



Contact

The members' newsletter of the Brisbane Theosophical Society

2009 Issue 2 April - May - June



Chiesa di San Michele Arcangelo, Panicale, Umbria, Italy

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Brisbane Theosophical Society

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« NOTE

BOOKSHOP & LIBRARY: (Closed on Public Holidays)
Monday to Thursday.....10:30 am to 2:30 pm
Friday1.00 pm to 4.00 pm & 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm

The programme of Lodge meetings is enclosed and is also placed on the Lodge website which will always be the most up-to-date source of information. Whenever there are changes to the programme an email circular is sent to all people who have given us their email address.

The Theosophical Society has no official statements of belief. It encourages members to seek the truth by various avenues, but always subject to respect for others. All views expressed in these pages are entirely those of the authors – not of the Society.

President's Letter - Noel Bertelle

As I ponder over the topics I would like to cover in this letter, three things come to mind. I hope you will also find them of interest - possibly even motivating.

Possessions

Are we ensnared by our possessions? Do we own them or are we possessed by them, and are we really in control of all other aspects of our lives for that matter? Such questions come to us at certain key points in our lives and when they do they positively demand answers. Moving house is one of those times I reflected as I viewed my belongings preparing to sort them in readiness for packing...

To date most of us have experienced life from birth to childhood to middle age and will likely continue to do so into maturity and old age before finally passing-on, having dutifully bequeathed our possessions to our loved-ones or favoured organisations. Those same possessions will in time be re-circulated heaven-knows-where and for whatever purpose. Nevertheless, whenever we find we are contemplating our possessions with regard to their worthiness and appropriateness in our present lives and into the foreseeable future, we may find ourselves reluctant to let go; we may find we are inventing reasons to hold on to things which are no longer of use. It is as though we had never read, during our theosophical studies, about the practice of non-attachment and the doctrine of impermanence; two very important understandings which, if practised, can relieve us from ensnarement in the world of illusion giving us freedom from thoughtless and unwise attachment to the many things that can hold us back from spiritual advancement.

Mindfulness can be important, too, because without the practice of mindfulness there can be no true awareness and without awareness it is difficult to know what is Real and what is impermanent and when it is that we may have become attached to the unholy or the unhealthy. Without such knowledge life will tend to become governed by emotions and our possessions will tend to take on a life of their own. It is then we find we are not really in control and are back in desire-mode; back in the land of 'Maya'; back sorting through the packing boxes of our lives, not knowing what is important and what is not. Not knowing what to let go of and when to let go

in order to further the real purpose of our lives. That is clearly the time for us to learn more about mindfulness and the clarity it can bring into one's life. Though its practice will take a measure of strength and discipline, it can also be practised as simply expressed in this Tibetan saying '... **just observe what happens, the very act in itself produces strength.**'

Speakers

Our Friday night public meetings are, as you know, the night we feature a speaker who usually addresses a theosophical subject, or wherever possible a subject aligned to its values. These evenings are not meant to be just for our entertainment, though that can be an attractive feature of them. They are intended primarily as a time when we get the opportunity to showcase the teachings and the wonders of Theosophy not just for our own members but also for the benefit of members of the public who may find through their visits that they are in tune with the Objects of the Society and in sympathy with its ideals. That is why we should warmly greet any new attendees and also make the effort to encourage our own friends and acquaintances to visit.

Of course finding interesting speakers almost every week is something of a mammoth task. Sure we can get speakers but as our purpose is not just the spreading of the latest sensational propaganda or the furtherance of some individual's personal agenda, we must continue to strive both for consistent quality and theosophical relevance and to achieve this is not as simple as it may seem. To the point: we are always looking for new speakers and it seems we are not doing enough to encourage our young (at least in terms of experience) potential speakers to 'spread their wings', and by so doing further their experience, knowledge and theosophical growth, whilst adding to the depth of talent available to our Branch and other associated groups which at times rely on us for help. Are we inhibiting the progress of some of our members by not encouraging them? Have we been relying too much on the 'tried and true' and not providing the encouragement and opportunity for others to get up and have a go? We need to address this and I would welcome any thoughts on the subject. And to any aspiring speakers out there who feel they would like a little help and encouragement before taking that next step, don't be concerned that you may be unleashed without adequate assistance as that will not happen. Short talks can be a good introductory experience and we can provide some sympathetic training, as it is requested or required. But first I need to know you are out there and willing, in your own time, to extend your experience and to offer your knowledge and talent in the interests of the Society. So, speak to me and if enough interest is shown we can organize training sessions for the future!

