

The Ideal Society

A Theosophical Perspective

What is an ideal and what are the components of an ideal society?

From “Isis Unveiled” by H. P. Blavatsky

“The religion [of] the last of the Buddhas, Gautama, based its moral ethics on three fundamental principles. It alleged that

1. every thing existing, exists from natural causes;
2. that virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment; and,
3. that the state of man in this world is probationary.

“We might add that on these three principles rested the universal foundation of every religious creed; God, and individual immortality for every man – if he could but win it.” (Vol. 2, p. 124)

“We will soon perceive that the ethics of Gautama-Buddha, Plato, Apollonius, Jesus, Ammonius Sakkas, and his disciples, were all based on the same mystic philosophy. That all worshipped one God, whether they considered Him as the "Father" of humanity, who lives in man as man lives in Him, or as the Incomprehensible Creative Principle; all led God-like lives. Ammonius, speaking of his philosophy, taught that their school dated from the days of Hermes, who brought his wisdom from India. It was the same mystical contemplation throughout, as that of the Yogin: the communion of the Brahman with his own luminous Self – the "Atman." And this Hindu term is again kabalistic, *par excellence*. Who is "Self"? is asked in the *Rig-Veda*; "Self is the Lord of all things . . . all things are contained in this Self; all selves are contained in this Self. Brahman itself is but Self," is the answer. Says Idra Rabba: "All things are Himself, and Himself is *concealed* on every side.”” (Vol. 2, p. 342)

From “The Need for True Ideals”

an article in “The Theosophical Movement” magazine, August 2001

But what is an ideal? According to the definition found in the dictionary, an ideal is that which is in accordance with one's most exalted imagination or conception. It is that which embodies one's highest standard of excellence. In philosophy, idealism is the theory which affirms that mind, or the spiritual and ideal, is of central importance in reality. To the idealist, reality is essentially spiritual because it embodies mind and reason. An idealist formulates ideals and lives under their influence. He deliberately exposes his mind to their current, exactly as a person who feels cold exposes himself to the rays of the sun, or one in a dark room lights a lamp. The idealist makes his mind receptive to the influence of his Higher Self and thus draws to himself its light and its radiance.

An idealist, in the philosophical sense, is thus a truly practical person. On the other hand, one who rejects ideals on the plea that he wants to be independent, or because he is not able to live up to them, is being very impractical and suffering from conceit, or from fear, or from both.

History and experience bear witness to the guiding part ideals play in the progress of humanity. An ideal that finds a responsive echo in our own heart can revolutionize our life and transform our nature. Let us set up a high ideal and make it our own by endearouring to live up to it, to translate

it into daily practice. Nor need we be deterred by awe at the sublimity of such an ideal. The very fact that we are able to respond means that we have in us the capacity ultimately to attain it. To adopt a noble ideal is the first step, and the longest journey must begin with that first step. The goal may loom far, far away, but a beginning has been made and to keep on striving is in itself an achievement.

The power of true Ideals is a triple one. There is first the power inherent in the Ideal itself. A true Ideal is an actual fact, a living archetype that radiates its own magnetic quality and sheds its beneficent influence upon humanity.

In the second place, such an Ideal, through this radiation, draws out from within everyone who accepts it and reflects upon it that which is consubstantial with its own quality. As the light and the warmth of the sun draw out the potency hidden in the seed, gradually enabling the plant to grow, bear flowers and fruits, and to produce seeds for future plants, so the magic power inherent in a high Ideal draws forth the dormant powers in a person's inner consciousness and gradually enables him to transcend his personal self and to show forth his inherent divinity.

But there is also the third aspect of an Ideal's power: the power generated by the effort of the individual to come nearer to his Ideal. This is a significant factor in the spiritual life and when correctly understood indicates the need to strive incessantly; for it is the striving that counts the most. Gandhiji says: "The goal ever recedes from us. The greater the progress, the greater the recognition of our unworthiness. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory."

Let us then choose the highest ideal we are able to conceive and to appreciate. Our hidden aspiration will exert its influence. Only a part of our ideal is made manifest. The rest remains unseen and yet it too has its own power. Albert Schweitzer, discussing what he designates as mankind's will towards the ideal, affirms his conviction that this will is greater than we can see and that the unseen part produces effects that exceed in value the effects of the visible action. He concludes: "Judging by what I have learnt of men and women, I am convinced that there is far more in them the idealist will-power than ever comes to the surface of the world."

