

The Mandate of the TS

SAMDHONG RINPOCHE

Friends,

I feel immensely happy to be with you at this important inaugural function, where Mrs Radha Burnier is once again formally assuming the role of International President of the Theosophical Society (TS). At the outset, I congratulate all the members of the Society in particular, and humanity in general, for having Radhaji as International President for the fourth consecutive term. On this solemn occasion I humbly and sincerely invoke the blessings of the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and all the Enlightened Ones, that they may bestow blessings on Radhaji to have the health and strength to lead the Society for many years to come, and on all its members to devote themselves to their share of service towards realizing the Society's objects. Although I have been a member of this great Society for the last three decades, I have not been able to serve it in any substantial way. Yet it is a great privilege for me to have this opportunity to say a few words this evening.

I need not dwell on the Society's objects, history and what it has done in the past,

because every member is quite familiar with them. I would like to use this opportunity to draw your kind attention to the present state of humanity, the great challenges before all elevated persons, and the universal responsibility of the TS as a whole, and each one of its members as individuals.

Dismayed by the human condition today, many are often tempted to question the relevance of the TS to this present age. A similar question has been asked of other spiritual traditions and institutions. In my view, this doubt which results in a lack of enthusiasm and lethargy arises in the minds of those who have not fully grasped the nature, function and strength of the Society. The relevance of any spiritual endeavour can never be determined by external conditions. It is determined by the faith and confidence of the practitioners. Those having the required *śraddhā*, or enlightened faith, will never doubt the relevance of the objects in which they have put their total faith. Each TS member must strengthen his or her enlightened faith in the purpose and path of the

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Society, and be aware of its relevance to our present age — a relevance which is perhaps greater than what it was at its inception.

The inspirers and founders of the TS saw the gross materialistic trend in the world more than a hundred years ago, and realized that the various religious traditions would become void of religiousness and be substituted by institutions and dogmas that would not be able to save humanity. On the contrary, they saw that the names of religions would be used very effectively to create divisions and conflicts. For this reason, a brotherhood of spiritually inclined people, irrespective of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour came together and established a programme in search and defence of Truth. The TS has promulgated the motto “There is no religion higher than Truth” to remind people not to neglect Truth, not only through the materialistic mindset, but also through the mind conditioned by religious institutions. In my opinion, the theosophical movement has played a very important role at a crucial juncture of human history for more than a hundred and twenty-five years.

If the TS had not come into being, the history of spiritual tradition, particularly in the Asian continent, would have been very different. In spite of tremendous negative forces, Mother Earth still holds pockets of positive energy and rays of light in the vast horizons of darkness. The task of the Society is not at the stage of completion, but of strengthening and continuing a great mission to save the earth and all its inhabitants. Although the es-

sence of human nature is good and pure, human beings are vulnerable and they can be conditioned by several predispositions. To be born as a human being is a most precious privilege, because in this life we have the potential to achieve liberation and enlightenment. But congenial conditions are required for the spiritual mind to grow, and for all mental impurities first to subside, and eventually to be eradicated.

If throughout life one were bereft of spiritual stimulation and consistently encountered the powerful stimuli of negative emotions, the opportunity for transformation would be totally denied. Today, the entire world is going towards moral bankruptcy and spiritual starvation. Powerful negative forces have been carefully planning an economic colonization of the entire world. They have found fertile ground in human greed and intolerance because these are easily exploited and used to promote their ulterior ends. These negative forces have been given a boost by the media in multifarious forms. The so-called information revolution has left no one untouched. Not so long ago, remote and unpolluted areas such as Ladakh and Bhutan have been unconsciously and easily captured by this Black Age instrument, exposing innocent people to an unquenchable thirst for material objects.

