

Theosophy as Beauty

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The Future Development of the Theosophical Society

Four Great Aspects of Theosophy

The richer Theosophy grows in revelation from above and in experience from below, the more important it is to remind ourselves, who live in a world of differences, that essentially Theosophy is one and indivisible. In this outer world of ours Theosophy assumes many different forms, largely to meet the needs of the varying modes of worship of its gradually increasing number of votaries. But however varied be its forms there is but one Theosophy, and it is not for any of us to insist that our own individual and cherished worship is the only true worship for all, and is the only true Theosophy.

During the past sixty years the Theosophy restored to the outer world by the Masters has enjoyed a number of interpretations, personally, I think, four in number. First there was the original interpretation of Theosophy through H.P. Blavatsky and through that great channel-maker, H. S. Olcott. This interpretation was of Theosophy in its aspect of cosmic and eternal wisdom. Unfolding from this original interpretation came in comparatively quick succession three others. The second was the interpretation of Theosophy through Dr. Besant—its interpretation in terms of will and activity. Third, there was the interpretation of Theosophy through Bishop Leadbeater—its interpretation in terms of the larger science. Fourth, there was the interpretation of Theosophy through Krishnamurti—its interpretation in terms of individual uniqueness and self-sufficiency. Each interpretation in truth, as it seems to me, reflects the other three. No single interpretation in reality contradicts any of the others. Together they form petals of a single flower. Each petal is certainly distinct from all the others, and sometimes, perhaps, in seeming antagonism to one or to another. Yet to the wise student of Theosophy all these interpretations belong to the one Lotus flower of Theosophy, or, if you will, are facets of the one great diamond of truth. Doubtless there have been other interpretations. But perhaps the above constitute the major interpretations so far vouchsafed to us.

And the Fifth

And now to these four would there seem to begin to be added a fifth, the interpretation of Theosophy in its aspect of Beauty, through the great Arts, through form and sound. We are at the beginning of a new era, both for Theosophy and for The Theosophical Society, during the course of which, while all other interpretations will surely grow in power and wisdom, the Beauty Aspect of Life will be much more definitely stressed. It has already received a certain amount of attention, mainly, perhaps, through the writings of Mr. Jinarajadasa. But now we are hoping Theosophy as Beauty will incarnate in actual forms, so that we may no longer be confined to principles, but may perceive Theosophy through the dance, through music, through painting, through sculpture, through architecture, through ceremonial—

forthshowing the essential unity of life amidst a myriad divergencies of colours, sounds, gestures, postures: all in terms of Beauty. In some degree essential colours and essential sounds, both primary and secondary, have been pointed out to us. We must now perceive those great forms upon the sending forth of which nature is building her evolutionary superstructure. And I venture to think that only those who are well acquainted with the science of Theosophy are in a position to perceive the nature of those essential principles of colour, of sound, and of form, which constitute the root-being of evolving life.

I have reason to believe that Shrimati Rukmini Devi will largely dedicate herself to this work, endeavouring to exemplify the great truths of Life especially through the medium of the dance. For many years she has been studying both in the West and in the East the fundamental principles of Art. She had the privilege of the friendship of one of the greatest of artists for all time—Madame Pavlova. In India she has for long been under the tuition of two of the greatest masters of dancing and music in Southern India. During the course of the Diamond Jubilee International Convention she gave a Recital of Indian Dancing which deeply impressed a very large audience. She is, therefore, in all probability well equipped to become one of the pillars of this new interpretation of Theosophy.

Theosophy As Beauty

Through dancing, through music, through painting, through sculpture, through ceremonial, will be disclosed to us as the years pass the mighty language of Form, of Movement, that we may come to realize that the Arts utter a universal language which all may hear even though there are a number of individual sub-languages appropriate to varying national, religious and racial types.

In Ancient India are probably to be found the most fundamental conceptions both of form and of movement, especially in some of the oldest sacred books. In Ancient India, the Arts were nothing more than, but nothing less than, appreciations, reflections, of eternal Life. They were incarnations of Divine Truths. Inevitably, as the centuries passed, the Arts have tended to lose their link with their ensouling realities, though by no means to the same extent as has been the case with their western counterparts since western Arts lost their religious idealism. Today in India, dancing and music, for example, still remain modes of worship of the Real.

