WORLD'S PRESENT NEEDS

THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM: THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF THINGS BOUGHT AND SOLD

(Summary of a lecture delivered at Adyar, December 1931)

A STRANGE commentary on World Economics is the unemployment of millions in two of the richest countries of the world, England and the United States. What is the reason for the economic crisis everywhere? It began with the changes brought about by the discovery of the New World, when European nations set out to gain gold and commodities from the East and the two Americas and Africa. The opening up of these continents to Europe drew much wealth to them, which began to be distributed not to all equally, but to certain classes only in the community. These individuals received, through the wealth accumulated by their ancestors or by themselves, advantages of science and inventions, and the consequent wealth extracted from the markets of the world by trade became their "Capital". This Capital was again invested to foster new undertakings, which in their turn produced more Capital. The organization

of joint stock companies and banks to lend money became inseparable from the modern system of economics.

The investment of Capital also brought in its train the division of labour, till today no one product of work is turned out by one workman in its entirety. Each workman is only a highly specialized automaton making, for eight hours a day, one particular small part of a bigger thing. The intensity of production requires that factories be kept working at full pressure and this necessitates the creation of ever-new needs by constant and wide advertising.

In this economic process, so characteristic of the modern world, the individual recedes more and more into the background. We have today practically a slave class which, though it may receive high wages, yet, by the economic system, can rarely break through into the higher ranks of life, except in the case of a few individuals. A part of the modern economic process is also the creation of combines or trusts, which are economical for production and distribution and so make for greater output. But they also inevitably mean the subordination of the welfare of the community in the long run to that of a few privileged individuals. Hence the modern movement for the Government control of trusts and cartels, which is being attempted in some countries.

The modern economic system has created a very definite pressure of life on the worker. His needs have been multiplied, while the amount of money with which to satisfy them has not kept pace with this enhanced sense for life. While wages proceed slowly upwards, the

desire for spending proceeds more rapidly. It is this that has brought about a sense of revolution in every country where the present economic system exists.

One result also of this is that wealthy people think of their wealth in terms of *goods*. This has created the present economic doctrine of what is value. But this completely covers up the economic waste created by rich people with their luxury who pay enormous sums for comparatively trivial satisfactions. Since all countries are becoming involved in the same economic gamble, naturally tariff walls are being created by each against the other.

Another vicious element in the modern development is the creation of a special type of goods of third or fourth rate quality to satisfy the poor. The doctrine of "shoddy" is accepted by the controllers of industry. This creates in each country a class of people from whom, by their economic position, the possibility of finer taste is removed. Just as there is a "depressed class" in India, so in the West there is a "deprived" class which, because of that deprivation, gets habituated to "shoddy" and therefore to lowered standards of taste.

I hold that the way out is to create a completely new conception of what *value* is. At present *value* is thought of in terms of a metal token, gold or silver, which represents so much goods, which are created by labour. But in this economic thinking there is complete oblivion of the man, the worker. The individual is ignored, and the wealth of a community is measured in terms of gold. During the last few weeks the English pound note has

lost one and a half dollars in its value in America. But is England really a *poorer* country because her goods, when exported, fetch fewer dollars or francs? The vitality of England is not less. Her men and women are just as capable of high effort and sacrifice, though the English token of *exchange value* has depreciated.

It is only when we begin to think of goods *in terms of the individual*, and not in terms of a token, that the reorganized economic system will begin. When to-day we note that a certain heap of rice costs one *rupee*, or that say a cooly's wage is half or a quarter of a rupee, we are all the time thinking of the goods created by the individual in terms of a *token*. Suppose in our thinking we were to reverse our habit and say that a certain standard wage is of "one cooly," that is, a worker who today gets half or a quarter of a rupee; then the heap of rice that would have been quoted as of the value of one rupee, would be quoted in the new scheme as of the value of "two coolies" or "four coolies". This at once makes us realize that goods are not final wealth, but that the only intrinsic source of wealth is the individual.*

It is by the recognition of man as the embodiment of life, and therefore as the producer of goods, that the real economic change has to begin. This necessitates

* But how differently the world thinks on this matter is illustrated in this cable from England today, December 6, 1944. "NEWMARKET, Dec. 5: At the bloodstock sales here today, a record price for a two-year-old was realised when Mrs. Florence Nagle paid 15,000 Guineas for Carpatica, a filly by the Derby winner, Hyperion, out of the 1,000 Guinea winner, Campanula. The previous best was 13,000 Guineas paid for Happy Landing, a year ago. Mr. G. Faber gave 21,000 Guineas for Duke of Westminster in 1909, but that was a private sale."

that a commission of experts should exist to evaluate what are the needs of a man in food, clothing, housing, etc. This then should become the standard of value. This standard will never depreciate, because man's final needs are always the same. It is quite true that the money paid to him as wage may be less or more, as the case may be ; but always that money will be paid not in terms of goods, but in terms of the amount of life in which he is to share.