The major part, locked in their hearts, has yet to be released.

May we then, sustained by our faith in humanity, of which we are a part, keep on in our efforts undismayed by aught! "Have patience, Candidate, as one who fears no failure, courts no success," enjoins *The Voice of the Silence*, and this is possible if we keep our gaze upon the Ideal we have accepted.

"There may also be another sort of wealth than mere gold, another sort of power than position in politics or society. The powerful, wide, all-embracing, rapidly-acting brain stored with knowledge is a vast possession which one man may enjoy. He can use it properly or improperly." (W. Q. Judge)

The article can be read in full at http://www.ultindia.org/tm_magazine/7110ideals.html

From the article "Misconceptions" by H. P. Blavatsky published in "Theosophy: Some Rare Perspectives"

"Once Theosophy and its principles are known, it will be demonstrated that our philosophy is not only a "close relative of modern science," but its forbear, though greatly transcending it in logic; and that its "metaphysics" is vaster, more beautiful and more powerful than any emanating from a dogmatic cult. It is the metaphysics of Nature in her chaste nakedness, both physical, moral and spiritual, alone capable of explaining the apparent miracle by means of natural and psychic laws, and of completing the mere physiological and pathological notions of Science, and of killing forever the anthropomorphic Gods and the Devils of dualistic religions. No one believes more firmly in the Unity of the eternal laws than do the Theosophists.

“The Neo-Buddhism of the religion of Prince Siddhartha Buddha will never be accepted by Europe-America for the simple reasons that it will never force on the Occident. As to the Neo-Budhism or the “Revival of the Ancient Wisdom” of the Ante-Vedic Aryas, the actual evolutionary period of the Occidental people will end in a blind alley, if they reject it. Neither the true Christianity of Jesus – the great Socialist and Adept, the divine man who was changed into an anthropomorphic god – nor the sciences (which, being in their transition period, are as Haeckel would say, rather *protistae* than definite sciences), nor the philosophies of today which seem to play at Blind Man’s Buff, breaking each other’s noses, will allow the Occident to attain its full efflorescence if it turns its back upon the ancient wisdom of bygone centuries. Happiness cannot exist where Truth is absent. Erected upon the shifting sands of human fiction and hypotheses, happiness is merely a house of cards tumbling down at the first whiff; it cannot exist in reality as long as egotism reigns supreme in civilised societies. As long as intellectual progress will refuse to accept a subordinate position to ethical progress, and egotism will not give way to the Altruism preached by Gautama and the true historical Jesus (the Jesus of the pagan sanctuary, not the Christ of the Churches), happiness for all the members of humanity will remain a Utopia. Whereas the Theosophists are the only ones at present to preach this sublime altruism (even if two-thirds of The Theosophical Society should have failed in this duty), and some of them alone, in the midst of a defiant and sneering mob sacrifice themselves body and soul, honour and possessions, ready to live misunderstood and derided, if only they can succeed in sowing the good seed of a harvest which will not be theirs to reap, those who are interested in the destiny of the miserable people should at least abstain from vilifying them.”

“There is but one way of ever ameliorating human life and it is by the love of one’s fellow man for his own sake and not for personal gratification. The greatest Theosophist – he who loves divine truth under all its forms – is the one who works for and with the poor.”

“The idea of the “Great Work” associated with the idea of God and Devil would make any *chela* of six months smile in pity. Theosophists do not believe either in the one or in the other. They believe in the Great ALL, in *Sat*, *i.e.*, absolute and infinite existence, unique and with nothing like unto it, which is neither a *Being* nor an anthropomorphic creature, which *is*, and can never *not be*. Theosophists see in the priest of any religion a useless if not a pernicious being. They preach against every dogmatic and infallible religion and recognize no other deity, which dispenses suffering and recompense, than *Karma*, an arbiter created by their own actions. The only God which they worship is TRUTH; the only devil which they recognize and which they fight against with unabated fury is the Satan of egotism and human passions.”