Working Bee

It has been quite a while since we have had a properly constructed Working Bee, which is not to take away from the hard work undertaken on a regular basis by just a few of our members. But now the time has come and we need your help to do a general clean-up, spruce-up and tidy-up of the premises, inside and out. Bring gardening tools, cleaning apparatus, gloves, lots of energy and a happy smile, and anything else you think may assist on the day. Oh, and do bring a vegetarian plate to share and we can enjoy some social time together over lunch.

Add it to your diary, now...

SATURDAY 16 MAY 9:30am – 3:00pm.

– Noel Bertelle

Springbrook Retreat Centre

Brisbane Lodge Meditation weekend

4pm Fri 3 April – Sun 5 April

Sunshine Coast Lodge weekend

4pm Fri 17 April – Sun 19 April

Toowoomba Group weekend

4pm Fri 12 June – Sun 14 June

Sunshine Coast Lodge weekend

4pm Fri 21 August – Sun 23 August

Brisbane Lodge Meditation weekend

4pm Fri 4 September – Sun 6 Sep

Australian School of Theosophy

28(?) Oct – 4 November (TS members only)

Krishnamurti Australia Gathering

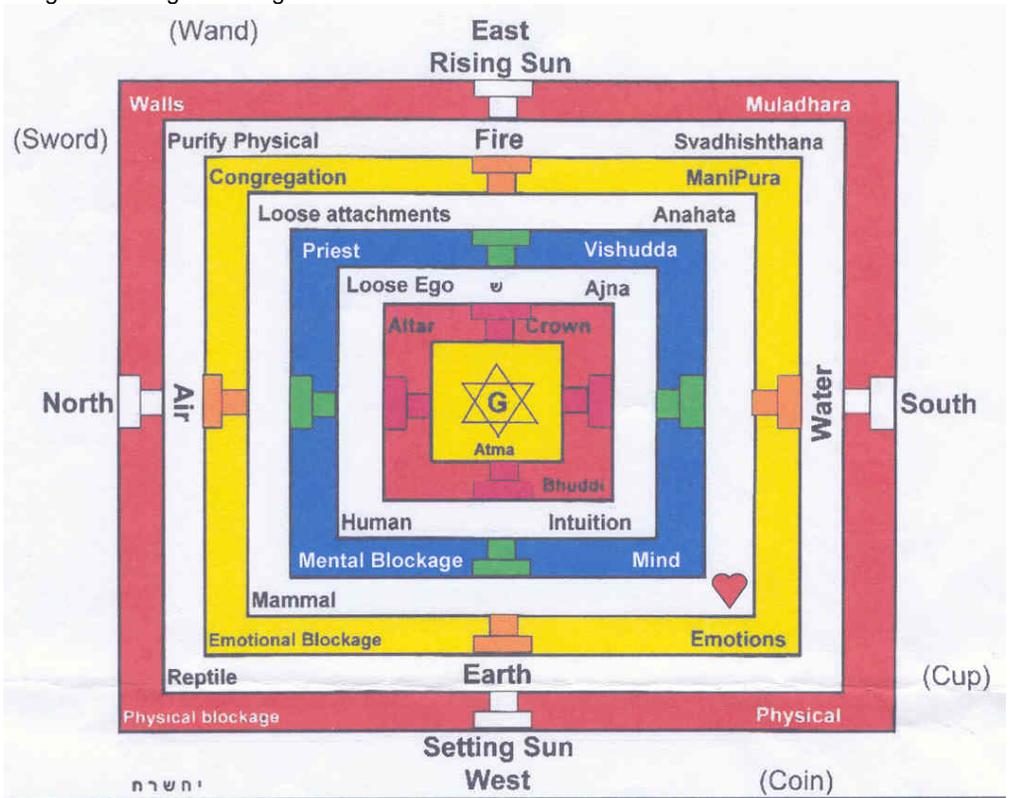
Wed 11 Nov – Wed 18 Nov. Contact:
gerald.reardon@gmail.com

UNLOCKING THE KEYS TO THE INNER TEMPLE

Tom Davis © Revised 2009

*Tom Davis is an active TS member from South Africa, who visited Australia recently and gave this talk at Brisbane Lodge.
His handout is reprinted here with his permission.*

This talk deals with revealing the hidden keys that unlock simultaneously the gates of the inner temple, understanding the ascent of the great pyramid and accessing the golden light within. The Process begins by laying the fourfold foundation of our being, symbolised by Tibetan Mandalhas or Thankas and the four cardinal directions which we need to have properly aligned in order to begin our disciplined practices towards gaining entry into the inner temple and merge with the great being within.