This fifth interpretation, once again as in the case of its predecessors, is being sponsored by members of the Theosophical Society, though with no official relationship whatever to the Movement. It will have as its primary objective the purpose of restoring to the Arts throughout the world their supreme objective, namely of bringing visible witness to the Real amidst the unreal, and will thus help to banish that ugliness which so much threatens to take the place of Beauty and to cause the world to sink again into an epoch of darkness. No less will this interpretation help towards the establishment of that universal Comradship of Art which is so essential an ingredient of the Universal Brotherhood which is the high objective of The Theosophical Society.

The Message of Beauty to Civilization

In furtherance of this interpretation has the International Academy of the Arts been established. Shrimati

Rukmini Devi hopes to travel in many countries in order to enlist support for it especially among artists and all lovers of beauty. Whenever invited she will be glad to give public addresses on "The Message of Beauty to Civilization." She hopes also to interpret especially through Dance Recitals that Eternal Wisdom which some of us call Theosophy, but which goes under many names. This will be a new form of that which is essentially Theosophical propaganda, a form so far neglected among us to the very definite detriment of our work of winning the world to Theosophy. We have been brought up in terms of words, of ideas, of beliefs, of opinions, of teachings through addresses, of forms appropriate to the kingdom of the mind. We are, perhaps, in no little danger of becoming mind-ridden. This is not altogether unnatural in a mind-ridden age. But the mind must be a servant and never a tyrant. Today we stand at the beginning of a period of adjustment in which Theosophy as Beauty will play a very important role. And the Light of Beauty shall not only illumine our minds, but shall also educate our eyes to convey to our souls a very vital aspect of eternal truth.

The Diamond of Theosophy

Thus through this fifth interpretation will be revealed to us yet another facet of the splendid diamond of Theosophy. We must learn to receive each revealing gladly, even though a particular revealing remains to us supreme. There must always be some for whom there can be but one supreme revealing. For such, one individual facet is their all, is indeed the very diamond itself, and to suggest the existence of other facets is almost a blasphemy, for such brethren have yet to realize that nothing can be taken away from one glory when another is added. It is most regrettable that in the case of the interpretation through Mr. Krishnamurti so much misunderstanding has arisen because of the fact that while some have felt his own interpretation to express the truest Theosophy, or conception of life, they have so far encountered, found that in this interpretation has arisen a dangerous challenge to the Theosophy which happens to be all-sufficient for them. For my own part, I welcome and respect and appreciate the interpretation offered to us by Mr. Krishnamurti. It is very definitely an enrichment of Theosophy, and is an interpretation of our science whereby we may understand much which heretofore has remained either unrevealed or insufficiently emphasized. Through his interpretation we should gain a wider vision of the real meaning and purpose of Theosophy.

Shines More and More

Thus opens one petal after another of the Lotus flower of Theosophy. Thus shines forth one facet after another of Theosophy's eternal diamond. Shall we not rejoice that in these ways is truth slowly but steadily revealing itself to our gaze? I am certain that the Theosophy of each one of us thus becomes substantially enriched, even though many of us may not yet be at such a stage of all-round development as to be able to perceive the White Light in every splendid colour of its rainbow. I may not yet be an artist in the truest sense of the word, but I hope I am sufficiently evolved to be able to perceive Theosophy in forms, in movements, in gestures, in colours, in sounds, no less than in words, in intellectual conceptions, in beliefs, in opinions. Let me see Theosophy with my eyes as much as I may be able to hear it with my ears, to know it with my mind and to feel it with my emotions.