“. . . people, are sacrificed in a holocaust to your progress, an insatiable and forever hungry Moloch. Yes, we protest, we say that “*today* is worse than yesterday,” and we deny the benefits of a progress which aims only at the welfare of the rich. The “happiness” you speak of will not come as long as moral progress slumbers in inactivity, paralyzed by the ferocious egotism of everybody, the rich as well as the poor.”

“The Theosophical “missionaries” aim also at a social revolution. But it is a wholly ethical revolution. It will come about when the disinherited masses understand that happiness is in their own hands, that wealth brings nothing but worries, that he is happy who works for others, for those others work for him, and when the rich realize that their felicity depends upon that of their brothers – whatever their race or religion – then only will the world see the dawn of happiness.”

**From the article “A League of Humanity” by Robert Crosbie
published in “The Friendly Philosopher”**

“Where shall we find the true foundation for a changed civilization that all men and women can see and stand on? It is not philosophies nor religions nor political panaceas that are needed; but Knowledge, and a wider scope of vision than the vicissitudes of one short physical life. The knowledge that is greater than all the forms of religion ever invented is the knowledge of the very nature of man himself, for himself and in himself. For we are not here as things apart; we are here because of one great sustaining Cause – infinite and omnipresent, not separate from us, nor from any other being. It is the same in all beings above the human and in all beings below the human – the very root of our natures, the very man himself. It is the Source of all powers and of all actions, whether good or evil. Then, everything that is done by beings affects all beings, and all that is has been caused by beings, each one affected according to its share in the cause. What the past has been, we are experiencing now – our lives now being but repetitions of lives that preceded them. What the future will be, we are making now – the lives to come depending entirely on the choice and direction of our thoughts and actions now.

“The war of this or any time is the result of the warring spirit, of the selfishness of mankind. It is the result of the failure to understand the great purpose of life, the nature of our minds, the full power of attainment within each being, the one Law of absolute justice inherent in all beings, the One Deity behind and in all, the one Goal for every Pilgrim, however the path varies. As soon as men are brought to the perception that every one reaps exactly what he sows, no one will do harm to any other being; there will then be no war. There will be no such misery as now exists; for to realize our own responsibility to all others and to act in accordance, is to have become unselfish, and to have done away with the prime cause of sin, sorrow and suffering.”

“We are going to have a league of humanity only when the ancient truths of the Wisdom Religion are once more perceived – when there is one purpose and one teaching. Its truths are self-evident, not to be accepted because written in some book, nor because they are the dicta of some particular church. They are the only truth worth considering because in the use of them they *prove* themselves true. And truth, as we ought to know, always explains. When we have the explanation, we have the truth. Each one has to make his own verification of the truth, but the fact remains that there *is* truth, and it has always existed. It has come to us from Beings higher than we, because once They turned Their faces in the right direction and pursued the course pointed out to Them ...”

**From “Duty – The Royal Talisman”
an article in “The Theosophical Movement” magazine, December 2012**

In Hindu Philosophy *Dharma* (duty), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire) and *Moksha* (liberation) are considered to be the four *purusharthas*, *i.e.*, the aim or goal of human existence. Each of the four *purusharthas* was subjected to a process of examination and elaboration which produced several key works in the history of Indian philosophy, including the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana (treating *kama*, particularly as “sexual gratification”), the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya (treating *artha* as “material pursuits”), the *Dharmashastras* of various authors, most notably Manu (treating *dharma* as “religious, social and personal ethics”), all of which are principally concerned with the attainment of *moksha*. The purpose of human life is to follow *dharma* or law, or to fulfil one’s *dharma* or duty as a human being, and achieve liberation by leading a balanced life in which both human passions and wealth have their legitimate place.

Often *moksha* or liberation is referred to as the *parama-purusartha* or “chief end of human life.” The erroneous understanding has been that the chief aim of human life could be attained by giving

up attachment to worldly life, *i.e.*, by retiring to a jungle or going to a monastery, forsaking one's duties towards household, society and nation. The fact is that we cannot get liberation by running away from the world and mankind or by mortification of the body, but by living in the world and discharging our duties towards family, nation and the whole of humanity. In India, especially, we find that a good religious man is afraid to take or give personal help to anyone. It is construed as getting involved and creating a tie with that person, and that in turn means having to be born again, whereas the goal of life is freedom from the chain of births and deaths. To reach *Moksha* or liberation is also to attain self-realization, and self-realization (or self-knowledge) is the child of loving deeds.

