

THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM

INAUGURAL ADDRESS DELIVERED
IN 1949 AND OPENING ADDRESS IN 1950

BY

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

President of the Theosophical Society

THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

ADYAR, MADRAS 20, INDIA

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THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM

I

INAUGURAL ADDRESS DELIVERED ON
NOVEMBER 17, 1949

BY C. JINARĀJADĀSA

President of the Theosophical Society

THERE is an important distinction between Wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom will embrace within her field of operations every form of knowledge; but all knowledge in its entirety does not constitute Wisdom. Wherein lies the difference?

All manifestation at all times consists of two aspects of the Unknowable, which are the Life and the Form. Knowledge gathered in every department of the knowable will map out the form-aspects of evolutionary processes and of being. Now, it is one function of the Wisdom-aspect in an individual to be in intimate touch with the form-side of everything; yet the universe in its aspect of form cannot be understood merely by

mental processes, however high they are. Bergson has pointed out how intelligence, when it attempts to understand the manifestations of life, goes astray, since intelligence tends to treat all things as if they were made of lifeless matter. It needs a faculty higher than the mind, which is *Buddhi*¹ or Intuition, in order to come into a direct relation with all form, by identifying each form with itself. Wisdom arises when there is this identification of the knower with the thing to be known; unless there is this identification, there is only knowledge. To use a simile of today, Wisdom takes an aeroplane view of all things, constantly flying over the field of facts which are on the plane of the mind, as it were photographing them till no fact is omitted from its survey. Wisdom may thus be described as the essence of fact, surcharged with the spirit of Life.

This conception of the Wisdom was known both in ancient India and in Greece. In India, in the various philosophical schools

¹ *Buddhi* in Indian philosophy is a high form of the intellect; *Buddhi* in Theosophical terminology is a form of consciousness distinct even from the "higher mind"; it means the Intuition, that faculty which is "the unperceived fore-known," as Lawrence of Arabia described it.

gathered round individuals who were the heads of these schools, there was an attempt, within the limitation of what was considered worth knowing, to understand the multiplicity of things as one Whole. In every one of the Upanishadic schools the theme was to know life as the Unity. It was realized that this could not be achieved by mere mental processes; an essential element of the problem of acquiring Wisdom was a life of purification and dedication, with the mind and the emotions directed to high ideals through prayers and meditations. In ancient India, the search throughout was to discover, less the thing-as-it-is, and more the *life-as-it-is*. Of course the word "life" was inseparable from the word "consciousness". There was very little science in those days, and the knowledge regarding the world was very much circumscribed, going scarcely beyond the boundaries of India. Nevertheless, the aim, starting from India as a centre, was to reach upwards to contact the universe as a Totality.

In Greece, which had much more of art, history, drama, political development and

other aspects of Greek culture, the Greek inquirer into the problem of Truth started by accepting the world-as-it-is, but he tried to see that world as from "on high". The aim was to penetrate behind appearance, and to sense the innermost Reality which is the background of all appearance.

Typical of this process is the attempt of Plato and his followers to see every form as reflecting the Idea or the Archetype. While a man might be a great knower of many things, he became truly wise only when his imagination and aspiration led him to sense the Archetypal World. It was this way of seeking which is fully described by the word coined by Pythagoras, "philosophos," the lover of Wisdom. All Greeks knew that this conception of *loving* the wisdom was the contribution of Pythagoras. When we say today that a man is a philosopher, we little realize that if he were *really* that, he would not be merely a mental possessor of knowledge, but that his emotional nature would be so intense and pure that he would be all the time a lover as well, seeking to find through the objects of his study the

Principle of Virtue, which once seen evokes at once in the beholder the profoundest love.

The Wisdom, therefore, is not a matter of accumulating all the facts concerning Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis. The Wisdom has the task of understanding the innermost *meaning* underlying Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis. It is to help in the search for Wisdom that the individual has at his service a faculty greater than the higher mind, which is Buddhi. This faculty of Buddhi has as its instrument the *kosha* or vehicle which is called in the Hindu system *Ānanda-maya-kosha*, "the sheath composed of Bliss". Bliss is the Indian equivalent of the love that accompanies Wisdom, which manifests through Buddhi, the Intuition.