Consistently stimulated greed and intolerance, right from childhood until death, has left no time and energy for the spiritually immature to reflect upon and discriminate between right and wrong, good and evil. Their mind is heavily conditioned to accept the idea of “wealth

for self” as the ultimate object of human life. The self- and money-centred mindset has no hesitation in creating catastrophes such as the starving of millions in the poor nations and depriving future generations of natural resources. Killing, war, fear of war, terrorism and the like, are the most effective means to promote trade, particularly that of arms and ammunitions. From a young age, people are systematically trained for comparison, competition and conflict. So-called conflict resolution, especially through violent methods, guarantees a new generation of multiple conflicts while trying to resolve the first one. Environmental degradation as a result of human greed has deprived all, including the animal kingdom, of health and a safe life. Most criminal acts are already legalized under various pretexts, and now they are in the process of being made “moral”, which is indeed a most alarming danger for humanity as a whole. This is the state of the world today.

All sensible persons who have even a slight inclination towards spirituality need to wake up and unite to face these challenges, and the TS must play a major role to save the future of humanity and the world. One may be tempted to raise the following points:

1. What can I do, since no one listens to me or cooperates with me?
2. Against these powerful forces of globalization, what can a few individuals or relatively small organizations such as the TS do? How can we stand against this current?
3. Many people justify their immoral

acts by saying: “I have no intention or willingness to do wrong but, since I have to survive in this evil society, there is no way out but to compromise with the current situation.”

I would stress again that the above questions and attitudes are a result of a lack of faith and conviction in Truth and the ideals to which we claim to be committed. In this apparent tug of war, many arguments and counterarguments can be presented endlessly, and we may go on discussing them academically or intellectually, but that would lead us nowhere.

The fundamental issue involved in this discussion is Truth. Whether one believes in Truth or not will determine all the answers to the above questions and attitudes. If someone believes in Truth, there is no room for raising such questions. Truth can only manifest itself through goodness, righteousness and justice, and not through evil, wrongdoing and injustice. If this is the case, then Truth must be incomparably more powerful than falsehood. Then the question of what can I, or we, do against massive evil does not arise. Truth and falsehood are not to be determined by a majority view. They are determined by reality itself. It is not like forming a government in a parliamentary system. Truth and falsehood are to be perceived by authentic wisdom, like seeing black and white.

In this context, the first and foremost task of spiritual organizations, including the TS, is to re-establish or strengthen people’s faith in Truth, so that they are empowered to disassociate themselves from, and resist, falsehood. I know this is

not an easy task. Our minds are so conditioned by a mass of predispositions, preconceptions, and particularly indoctrination by the media, that they lack the basic ability to comprehend and perceive the whole. The mind has been conditioned to always see things in fragments and alternatives. Whenever we talk about Truth, our thought process immediately puts forward an image of truth that is the opposite of, or an alternative to, our image of falsehood. In this way, Truth is presented to one's thought as just an image parallel to the image of falsehood, giving both images equal status. This is the pitiable condition in which we find ourselves.

Unless and until the state of falsehood is recognized and negated completely, Truth can never be perceived. The materialistic mindset is incapable of recognizing and negating anything. It is indoctrinated with fear, self-negation and nihilism, which play a very subtle role in our mind, preventing us from identifying and negating falsehood. The Buddha, Nagarjuna, Jiddu Krishnamurti and many other sages and seers tried their best to teach people how to negate. Negation should not be construed as being negative. It is the source of total creativity. In a sense, it is the only positive, because it paves the way for

uncovering the Truth. Therefore, I entreat everyone to allow their intelligence to be awakened and perceive the Truth as it is, so that our physical, verbal and mental activities may naturally flower in goodness to benefit all living beings. To create a congenial condition for this awakening, each one should be aware of his or her universal responsibility to: (1) disassociate from wrongdoing; (2) firmly and non-violently resist all wrong acts in society, expressing their disagreement in clear words; and (3) step out of the mighty stream of the evil forces of consumerism and globalization. While doing so, each one should lead a righteous life with right livelihood, discriminating needs from wants.

I am sure this is not impossible for anyone with the clear inclination to find Truth. If such a spiritual mindset is generated, it will not be difficult to lead an uncompromisingly righteous life even in today's world. If a human being cannot survive without compromising with evil, such survival has no meaning. The Theosophical Society, with its definite mandate from the Enlightened Ones, can help a vast number of individuals to enter the right path of Truth.

May all sentient beings have peace and contentment. ✧

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