The four sides of a Holy Temple or the Great Pyramid at Giza, represent four elements, four root vogas and four inner temples. It also represents the temple of our own being.

1. The outer or first temple is contained by the walls and tiled roof (the empty shell). *Tarot Pentacle.*
2. The second temple is where the congregation sit or kneel. *Tarot Cup.*

3. The third temple is the sanctuary protected by a barrier and elevated platform. *Tarot Sword.*
4. The fourth or inner temple or Sanctum Sanctorum is the focal point or area sacred to the temple, where Holy writing and or symbols are placed on an altar. *Tarot wand or Aaron's rod.*

The four sides and elements, correspond to four root yogas or ways out of our cycle of suffering, due to our attachment to an illusory ego and the material world.

The first temple and element earth refers to keeping the physical body clean without and within, establishing excellent health through right breathing, diet, exercise, way of life and thinking - *Hatha and Karma Yoga.* (working on the self)

The second temple and element water represents the emotional body and temperaments. This is related to relationships and working with others with peaceful, compassionate, brotherly love and calmness, through devotional practice, bowing and a non judgmental attitude - *Bhakti Yoga*

The third temple and element air refers to the mind. We need to be aware of it's workings, slowing it down and watching its thinking process. This is achieved through contemplation or meditation - *Jnani Yoga.* Through Vipassana or insight we can experience the known universe as it is, without judgement or preconceived ideas.

During long silent retreats where one alternates sitting and walking meditation with long country walks, ones energy levels increase dramatically only after a short period of 7 days. This indicates that when the body is gently exercised, the emotions are calm and mind ceases to be active, one becomes a pressure vessel for the containment of various types of energy.

The fourth temple and element fire, refers to various forms of energy in the body, including heat energy, electrical energy, Prana or Chi and the ability to store and utilise this energy at will = Prana Yoga. When there is a service or ceremony in the Temple or church, the priest and congregation participate in generating a charged atmosphere capable of elevating the consciousness of those within the temple.

The great danger of storing energy in a pressure vessel is that it can easily explode if appropriate safety measures are not employed. Therefore various yogas were developed to assist us to keep the lid on our pressure pot.

The four sides of the pyramid (the four elements) culminate in a single point at the top. This gives us an example of reaching the pinnacle of our potential through a process of purification. Therefore, we should put the lid on our own pressure pot and begin to intensify and refine this energy, prana or chi, in its various forms. We may then channel it into reaching elevated states of consciousness to achieve enlightenment of the individual and service to humanity.

The process of unlocking the doorways to access the golden light within

To reveal something, there must first be something to reveal that is hidden; secondly, to have the desire to have it revealed. Then remove what is obscuring it.

How do we then determine if there is a golden light to reveal? Unfortunately we cannot experience the golden light or halo of enlightened beings, unless we are able to see auras. Seeing auras becomes possible as we go through the process of revealing our own golden light. There are many historical accounts and in the holy scriptures of angelic beings, prophets and holy people who were bathed in light or a great light shone about them.

For those desiring to reveal the light that is within, several things must be accomplished.

We tend to obscure the light that exists in each one of us, by covering ourselves with many layers or protective barriers and use aggressive body language, to warn off potential intruders into these protected domains. We become fearful of revealing our true nature, because of past conditioning. We are taught that we are separate individuals and that we must strive to develop strong ego centeredness with aggressive behaviour, in order to be successful in the material

world. In this material world of hate and greed, we hurt and offend others endlessly; in turn we are hurt and offended endlessly by others.

Commercials in the electronic and print media bombard our conscious and subconscious mind with the inference, that if we buy and use this or that product, or we acquire lots of money and material things, we will influence others and will be successful in many ways. This gives a false feeling of omnipotence. Ultimately there is confusion with the reality of the let down, when we do not experience what was promised. This is because the whole thing promotes the idea of a separate self, ego centeredness and thus greed, hate and insecurity. To overcome these negative states, which cause this field of delusion, the creation of the false self with all its layers must be understood by us and then dismantled step by step.

The first stage is usually to work upon ourselves. The second stage is to learn to live in harmony with others of like mind and then gradually with all other beings. Engaging in some worthy service to humanity can assist this. The third stage is to break down the strong egoistic edifice of our own making and loosen dependant attachment to the selfish self, material things, pets and people without losing our sense of compassion. Through Yogic practice we can gradually remove the blockages or heavy doorways restricting access to the golden light within.