It is the purpose of a School of the Wisdom to bring each student to survey things "from the centre". This means, first, that every possible event or experience in the universe, not merely in the mechanical evolutionary processes but specially concerning every revelation of mankind, has to be brought into the circumference. All these aspects have then to be surveyed as from

the centre, so that each aspect is seen in relation to all other aspects. When so surveyed, the aim is to go beyond the mental survey to a realization of the meaning both of the centre and of the circumference.

It goes without saying that into the circumference must be brought all knowledge that exists concerning Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis. But we must bring into Anthropogenesis, the study of the origins of man, not merely the understanding of races and sub-races and their characteristics, but also a careful study of the cultures which have been produced at all periods of history. The word "culture" covers religion, philosophy, every form of art-creation, such as poetry, song, music, architecture, drama, sculpture, painting, dance, etc.; all achievements of mankind in organizing human life to express itself more fully through ways of development and expansion not excluding political growth; economic schemes for betterment; educational methods and ideals—*all* have to be brought into the circumference.

The aim of a true School of the Wisdom, then, is to enable the individual to cease

from being one who gives his intellectual adherence to a particular school of philosophy, and becomes by himself one who little by little surveys the problem of life directly from his own standpoint. It is the School's purpose to equip its students to become, each according to his temperament and aptitude, philosophers, scientists, ethical teachers, artists, givers of economic law, statesmen, educators, town planners and every other possible type of server of humanity. Some day each student may start a School of the Wisdom of his own.

In the attempt of the School towards this objective, there is knowledge of two types to be used as the material of study. There is what may be called Ancient Theosophy, that is, all truths in past ages in the religions and philosophies of India, Greece, Egypt and China. This vast body of knowledge is scattered in many books and traditions, but they all combine to give a definite conception of the world as having for its basis a mental and spiritual structure. We have in addition what can well be termed Modern Theosophy, commencing with the

teachings, both old and new, given by the Adept Brotherhood, the Guardians of Humanity, through H. P. Blavatsky and several of her disciples. But in addition, we have to take specially into account all of the knowledge that modern Science has gathered in her many departments of research. While scientific theories may often be challenged, it is not so with the facts discovered in scientific research. Every such fact is an inseparable part of all the other facts; they have been taken into account in the teachings of Ancient and Modern Theosophy.

There are two lines of Milton which describe clearly what is the conception which I have of the individual who has achieved the object of the School of the Wisdom. They are :

“ He that has light within his own clear
breast,
May sit i' th' centre and enjoy bright
day.”

In these two lines we have four thoughts. First, that of “light”; second, that it must be within a man’s “own clear breast”; third, to “sit in the centre”; and fourth, to “enjoy bright day”.

To sit in the centre is the objective I have in mind for each student, so that he stands in what Carlyle has termed the "centre of immensities and the conflux of eternities". In other words, all the past is joined to what is the present, and there is no field of collective human activity nor individual action in the processes of the universe that is not within his purview. But this sitting in the centre can only happen when within his own breast there is *clearness*. This necessitates a perfect peace; not a negative quiescent peace, but one that broods over all things in a spirit of tenderness. When the light has been so born and is reflected in his own clear breast, then the seeker of Truth not only sits in the centre, but he comes to that ideal state of being which is to "enjoy bright day".

This intense sense of Life must always accompany the true student. There can be no Wisdom which is unaccompanied by an ever-increasing sense of Wonder. It is this sense that has well been described by Newton regarding himself:

"I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have

been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

Finally, there cannot be any Wisdom in a man's nature until he has fully understood the relation which he bears to all his fellow-men. All Wisdom fails in its endeavour unless it finds, in part, at least, a solution of the

"infinite passion and the pain
of finite hearts that yearn".

The Latin poet Terence said what has been a beacon light in European culture: *Homo sum, humani nil alienum me puto*: "I am a man; I count nothing human indifferent to me." The aim of all studies in a true School of Wisdom is not the perfection of the individual as such, but only in order that the individual may use every faculty of his being towards "lifting a little of the heavy Karma of the world". Until the seeker for Wisdom seeks not only for himself, but also for all men, what he acquires is not worth

the name of Wisdom. That is why as long ago as 1921 I said: "Loving action is Divine Wisdom at work, and whoso acts lovingly will inevitably come to the Wisdom." This can be achieved swiftest with the aid of Theosophy. But when all is said and done, the Wisdom has to be *lived*. It is only in the process of living that the individual comes to his own centre, and lives surrounded by that Light which is indeed "bright day".