Thus we begin to have the conception of an intrinsic value in buying and selling, for man as a soul is the creator of goods which we are buying or selling. This brings the problem of ethics immediately into the problem of business. Though at first such a correlation may make new problems for us, yet seeing that the old economic system has not given peace that is real prosperity, there must be created a completely new system. But this new system cannot be brought about by legislation ; it can happen only by the action of groups of individuals who take their stand upon " life " and not upon " wealth ". This was the ancient ideal of the Brahmana in India and of the " superior man " in China. It is to proclaim this ideal of a man, who has inner riches of his own far greater than can be provided by metal or paper tokens, that the Theosophists are working.

It is in such a world-crisis as that of today that Theosophists, though few in number, can do much to set the right standard of what is true wealth. The only possibility of the regeneration of the world is when each country has a small band of Theosophists who are highly

trained for service, and enter the world's work as statesmen, artists, administrators, directors of capital, etc., who want nothing for themselves, but work for a mere pittance. They can then show what is the true standard of life, which is, that *man is the measure of the thing*, and not the thing the measure of the man. This is the *intrinsic value* which the world badly needs. The world can be regenerated only when in each country there is a small group, as are today the officers in an army who are willing to sacrifice their lives in the leadership of their men. Such men can be produced as Theosophical Ideals are understood; and therefore the growth of the Theosophical Society is inseparable from a real lasting economic regeneration of the world.

II

A WORLD IN DISTRESS: THE REMEDIES AS SEEN BY THE THEOSOPHIST

*(Summary of a lecture delivered at Adyar,
December 1932)*

We members of the Theosophical Society have no particular common faith or creed, except our assertion of belief in a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. Our sense of Brotherhood impels us to feel a unity with all that lives, and most particularly with all mankind. Therefore to be a Theosophist means to be acutely conscious of any

kind of distress in the world, and to be reformers ever striving to know in what way we can diminish the world's misery. Our prime duty as Theosophists is to go out into every country to abolish or minimize suffering wherever we find it, and in order to do our work efficiently we have a great body of thought called Theosophy to guide us.

This body of thought comes from the past, but it is being continually added to age by age. None of us in the Society is committed to all that Theosophy proclaims; each selects from its great ideas whatever teachings and ideals inspire him to live as a Theosophist. Each will select according to his temperament, and each will therefore act in life according to the manner in which he feels he can be most serviceable.

To-day five of us begin to expound to you what we as Theosophists feel are the solutions to the problem of a World in Distress. But we are only five speakers, and we are not proclaiming something which is final and to be accepted by all. Each one as he expounds will describe the manner in which the great problem appears to him, and what is the way in which he himself can be most efficient in the service of the world. Therefore, as we speak, each will survey the problem from his own particular standpoint, and he will offer you what appeals to him as the remedy. If we had a Convention lasting for a month we could have thirty speakers presenting thirty points of view. Every one of you as a Theosophist has, or should have, some remedy to suggest; but we are limited only to four days of Convention, and therefore can

touch upon only a few of the many remedies which may be suggested to the world.

You are all aware from what you have read in newspapers and heard in lectures what the economists of the world say with regard to the distress everywhere to-day. They will tell you that it is due to this, that or the other cause, and all the time they are propounding remedies. It is striking that they are not all united in their remedies. Some suggest changing the banking system, others the abolition of tariffs, and so on. But as I visualize the causes from a standpoint which shows them clear to me, the root of all our troubles is due to a subtle change which has taken place in the world regarding what is worth seeking in life.

Surely there can be no dispute finally as to what is worth seeking—what is the right, what is the beautiful, what is the good. But of late, largely due to the effect of modern science, there has come about a change concerning what is worth seeking. Science has released the forces of Nature, and has given us myriads of new things as the result of the perfection of machinery. The wonderful advance of scientific and mechanical achievement during the last fifty years has given to us numbers of objects which our grandparents never dreamed were necessary for our daily life. We say to-day that the standard of living has become higher. That is true, but also as the result of these manifold improvements introduced by science and by machinery, the struggle for life has become intensified as never before. New needs have been created for us of which we are conscious which

were unknown to past generations. We feel that we cannot be happy unless we have this or the other possession, and year by year more and more objects must cater to our physical comforts. Such is our life to-day that the whole gospel of modern business is to create more needs for us, and to make us believe that these needs are conducive to our happiness. We are no longer happy with the few needs which our grandparents thought were sufficient.