There are seven stages in basic integrated yogic practice linked to the seven main energy centres. In more advanced yoga, the special uses of energies or siddhis are developed. In the kabbalistic tradition, there are 10 energy centres and 22 paths to develop golden light, which are very similar to the yogic paths. There is also a Taoist Yogic system of golden light cultivation incorporating; strict discipline, devotion, humility, service, medicinal regimes, energy generation and martial arts.

The 7 Integral Yoga practices are:

1. **Hatha Yoga practice** or Chi Kung (Muladhara or base energy centre) Develops a healthy and beautiful body through right exercise, yogic postures or asanas, right diet, right breathing and relaxed sleep. (Hatha yoga by itself is not sufficient. This must be enhanced by other forms of yoga) This aids in healing the physical body.
2. **Bhakti Yoga Practice** (Svadhishthana or solid fuel energy centre - four fingers below the navel) Develops right relationships through breath control, cultivating gentleness, devotion, humility, non judgement, equanimity and compassion. This aids in healing the emotional body.
3. **Jnani Yoga Practice** (Manipura or navel energy centre) Develops right thinking through truthfulness (overcoming delusion) and understanding the mind through meditation, working with breathing, mindfulness and detachment. In addition, it is beneficial to refer to the Holy Scriptures for guidance and to strengthen the practice. To engage in discourse and take instruction from wise and skilful teachers helps growth. This aids in healing the mind.
4. **Karma Yoga Practice** (Anahata or heart energy centre) Develops right living. Choose doing a job which is not in conflict with your healing practice. Work within the natural law of cause and effect, which means avoiding doing negative or harmful acts to others or yourself. (Karma Yoga also involves using touch with compassion to heal.) This aids in healing relationships with other sentient beings and the world.
5. **Japa Yoga Practice** (Vishuddha or throat chakra) Develops right voice. Speak using healing language, sing or say positive affirmations and have periods of retreat in silence. Avoid harsh or hurtful speech, untruthfulness and gossip. Speech can be used to heal several modalities.
6. **Lava Yoga Practice** (Ajna or brow chakra) Develops seeing clearly without distraction. Through the stages of visualisation comes telepathy, astral projection, dream recording and interpretation, minor visions, stopping the thinking process in

meditation, clairaudience, clairvoyance, seeing etheric bodies and auras around people, animals, plants and minerals, and seeing into the past, present and future (the gift of prophecy). Prophecy or seeing clearly can be used to heal several modalities.

7. **Raja Yoga Practice** (Sahasrara or crown energy centre) Combines all the above yogas and we enter into union with the manifest and unmanifest universe (or God) for short periods. Steadily these periods become longer until we attain complete union. During these periods, there is an increased outpouring of compassion. The golden light within begins to shine forth dimly and grows brighter as one nears complete union. One's presence, visualisation, thought, speech or touch can be used to heal.

These are not the only Yogas. There are many additional and specific yogas such as Kundalini Yoga which is mainly to do with energy management and Tantric Yoga which contrary to popular belief, is mainly about combining wisdom and compassion into a unitary whole through practice with another being of opposite polarity.

In all of the above yogic disciplines, Breathing Techniques (Prana Yoga) are used to enhance an exercise or lock and unlock important body temple doorways. Prana is life sustaining energy in its several forms e.g. Earth, Water, Air, Fire, Hereditary and Universal Prana or Chi.

To become harmonious with these elements outside ourselves, we start with enhancing and harmonising these energy elements in our own body.

We have to gain mastery over carnal desires and weaknesses and gradually step up the level of energy in the body. As we do this and at the same time develop each yoga and energy centre, the golden light within increases and shines outwardly. Its level of brightness, is in direct proportion to the level of energy containment and dedication to the yoga practice.

Finding Teachers

To engage in any path alone is slow, because we tend to be unaware of various faults we need to correct. It is preferable to have guidance from a skilful teacher or spiritual friend who has already mastered the various practices. Therefore find the right teacher for a specific Yoga, at your level. Don't become too attached to a specific Yoga, otherwise other stages may become more difficult.

To become a pupil of a skilful master, is not easy, as absolute commitment and obedience is usually required from the pupil. Most of the methods or teaching techniques involve submission to severe disciplines until one has developed sufficient self-discipline. The true teacher will not take on students who are not prepared to submit to this. There are direct and graded paths. The direct path involves entering a monastery, ashram or spiritual centre and submitting to very difficult practice (All yogas at once from scratch).