Essential in the progress towards acquiring Wisdom is a man's growing intimacy with all aspects of Nature. *The Voice of the Silence* teaches: "Help Nature and work with her." The first step towards helping Nature is to know what Nature is. The message which each tree, flower, meadow, lake, rock, mountain range, sea, sky and cloud has, must be listened to and understood. Equally, too, can a man find a message in the beauty of bird and beast. Nature must not only be admired; she must also be *loved*. Nature is one volume of the innumerable volumes of the Secret Doctrine of the Wisdom.

One proof which the student finds in himself that he has achieved Wisdom is an irresistible urge in him to create. What Shakespeare describes about the state of mind of the poet is not less true of every man who, having become in a measure one with Wisdom, feels the urge to "make," *i.e.*, to *re-make*, the world of thought and feeling which surrounds him. The Greek word "poet" means one who "makes". Shakespeare describes the poet's eye :

". . . in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from
 earth to heaven ;
 And, as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's
 pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy
 nothing
 A local habitation and a name."

Every student of the School of the Wisdom, as he comes towards finishing his course of study, will feel in himself that he must body forth those new aspects of himself which he has discovered, in essay, poem, song, sonata, symphony, painting, sculpture, dance,

drama, and in all other forms of creation which have within them the nature of Art. The true nature of Art has been described by Carlyle: "In all true works of Art wilt thou discern Eternity looking through Time, the Godlike rendered visible." Thus it follows, that every thought, feeling and action of the man who has acquired Wisdom is all the time revealing the Eternal and Godlike.

This is the summation of all possible human achievement, and it is towards this that a true School of the Wisdom leads its followers. Wisdom liberates; he who has acquired Wisdom is free of dogmas and creeds, rites and ceremonies; nor does he any longer feel the need to be guided by any kind of a Guru or Guide, Philosopher and Friend. He comes to a realization of the true relation which he has towards Infinite Being, which has been described by Plotinus in the last words of his great work:

"This, therefore, is the life of the Gods and of divine and happy men, a liberation from all terrene concerns, a life unaccompanied with human pleasure, and a flight of the alone to the ALONE."

II

OPENING ADDRESS TO THE SCHOOL

OCTOBER 1, 1950

In this first address for the second year's session of the School of the Wisdom, I have first of all to reiterate what I said when the School was inaugurated last year. In that address I laid down what to me should be the principles that should regulate the studies of any organization that calls itself a "School of the Wisdom". Today I have to draw special attention to certain of the ideas which I then enunciated.

I stated, using a modern simile, that the attitude of mind which might be described as Wisdom is one that takes

"an aeroplane view of things, constantly flying over the field of facts which are on the plane of the mind, as it were photographing them, till no fact is omitted from its survey. Wisdom may thus be described as the essence of fact, surcharged with the spirit of Life."

Following from this conception, the search for Wisdom is not like the aim of modern Science, but rather that of ancient India. In modern Science we may say the attempt is to see "the thing as it is"; in ancient Indian philosophy the aim is far more to see "*the life as it is,*" and I pointed out that the word "life" included every form of consciousness.

I draw your attention to the importance, as you study Cosmogogenesis and Anthro-pogenesis, of realizing that the aim should not be merely to accumulate all the facts which are given concerning the Cosmic process, but rather to try to understand the *meaning* of that process. This meaning underlying the events of the evolutionary process can only be arrived at by the use of a faculty beyond the mind, which I called the Intuition. I asked you to note that one special purpose of a School of the Wisdom is to help each student to survey all things "from the centre".

After mentioning all possible types of knowledge in the domain of religion, ethnology, art, science, etc., I mentioned that all

these have to be brought into the circumference of a circle, while the student aims to see all in the circumference as from the centre of the circle.