All the nations are reorganizing themselves economically, and that reorganization fundamentally is to sell more to others, and to purchase as little as possible from them. That is the great economic cry to-day: Let us organize our country in order to be a seller of many things, but put up tariff walls so that we may be a buyer of as few things as possible. But as the principal nations have aimed at selling to each other whilst restricting their purchases from each other, what is the result? A plethora of goods, more than the world can consume, because there is not enough money or purchasers to buy them. Therefore all the solutions presented to-day by the economists amount to this: *We must create more money for all, so that they may buy more goods.* Therefore we have Major C. H. Douglas the originator of the Social Credit gospel, writing: "an enormous and increasing capacity to produce the goods and services which are a primary objective of civilisation, and which probably form the material basis on which alone a cultural superstructure can be reared". I do not think that is the real solution, and I shall explain why.

The great trend away from the old ideals of life, to which I have alluded, has largely been due, I said, to the growth of modern science. In the past great days of religion, men were taught that this our life of 70 or 80 years was only an ante-chamber to a larger life, and that all objects of this world and the activities in it had their value only in so far as they released the powers of the Soul. The gospel of every religion is that man is only a passer-by travelling through this world into an eternal world. But all that is changed to-day; more and more people are trying to live in this world as if it and its enjoyments were the only Reality. Therefore anything which intensifies the sense of reality of *this* world appeals to them. Naturally enough all economists take for granted that men know of or care for only one life. They say that we must alter the banking system, abolish or alter tariffs, that the present exploitation of the workers must cease, that men's hunger for land must not be thwarted by the few who hold it, that armies and navies must be reduced. They propound a hundred and one suggestions, but all their suggestions come to this: *There must be more money for all!*

But the real solution is this: *There must be more Soul for all.* It is because we have forgotten the great idea that life is fundamentally Soul, and have put instead of Soul the convenience summed up in the word "money", that to-day there is a World in Distress. It is by capturing once again the spiritual sense which has fled that the true remedy begins. What is worth while in life? It is upon the answer to that question that all

the problems of economics hinge. In modern days what is the gospel which we are teaching in our educational system? It is that, if you can save money, and invest, and so produce more goods through investment, you will be secure against distress in old age. The whole economic system whispers its message: "Take care of your future in *this* world, provide for your old age, save and invest!"

And yet there is another and a truer gospel which was proclaimed in ancient days and is well expressed for us in a Chinese saying: "If you have two loaves, sell one, and buy a lily." There we have the great spiritual principle of transmuting Life. But that is not the principle to-day. The principle to-day is to save and to invest; yet what an English poet says sarcastically commenting upon our modern system is true: "I love a bank for violets; I loathe a bank for savings."

The sense of life, of growth, of self-expression, does not come from a multitude of possessions, but only from possessing the *right* things. When King Janaka saw Mithila, his capital, consumed by fire, he said: "Nothing that is mine is burning." For he had as his eternal possession the Oneness of Life which he had discovered. It is not more money for all that we need for the prosperity of the world, but more good taste for all. It is on such a spiritual principle that the world's reorganization must proceed.

What are the true riches that life has for us? Suppose instead of hoping and planning for a larger income, we plan to have other eyes with which to see, other ears

with which to hear. Think of a man striving to train himself to know more flowers, to see more delicate shades in sunsets, to hear more overtones in the roar of the surf. It is these things that are Life, and any true system of education should teach us to select from experiences the things that are permanent, and which the wearing away of the body will not take from among our eternal possessions. To discover the permanent amidst the fleeting, that is the reason why we are born.

But that reason is no longer suggested to us by the religions, at least with any intensity to produce conviction. That is why in many ways we have to learn life all over again. For the greatness of life for an individual comes from the few things that he *selects*. As we lessen the number of our needs the more we find intrinsic beauty in them. To select from life : that is the true task of education. True wealth is always from selecting, and from transmuting the coarser to the finer, the fleeting to the permanent. Let me illustrate. It is quite true that in my rooms I have several walls full of books, but if I were going to be exiled to a desert island with only a few of the world's books, I should select just these few : a volume of the Upanishads, the Bible, the Sutta Nipāta, Dante's Divine Comedy, Hardy's poems, and the two Oxford books of English and Spanish verse. And why so few ? Because I have discovered my world of literature, and what I read in these reflects my own inner discovery.