The Theosophical Society urgently needs the development of the aspect of Beauty. Much of its work remains unfulfilled, much of its life remains in shadow, as it lacks the power to be a pure channel through which the Light of Beauty may shine upon the outer world. Let this new interpretation be added to those

which have gone before it. We must not forget other petals, other facets, as we rejoice in the new petal, the new facet, which is becoming disclosed to our gaze. During the past sixty years Theosophy has been greatly restored to us. Today we need the whole of the restoration we have so far received. We need in a very special measure the Theosophy which H.P. Blavatsky gave to the world at the command of her Master. It is a Theosophy as true today as ever it was. No less do we need the successive interpretations which have come to us through Dr. Besant, Bishop Leadbeater, through Mr. Krishnamurti and through other Theosophists who have revealed to us the Light. For my own part, while one special interpretation may be more congenial to my individual temperament, I am happy to be able to make no distinction between the interpretations. The Lord Muhammad made no distinction between the Prophets. He knew that each Prophet brought his truth from the One Source. We should know that each of our great interpreters brought his truth from the One Source.

Let us not think we must reconcile one petal and one facet with another. Let us not think that any individual teaching is only justified as it can be found in books, in scriptures, in traditions, in orthodoxies. Let us not be eager to harmonize. All such anxiety seems to me to be slavery to orthodoxy, is a mode of fear, is an imprisonment in the past when we should be free in all modes of time, past, present and future.

Seeing Theosophy

How wonderful it will be when we are able to present Theosophy to the world not only through books, and through lectures, but equally through the Arts. I think there are many members of our Society who are already able to perceive Theosophy in one or another of the Arts, who see in forms, in colours, who hear in sounds, who sense in ceremonies and rituals a myriad glorious aspects of life, a myriad truths, a myriad laws. May such brethren become encouraged through the emergence of this fifth interpretation, to go forth into the world, calling the world to Theosophy through dancing, through music, through painting, through the drama, through sculpture, through architecture, through ceremony. May they have encouragement to become creators in the outer world of forms through which the beauties of Theosophy may become increasingly perceived. Many of us may still be needed to work more particularly in the fields of other interpretations. All of us have, as it seems to me, the duty of ceaselessly calling attention to the great interpretations which already illumine the way of the world as it travels towards the light. We all rejoice that a new field of activity is now beginning to open before us, and that many members will now be finding in this new field their true Theosophical vocation. I feel sure that under the influence of this new way there will be many to join The Theosophical Society, giving to it a much needed Beauty and themselves making their own conceptions of Beauty more true. How wonderful it is that our fields of work and service thus increase—to the greater glory of the Masters and of Truth and Brotherhood.

Understanding is Happiness

In the midst of these various interpretations, however, let us realize that each is in fact an opportunity for increased understanding, even though one particular interpretation reigns supreme in our hearts. In misunderstanding lies most of the unhappiness which at present permeates the world. War is, of course, due to misunderstanding, born as such misunderstanding generally is of pride and selfishness. The oppositions between nations and between races are due to misunderstanding and results in terrible unhappiness. Religious conflict and the strange tendency to proselytization are entirely due to

misunderstanding. And how terrible is the unhappiness which results. The Theosophical Society is, or should be, a Brotherhood of Mutual Understanding. Indeed, brotherhood means understanding. Theosophy is the great science of understanding, for it is all-inclusive, demonstrates truth to be everywhere, and absent nowhere. Thus is the virtue of appreciation exalted and the spirit of respect firmly rooted in the hearts of all. The time for aggression is past, for aggressive teaching, for denunciatory criticism, for all signs of small-minded sense of superiority. The time is past for abusive and violent language, for the vulgarities and crudities of separative utterances. The time is past for us to attack each other's sincerities. The time has come for us to promote our causes graciously and in a spirit of appreciative chivalry towards those causes are other than our own. We need each other. We need to respect one another. How little do we tread our own ways as we pour contempt on the ways of others. How much the world and each one of us in it need Freedom and Friendship—to receive and to give.

What is Theosophy?

I am often asked as to how we classify Theosophy. Is it a religion? Is it a science? Is it a philosophy? My answer is that Theosophy is as you take it. In so far as we believe it, it is religion. In so far as we intellectually conceive it, it is philosophy. In so far as we experiment with it, it is science. But it is Life as we live it.