One special element in this process of seeking and finding the Wisdom I tried to illustrate by the two lines from Milton :

“ He that has light within his own clear
breast,
May sit i' th' centre and enjoy bright
day.”

The first requisite is that a man should understand the meaning of “light,” that inner quality of vision which is a faculty added to that of mind. Then I pointed out that this light must not be one received from another, but developed from a man’s “own clear breast,” and how this light may be obtained. There must be in the light of the breast a *clearness*, that is to say, no vague and foggy conceptions concerning the knowable, but whatever has been gathered of knowledge is made clear not only to the mind but also realized in some measure by the heart.

Then lastly, using Milton's phrase, I pointed out that he who comes to the centre along the line of clearness in his heart and mind, and directly, for himself, does then indeed "enjoy bright day".

I emphasize once again that in any attempt to understand the Wisdom the student must aim at contacting or intuiting the "sense of life," for until there is this intense feeling of life, accompanied by "an ever-increasing sense of Wonder," the student fails to come to that attitude of heart and mind which may be called the Wisdom.

I laid special stress on the fact that there can be no achievement of any true Wisdom at all unless the student keeps continually in mind his relation to all his fellow-men. No man can save his life to himself alone; he is inseparably bound to all the millions of humanity of which he is a part. If the student rises in his nature, he must in some measure raise the nature of the millions with him. It is this intense continual survey of the tragedy of humanity that is necessary for the student to prevent his mind from becoming rigid and insensitive to the streams of life

around him. It is because of this need that I quoted the well-known lines of Browning :
 “ infinite passion and the pain
 of finite hearts that yearn.”

I desire to dwell upon a factor in spiritual understanding which is not usually recognized, and it is that there is an intimate relation between what is called social service and the growth into Wisdom. Were it possible I would ask each student of the School to undertake some kind of service for the villagers in Adyar, and also in the slums in the city. But the work has to be done in the language of the people, which is Tamil, and it is not possible to achieve any results through an interpreter. It is the personal contact between the helper and the helped that is necessary, and it is this connection that particularly unfolds hidden aspects in the nature of the helper.

I can here illustrate my thought by what happened in 1874 in the life of the great John Ruskin. He was at the time the professor of Fine Art in the University of Oxford, and had a great influence over a large number of students. He had especially

emphasized the need of an ethical conception with regard to all phases of life, even that of economics, and particularly in every aspect of art. One day when he was walking outside Oxford and passing the village of Ferry Hincksey, just after some rain, he saw that the children of the cottagers on either side of the road were playing in the muddy road, because they had no other place in which to play. Ruskin pondered over this, and when he returned he determined that at least the children who were forced to play in the road should have a road without puddles. He then called upon his gardener to help him and asked which of his students would come with him to mend that road. They went with picks and shovels, and under his supervision and the guidance of the gardener granite was collected, and one by one the puddles were covered up. At last there was a dry road where the children could play.

In the meantime, there was a sensation in England because a professor of Fine Art should do such a work, and many parents objected, saying that they had not sent their

sons for an expensive education at Oxford to be taught to mend roads. Soon after, Ruskin pointed out in an address the inner psychological meaning of what he had achieved for the students. He said :

“ Will, then, none of you out of your abundance, the abundance of your strength and of your leisure, do anything for the poor? The poor ye always have with you. Drain a single cottage; repair a single village by-way, make good a single garden wall; make pleasant with flowers one widow’s plot, and your muscles will be more strong and your hearts more light than had all your leisure hours been spent in costly games, or yet more hurtful amusements.”

Many years after, this same thought was taken up by a group of University men at Oxford and Cambridge, who established in the East End of London (the poorest part) what are known as University Settlements. During the summer vacation a certain number of students volunteer to go and live for a few weeks in their Settlement and there help in whatever ways to which they are directed, such as teaching, holding services,

playing indoor games, and going on picnics, etc., with those who come to the Settlement, in other words, to try to lift a little of the deep gloom which covers the East End of London.

The principle is exactly the same, that a young man aiming to begin his life with a degree from the University should have a new aspect of his character released by social service, which would in after life profoundly influence his whole attitude toward his fellow-men.