“To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practice the six glorious virtues is the second,” says the *Voice of the Silence*. The person, who does not perform his “duty” or appointed work in life, lives in vain. We might say that the performance of one's duty is an integral part of spiritual development. But what is duty? H.P.B. defines it as, “Duty is that which is *due* to Humanity, to our fellow-men, neighbours, family, and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves.” The area of our duty is not restricted to our family or society but embraces the whole of humanity. When we fulfil our duties towards the family, society or nation we are, in a sense, only repaying our debt towards them, which we might have engendered in this life or in some past life. Mr. Judge says that performance of one's duty is higher yoga than chanting of mantras or yoga practices. If you are unable to do anything else, but only perform your duty, then even that will take you to the final goal.

The *Gita* says that action is better than inaction, and in fact, it is not possible to remain inactive even for a moment. We are continually acting, if not on the physical, then on the mental plane. To think, “now onwards I will not act,” is in itself an action on the mental plane. We live the life full of activity. For instance, we eat, drink, breathe, sleep, think, and during all these activities we are not without action. Hence, when Arjuna refused to fight, Shri Krishna told him that “If indulging in self-confidence, thou sayest, ‘I will not fight,’ such a determination will prove itself in vain, for the principles of thy nature will impel thee to engage.” Shri Krishna shows that the body with its tendencies is the manifestation of what the inner man is. The inner man is the result of thoughts and actions of past incarnations. Thus, each person is naturally, by his bodily tendencies, compelled to do the acts of this or that particular calling. We are born in the environment and the family where we could have the needed experience. Arjuna, being a warrior, is compelled to fight, whether he will or not. So also, each one of us is compelled to act, by the force of our past tendencies.

Next we must consider what kind of actions one must perform and *how* these must be performed. Mr. Judge's advice is that we must not madly rush out “to do” something. Do what you find to do. Sometimes we may be unable to carry out anything, but if we ardently desire to do something, our desire will strike the chord in some other hearts and we will find that the work we longed to do has got done. Shri B. P. Wadia writes that the work that is necessary to be done must be regarded as our duty. What is not necessary to be done is not our duty. “The law of necessity” helps us determine what our duty is.

In the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita* we are told about *Karma*, *Vikarma* and *A-karma*. *A-karma* is inaction or abandonment of action. *Vi-karma* are the bad actions or destructive activities that are condemned and forbidden in the scriptures and by the *Shashtras*. The constructive activities or karma are of three kinds, *viz.*, *Nitya*, *Naimittika* and *Kamyā* karma. *Kamyā* karma are the actions performed with the expectation of reward. They are desire-prompted activities. *Naimittika* karma include special duties performed on special occasions, such as, our duty to help the accident victim, if we happen to be on the scene of accident. *Nitya* karma implies daily duties. Mr. Judge says, “It is our duty to help all, and we must begin with those nearest to us, for to run abroad to

souls we might possibly help, we again forsake our present duty.” The *Gita* says that over and above the performance of one’s duties one should never abandon deeds of *dana* (charity), *tapas* (mortification) and *yajna* (sacrifice). . . .

The word “duty” is the English rendering of the Sanskrit word *dharma*. *Svadharmā* (one’s own duty) is fulfilling *svabhāva* (one’s inner nature). By being in the place which matches our inner longings and skills we can give our best contribution to the world. Shri Krishna says in the *Gita* that humanity was divided into four classes or divisions depending upon the inner disposition or temperament. Thus, a man of “Kshtriya” or warrior temperament can serve the society or nation best by joining the police force or army, and a person with good business acumen can give his best contribution by being a businessman. For the healthy functioning of the society the work of a doctor, lawyer, professor or trader is equally important, as they are complementary and hence must be co-operative and not competitive units in the whole. Mr. Judge advises, “It is one’s duty to try to find one’s own duty and not to get into the duty of another. . . . We should detach our *minds* (as well as our tongues) from the duties and acts of others whenever those are outside of our own.”

The article can be read in full at http://www.ultindia.org/tm_magazine/TMDec2012.pdf