Theosophy can be all things to all types of student, but it remains veiled save as it is lived. Belief is not enough. Intellectual conception is not enough. Experiment is not enough. Life dynamic, life restless, life unfolding, life aspiring, life expanding—such alone is enough, for above all else Theosophy is the religion, the philosophy, the science, and the very life, of movement. Theosophy stays in no faith, in no science, in no philosophy, in no mode of living. Theosophy sweeps onwards and ever onwards those of its votaries who are knowers of its Truth. The Theosophist of 1875 was different, even though not essentially, from his brother of 1900. The Theosophist of 1912 was different from his brother of 1925. The Theosophist of 1934 was different from his brother of 1935. And the Theosophist of 1941 will, I most sincerely trust, be different indeed from his brother of 1936. Even the essentials change as to the perception of them. Should we not see today far more Theosophy, even in the Theosophy as presented to us a decade or so ago, than that which at first we saw? Shall we not hope to see in the course of a little while a Theosophy more wonderful still than the Theosophy which thrills us today? Theosophy is infinite, and never must our finite knowledge of it be without a silver lining of the infinite. Never must any less be without the fragrant intimation of the more.

G. S Arundale

Theosophy as Beauty

WE have already witnessed four great interpretations of Theosophy and, as I have said, we are now on the threshold of a fifth, an interpretation with which, as already suggested, Shrimati Rukmini Devi may have much to do. This fifth interpretation, it has seemed to me, will concern itself with Theosophy interpreted through the Arts, so that while we have already had Theosophy interpreted in terms of will and of wisdom, we shall now witness the interpretation of our great science in terms of beauty.

I am happy to say that the public work for this interpretation was begun at Adyar on March 15th 1936, when Shrimati Rukmini Devi gave a public Classical Recital of Indian Dancing before a very large and distinguished audience. The setting for the Recital was indeed beautiful, for it was in the open air in the comparative cool of the early evening, and the audience sat under the spreading branches of a noble tree. The stage was quite simple, with some old Indian embroidery and a background of a soft green cloth. On the left, as one faced it, sat on the ground the accompanying musicians and Shrimati Rukmini's great teacher, a famous genius of southern India, whose family has for centuries been dedicated to the Art of Dancing, Mr. Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, helped by his distinguished son-in-law, Mr. Chokkalingam Pillai. Shrimati Visalakshi Ammal was also there to give support of her vocal powers.

The Recital opened with a few introductory words, followed by a most impressive Sanskrit invocation to Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance. Then, after a little tuning in by violinist, singers and drummer, Shrimati Rukmini appeared in a very beautiful dress inspired in its design by the sacramental dance dresses of the olden days. The theme of the Dance Recital was an emotional interpretation of the aspirational outpourings of the Soul, and the ecstatic identification of these with the very Soul of the Universe itself—the merging of the individual soul in God. Every movement, every gesture, every pose, each song, expressed an aspect of such union, so that the whole Dance became an intricate yet beautifully rhythmic symbol of a soul's awakening to its Divinity. Yet, emotional in texture though this particular Dance undoubtedly was, it had a very high intellectual content, appealing no less to the mind than to the emotions themselves. The Mayor of Madras, a number of His Majesty's Judges of the High Court, and many other leading citizens both of Madras and other cities were present at the Recital.

Two days later Shrimati Rukmini had the pleasure of giving a similar Dance Recital before Their Excellencies the Governor and Lady Marjorie Erskine at Government House, Madras.

Work Among the Poor

Shrimati Rukmini Devi has decided that her work must not only lie among those who may be able to pay for tickets, but must no less be among the poor, who need so much beauty in their lives and who certainly ought not to have to pay for it. Especially in India poverty among the masses is so acute that they cannot generally afford two meals each day, let alone the most trifling payment for seats at a theatre. She has in mind, therefore, to organize suitable entertainments for poor people, with the help of those who are happy to place their talents at the service of those to whom pleasure and artistic uplift is so very rare.. She hopes to emulate in some measure the wonderful work being done in Britain by the Arts League of Service, with which her friend, Miss E. Elder, is so intimately connected. India needs the release among the masses of her ancient and exquisite Arts. There can be no free India until and unless

the soul of her culture is free and active.