It is for this inner discovery of our true wealth and possessions that we are here in the world, but unfortunately that is no longer being taught us clearly to-day.

Here religion must come to our aid once again. I do not mean creeds, formulæ and rituals. I mean that sense which religion should give of a fine taste towards all life's experiences, whereby we know the lovely from the mere-ticious, the eternal from the passing. *Back to the Soul*—that is the remedy!

But to teach ourselves to get back to the Soul, how shall we find the method? Not by laws. No laws of an administration, no laws proclaimed by any king or legislator, will teach us where lies the way to discover more Soul. That can only be done by the souls themselves. When there are a few in the world who have the true characteristics of the Soul, they are like little miniature suns shining on all sides to others revealing what is the greatness of Soul.

The solution in each country is for a small number, a thousand at most perhaps, to set about discovering the Soul, and to take their stand on Soul and not on possessions. These few will be marked men in the beginning, scoffed at and ridiculed. But they will be understood after a while, and the great doctrine will be preached by their mode of living that man comes here to discover what is the essential nature of Soul in *everything*—in each stone, in each shrub, in every human being who lives and suffers. If only the religions of the world to-day would combine to preach this doctrine: that man is eternal, that his life Here is only to discover something of the beauty of the life Yonder, that this life is only the antechamber to it, that this life which is fleeting, with its few joys and many miseries and sorrows, has only one value—that we

may discover the Perfect, the Eternal, the Beautiful and the Happy !

If only religion were to teach it, if only all the religions would combine to-day to teach mankind once more that Soul is the greatest thing in life, then the economic machinery of the world which is out of gear would come back into its right adjustment. To lessen the struggle for all—that is the crying need. For if each individual lessened the struggle for himself by selecting, by seeking not the transitory but the eternal world, then slowly, slowly, his example would be copied by thousands, and instead of “speeding up” life we should slacken life, until there would be leisure to discover the Soul in the beautiful little things of life, until we see only One Thing—the Essential Thing in eternity. To go wherever in the world we may, and see and read The One in everything, that is Life. When a man finds that One in all existence, he finds all things. Is not the whole ocean mirrored in a dewdrop ? Is not the whole beauty of the world in a tiny wild flower ? Have we not the Divinity of Christ and Shri Krishna in a child’s face ?

These are the truths which the world to-day needs for mankind, and it is only in so far as we understand that in finding the Soul of things we find the All, we shall, to my judgment, discover the remedy for the World in Distress to-day.

III

THEOSOPHY AND WORLD RECONSTRUCTION

*(Summary of a lecture delivered at Adyar,
December 1941)*

The present world chaos is driving home to all how each nation is dependent upon every other nation, especially economically. The principle adopted hitherto in human affairs has been, "Each for himself and the devil take the hindmost." This has produced as an inevitable result "big business" which exploits the masses, and Imperialism which plans to control the raw products and markets of the world.

These evils have their roots in race pride, religious exclusiveness, and especially in the wholehearted acceptance that the only life worth living is that of the material and tangible world. Race pride, as also class and caste pride, engender hatred which is one cause of war. An equally contributing element to man's war spirit and mentality is given by those religions which proclaim a salvation restricted only to those who profess its creed. Every kind of missionary effort which glorifies one religion at the expense of all others feeds the war spirit in man, for no man loves to be told that his God is no God. Where the conception of man as an immortal soul is a mere lip profession, as in most believers in the faiths today, an inevitable result is the attempt to crowd into one life-time all that man considers happiness. Hence the modern furious struggle for existence and the

wasteful speed in living by those who are well off. What we term a higher standard of living is *only a higher scale of spending*. The happiness which all seek does not come along that road.

WORLD DIRECTORATES

New ideas must prevail in any reconstruction, if it is to be lasting, and if it is to end war. Among them are, that each race or people, even primitive peoples, has its special valuable contribution to civilization. There must be no grading of peoples into superior or inferior. Then every religion must admit that all other religions are brothers in the one family of God. Also our sense of patriotism must be so sublimated that, while we love our land, we recognize that others must have the right to love their lands as fervently as we.