There is an intimate relation between one's unfoldment into Wisdom and loving one's neighbour, as was the phrase used by Jesus Christ. At all costs a student of the School of the Wisdom should never forget how his growth into Wisdom depends upon his growth in the understanding of the problem of the handicaps and sufferings of his fellow-men.

I laid special emphasis on an idea not recognized in the philosophic schools, which is that each man understands only in so far as he acts so as to create. This action must to be "re-make" the Cosmic process in

various forms of art which I mentioned. In many ways the easiest form of "re-creation" of the world of heart and mind around us is through poetry. One of these days every student of the School of the Wisdom must be taught to create poetry, painting, sculpture, etc. It is only in so far as he re-creates the objective world received by his mind that he not only understands the meaning of that world, but he also takes part in that mysterious re-making of the universal process, which is one purpose of the Maker of the Process.

I quoted the significant words of Carlyle as to the true nature of Art: "In all true works of Art wilt thou discern Eternity looking through Time, the Godlike rendered visible." Thus it follows that every thought, feeling and action of the man who has acquired Wisdom is all the time revealing the Eternal and Godlike.

I want especially to lay emphasis upon the fact that there must be no kind of acceptance of any teacher or of his writings as the standard of truth which must never be challenged. There was a time when after

Pythagoras had done his work, his disciples erected his teachings into an unchallengeable authority. When there was any argument on which there were differences of opinion, all disputes as to differences were suppressed with the words "*ipse dixit*," the Latin form of the Greek, meaning "The Master has said it". That form of orthodoxy with regard to Wisdom leads very quickly to rigidity and the loss of the true sense of Wisdom. This is well illustrated by what happened in the case of the teachings of Aristotle. After his school had been established by his disciples, certain aspects of his teachings were incorporated into the speculations of the Christian Fathers of the early centuries. From them the ideas of Aristotle were made into a rigid form of truth, and over the gate of one Christian Theological Seminary were inscribed these two lines :

*Omnis hinc excluditur, omnis est abiectus,
Qui non Aristotelis venit armis tectus.*

"Everyone from here is barred, everyone rejected,
Who comes not with Aristotle's armour protected."

The result was that when Francis Bacon as a youth of sixteen went to Cambridge he saw with his clear mind that Aristotle's ideas regarding the nature of the world were holding back mankind's progress. Blended with these ideas of Aristotle were the conceptions of Ptolemy of the earth being the centre round which the sun and the planets revolved. It was this idea which was declared as the one and only truth by the Catholic hierarchy at Rome, so that when Copernicus gave the proof that the sun was the centre of the Solar System, his ideas were proclaimed heretical and his works placed on the *Index* of heretical works. Bacon, surveying already as a youth the rigidity of thought in Europe, determined that his aim in life should be to wean thinkers away from the Aristotelian system, and start the search for knowledge afresh by gathering all possible facts in Nature, in order that from these facts a new synthesis might be made. It was only as the result of Bacon's impulse that the new wave in thought and in science began, and when the Royal Society of England was founded in 1662 there began the era of

modern Science which has been so fruitful in giving mankind new worlds of knowledge.

If a School of the Wisdom in which the students are Theosophists erects any dictum, of even the greatest Teachers, into an unchallengeable metron or standard, within a generation or two the School will have lost its true purpose. To erect any kind of a "ring pass-not" round the system of any Teacher, however great, is to transform a School of the Wisdom into a body of seekers pledged to an orthodoxy who seek merely the details of knowledge.

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That "true purpose" is for each individual student to come directly "to the centre" and create his own synthesis of knowledge. Truly and with deep gratitude he cannot help being under profound obligation to all Teachers who have gone before him. They mark out the path for him to tread, but he must not ask them to allow him to hold their hands as he journeys. He must journey alone. When he journeys alone, except for the mysterious fact that all mankind travels with him, then he deserves the name of being a man of Wisdom.

When in 1921 I wrote the final chapter of all that I had propounded in the many chapters of my *First Principles of Theosophy*, I summed up the *meaning* of all the teachings, in terms of *Life*, in one sentence : "Loving action is Divine Wisdom at work, and whoso acts lovingly will inevitably come to the Wisdom." In that sentence is, for me, the Fact of facts.