Southern India's leading daily newspaper *The Hindu*, had a long article on the Dance Recital given at Adyar, in the course of which it was stated that:

The occasion was notable as marking the public debut of an educated and cultured lady outside the professional ranks, whose disinterested love of a great art has led her to study its intricate and elaborate technique and to attempt with originality and verve the difficult and delicate task of portraying emotions through gesture and expression . . . Striking as Mrs. Arundale's performance was . . . the promise of excellence she gives . . . is even more striking. For this as well as for the immense possibilities of renovation and development that it foreshadows for the art, her progress deserves to be watched.

The article proceeds to note the "thrilling effect" produced upon the audience by certain special passages, and how "singularly happy" was the rendering of the outpouring of the self in ecstatic recognition of its identity with the universe.

But all this, of course, is but the beginning, and I feel sure that this fifth interpretation of Theosophy as Beauty will render the greatest service to the whole world in that artistic and cultural revival upon which its happy and prosperous future so largely depends.

G. S. Arundale

The International Academy of the Arts**Inaugural Address**

THIS is an informal beginning of what for the present we are calling The International Academy of the Arts — possibly we may find a better name for it afterwards.

Our Objects will be:

1. To emphasize the essential Unity of all true Art;
2. To work for the recognition of the Arts as inherent in effective individual, national and religious growth.

For the time being we shall have no formal organization, as we want to begin in a small way so that as we work we may sense the lines along which we should develop. The spirit within all our work will be to reflect as best we can Art as a pure power of Divine Nature — God in His Aspect of Beauty.

We hope in due course to attract artists to Adyar from all parts of the world, for our Academy is International, as its Objects show: artists in whom the spirit of Art shines and who know Art to be an expression of the power of Universal Life and Growth. We often think of Life in terms of Will and of Wisdom, but we often neglect Life in its aspect of Beauty.

This is a time in which individuals, nations and faiths may be drawn together largely through the intensification of a spirit of individual dedication to the Beautiful, and through the education of the appreciation of the Beautiful in the many different forms in which we find it in different faiths, in different nations and in different races. The West does not know yet how to appreciate the Beautiful as expressed in western forms. The more the West and the East draw together in mutual appreciation of all that is beautiful in the civilization of each, the more quickly shall the world approach the goal of Universal Brotherhood and Peace.

Therefore is our Academy *international*, even though it has its setting and headquarters in India. But it must be remembered that India is a very great home of the Beautiful. There is not a single Art which has not been beautifully expressed in India — whether Music or Dancing or Painting or Sculpture or Architecture. Every expression of the Beautiful has been revered with great faithfulness by Indian artists for thousands upon thousands of years. India has much to give to such an Academy as ours, as the West has also much to give; and I feel particularly happy that we are inaugurating this movement on a day sacred to Nataraja, the Eternal Lord of the Dance, the Lord of Divine Rhythm, to whom I offer whatever I can give.

My dream for our Academy is that it should not merely serve to encourage the Arts as such, but should no less stimulate the spirit of Art in every department of Life. Art is a stream flowing through all Life. There is no fundamental distinction between Science and Art, or between Religion and Art, or between

Philosophy and Art, or between Industry and Art, any more than there is essential distinction between Life and Art. Art is a universal mode of Life, as also, most truly, is Science, is Religion, is every individual and particular expression of Life. The part is always vibrant with the Whole, and with every other part. Life is One whatever be its forms.

I therefore feel that while we may rightly emphasize certain forms of Art, we are mainly concerned with the universal spirit of Art, for as the spirit spreads and intensifies in beautiful purity, so will it naturally assume the forms appropriate to varying circumstances and needs. If the spirit of Art be free and universal, then will Life grow in simplicity and beauty, and Nature will be honoured in the myriad forms through which she attains self-realization.

I am particularly hoping that young people may come to Adyar to study in the Academy, for already we are privileged to count upon its staff two very great teachers — one of singing, and the other of dancing, under both of whom I have been fortunate to study. Of course these teachers are Indian teachers, for we are determined to do all we can to encourage the renaissance of Indian Art in all its branches, so that India may once again rise to the stature of the Beautiful which was hers in the long ago. Unless India learns once more to reverence her own splendid standards in the Arts, neither will she be worthy of Swaraj, nor will she be able to take her rightful place among the nations of the world. The authorities of the Besant Memorial School have offered full cooperation with the Academy, so that our students may benefit, at least to some extent, from the ordinary curriculum, and the students of the School themselves may benefit from the artistic education the Academy hopes to provide.