When these ideas prevail, common sense will dictate that the whole world must henceforth be administered as one indivisible unitary organization. Every factor in nationalism, religion or social conditions which stands in the way of unification must be eliminated, peaceably and by persuasion if possible, but by force of a World Police if necessary, in order that all mankind may not suffer because of the selfishness of a few. All the nations of the world need now to get together to create World Directorates. We shall need to create World Directorates in Banking and Exchange, in Industry, in Production, in Distribution, in Raw Materials, in Labour, in Sanitation and Hygiene, in Dissemination of Culture and so on. Each Directorate must take charge of the whole world as one unit.

All this of course means sacrifice of some part of our nationalism, our commercial expansion, our religious rigidity and our superiority complex in race, class, caste and especially of sex.

All schemes of reconstruction will succeed not because of better conditions of labour, or an equalization of wealth, but only because the true leaders in every nation, who certainly are not the politicians, give the new tone to life which is expressed graphically in the saying of a Chinese sage, "If you have two loaves, sell one, and buy a lily." Until religious leaders can convince the thoughtful men and women in each land that the real wealth of a community is not in its bank balances and exchange rates or in its armaments, all dreams of reconstruction will finally fail.

A NEW RELIGION

Only the sense of a Universal Brotherhood of all mankind, and the recognition, that man is fundamentally a soul who incarnates in a body in order to discover the untold wealth of his own inner nature, will lead the way out of world chaos into world order. Until the struggle for existence is lessened for all men, reconstruction is bound to fail. Mere economic readjustments can never lessen the keenness of that struggle.

Mankind's present tragedy is that no existing religion, each now with its exclusive gospel of creed, seems capable today of giving the world as one Whole the inspiration which mankind needs. Therefore all

men and women in every country, who have goodwill and the sense of spiritual values, must somehow get together, in order to create a new kind of religion with new conceptions about God or the Ultimate Reality. Economic reconstruction must have a spiritual and humanitarian basis. This is what Theosophists are attempting to create.

Postscript

On looking through the notes of this lecture of December 1941 after my return to Adyar, I find that I mentioned that all production must be controlled by the Nation, and that all distribution, while allowed to be done by private persons, must not be left to their initiative, but be licensed by the Nation. This of course is what is actually happening now in Britain, under the urgency of creating and pitting everything against two powerful enemies. Everybody in England accepts the present order of regimentation and rationing as inevitable; there are very few capitalists there who feel that their "initiative" and "freedom to expand" are being suppressed. If they feel it, they dare not say it, because they know that on this matter the Nation is against them. If regimentation and control are necessary for the successful winning of a World War, are they not equally

necessary for the successful maintenance of a World Peace? There are millions who think so.

One other matter I mentioned in my lecture : that all land should be owned by the Nation. This has been the age-long custom in India, regarding agricultural land, until the old order was upset by the East India Company, the old representative of Britain in India. The farmer is a lessee, not owner, although a life-lessee, with a right to alienate under conditions stated by the Nation, who always is the owner in perpetuity. I hold further that all land *in cities also* should be owned by the Nation. Briefly, there should be no private ownership of any public utility, nor of any primary source of production, such as mines and factories producing goods in a schedule of goods decreed as needed for the standard of living. "Luxury goods" can be left to private profiteering. But the Nation need not *operate* any undertaking ; private initiative can be given adequate freedom if the Nation (as now in war) issues licenses to produce and distribute, and exacts the production of accounts of profits and balances.*

* In London, at the "Shadow Convention" held during December 1942, I dealt fairly fully with the whole economic order of the world today, examining especially the history of the growth of the "Social Services" in Britain. A summary of this lecture was published in the British Theosophical Magazine, and several copies were sent to India. They all failed to arrive, presumably due to enemy action.

THE BROTHERLAND OF HUMANITY

Man is trained in "God's Plan which is Evolution" to go from his little self to the great SELF. First, he is taught to know himself as one with his family, and later, after many lives, to identify his interests with that of the tribe and community. Later still, he is guided to give his dedication to that aspect of the Divine Life which is embodied as the Nation. Then man knows how great and glorious a thing it is to live and die for his Nation.

There is one step further on his path to the great SELF. It is to widen out from his Nation to Humanity. It is this last stage which opens before him when he becomes a member of the Theosophical Society. Many are the Fatherlands and Motherlands in which the soul of man lives life after life, to learn the way to the SELF. But there is one BROTHERLAND, living in which he comes to his goal; it is the Theosophical Society, or some similar organization, where the one thing that matters is that the World as a Whole shall go towards the Light.

Thrice blessed are those who have joined our Theosophical Society, and look to the *Brotherland of all Humanity* as their one and only goal.

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

Adyar

December 16, 1925

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