I am hoping to have the support of artists all over the world, so that while our beginning will be more or less on Indian lines, gradually all lines may find beautiful expression here at Adyar in emphasis of the essential Unity of all true Art, and establish an honoured place for the Arts in every aspect of human life. I want the life of the individual, the life of every nation, the life of every religion, to be as full of the spirit of Art as these are so often full of the commercial, the intellectual and the utilitarian spirit. There is every reason why all objects of practical utility should be artistic. There is every reason why commercial life should promote Art no less sedulously than it is supposed to promote material prosperity. There is every reason why the mind should be no less artistic than it is supposed to be logical and discriminating

Indeed, without Art all aspects of Life fall short of achieving their purpose. And as we move forward into the new age we must restore to the Arts the place they have lost in education, in religion, in industry and commerce, in national and international life, in individual and social living. Thus alone shall prosperity return and peace and happiness for all.

We already have the nucleus of a fund for the building of a theatre, so that beautiful dramatic work may be undertaken, and in particular the wonderful dance dramas which play so large a part in the lives of the Indian people. We hope to encourage Indian artists to write plays embodying Indian themes, full of inspiration and beauty, and we shall hope to produce them on the most modern scientific principles of production. One of the most important duties of the Academy will be to help to present to the West all that is best in Indian Art, and to win for it the appreciation which true Art should receive from artists everywhere, irrespective of all distinctions of nationality and race. There must be a Universal Brotherhood of Art, and our Academy will do all in its power to promote it, thus linking nation and nation, faith and faith, individual and individual, in mutual appreciation and therefore in mutual fellowship.

I want, however, strongly to emphasize the fact that the work of the Academy is only beginning as we strive to express the Arts in beautiful forms, in beautiful sounds, in beautiful colours. The supreme purpose of the Academy is to encourage the living of beautiful lives, of lives so refined and so artistic, so gracious and so compassionate, so true and so noble, so wise and so understanding, that everywhere the beautiful is extolled and all ugliness fades away. Our Academy will be very proud and happy to encourage beautiful dancing, beautiful music, beautiful painting and sculpture, beautiful singing, beautiful handcrafts and architecture, to give support to that Spirit of the Beautiful which knows no distinctions of race, of nation or of faith. But the Academy will be still more happy to know that in its own humble way it is helping to make more beautiful, more artistic, the lives of all, that in the education of the young, creative reverence for the Beautiful has a pre-eminent place, that ugliness is beginning to depart from daily life whether in the home or in the earning of livelihood, that leisure finds decreasing satisfaction in the crude and vulgar, and that the whole world is slowly turning away from those barbarisms of war, of greed and of cruelty which still challenge its right to be called civilized.

As the Academy grows it will take upon itself such organized forms as may seem most suited to its world-wide objective. In the mean time we shall establish a nucleus of its work at Adyar, and I hope to visit many countries to enlist the active support of all who believe with me that true physical, true emotional, true mental living in no small measure depends upon the influence of the Beautiful upon each, and that essential to happiness, peace and prosperity, is Beauty.

Rukmini Arundale

The Function of the Artist

WHILE the function of the artist is to reveal beauty in various aspects of life, his work has also another effect which is not recognized. Every form of art is an appeal to a hidden faculty in man which is the intuition. The artist creates, whether in music, painting, sculpture, song or dance or in any other form, because he exercises the intuition and sees the world mirrored in that new faculty.

Most people understand the world either through their emotions or through their minds. When they become artistic or sensitive to beauty in any form, their reaction to life is more from the intuition. Then they see all the diversities of life as linked in one great scheme or divine plan, whose essential quality is absolute beauty.

While religion gives the message of the good, and science and philosophy the message of the true, art gives the message of the beautiful, and by doing so creates a union of the good, the true and the beautiful.

When the artists understands his true mission, he becomes as a prophet to lead mankind to new lands of endeavour, where all that they create shall reveal the nature of God who is Absolute Beauty.

C. Jinarajadasa