There is no guarantee that an individual will master any of the yogas or achieve enlightenment, liberation or universal consciousness (union with god) unless there is total commitment. A teacher can only point the way and then it is up to the pupil to apply themselves to the practice with the right amount of diligence, dedication and awareness. One does not necessarily have to achieve total enlightenment. Any development of these energy centres will improve your health and well being.

So why don't you all start today in the great work of unlocking the doorways to your inner temples so that you may ultimately reveal the golden light within.

Easter in an ancient hilltop town

By Geoff Harrod, while in Italy last year

Panicale is a small hilltop town in Umbria, overlooking Lake Trasimeno. It is off the major tourist tracks as its approaches are impossible for tour buses and the lumbering mobile caravans have trouble also. It is completely enclosed in its fortified stone walls and has only two gates. The town's origins were in Etruscan times 4,000 years ago and some of the original Etruscan wall material still stands. This is a region abundant with ancient hilltop fortified cities, towns and villages, so in respect of its Etruscan remains and its town walls and hilltop position, it is not at all unusual here. It was an important centre in Roman times and later under the rule of Charlemagne. Its present walls and buildings date mainly from 1300 and 1600.

What makes Panicale my favourite of all these hill towns is its unchanged appearance and feeling from medieval times and the absence of any modern town adjacent or surrounding it. Most Italian towns have an ancient core enclosed within walls, but are surrounded by extensive modern development. Sometimes the modern town is in the valley where the motorway and railway run and the ancient town stands above on a crag-top, as at Orvieto, Cortona and Perugia. But Panicale is small and surrounded by steep wooded hills with terraced olive groves and vineyards lower down.

So when you enter the town gate you really get a feeling of being in a medieval town. The streets are extremely narrow and steep and often break into flights of steps. Motor traffic is not practicable within the walls. The streets are in a roughly elliptical circulating pattern, coming together at either end of the oval town, at the two gates. Today, most of the ancient buildings have been made into modern apartments inside.



There is a large fan-shaped piazza just inside the main South gate. The piazza is dominated by the bulk of the fortified church, *Chiesa di San Michele Arcangelo*. This rises as a high blank brick and stone wall like a fortress. (Front cover) It is in fact a fortress and the only windows are small round ones near the top. Many old churches were fortified against the armies of City State princes and the Pope's army. The church fronts onto another piazza reached up a flight of steps through an archway. Its plain, rough exterior hides an ornate interior. Its present form dates from about 1600. It is at present being restored from a rather run-down condition, so a large part of the church is blocked off by scaffolding as you can see in the last picture.

There are two other churches at Panicale, both outside the walls. One, oddly named *Chiesa della Madonna della Sbarra*, or *church of the Madonna of the toll-bar*, is where the toll bar used to be at the top of the steep approach road. The other, *Chiesa di San Sebastiano*, is on the second peak of the hilltop ridge. This tiny church is famous as the home of one of the most famous frescos in Italy - Perugino's *The Martyrdom of St Sebastian*. Perugino was a native of Panicale, and in his typical style, Lake Trasimeno, as seen from Panicale, is visible outside the palace in which St Sebastian is being executed by archers. There is also a fresco there that is at present the object of great interest around Italy as experts now think it is by Raphael, who was Perugino's pupil.

The Easter procession at Panicale starts and finishes at the main church of *Archangel Michael*. It begins at 9:30pm on Good Friday with a service inside the main church. Then the procession sets off about 10 pm to *San Sebastiano* and back.



That year Easter was unusually early and winter lingered unusually long and cold. Hence the Good Friday night procession was held in an extremely cold, strong wind in this hilltop location. There had even been some snow. The wind was really viscous, making it seem like well below zero with the wind chill, even though it was actually about 3 degrees.

The procession comprised several stout men carrying 3 huge crosses and others carrying a large statue of Jesus that was clearly normally affixed to a cross but was carried horizontally, and another of a huge Madonna on a marble base. This was accompanied by a small choir of girls and the priest, in red robes. It made its way down from the old church of St Michael in the highest part of the town through the alleyways and archways to the main piazza, with a stop there for blessing of the shrine above the town well (see front cover), then out through the south gate and up a narrow road along the ridge to the second hilltop and the small chapel of *St Sebastian*. After a ceremony there, it turned around and returned.

After the conclusion of the service, now about midnight, the priest conducted an interactive discussion with the people, who took part with typical Italian animated discourses.



It was a memorable experience being a part of this old ceremony, in a medieval environment with the old town lit by flares. I took the pictures you see here using the very meagre available light to try to capture something of the unique ambience of this event.

(If you view *Contact* electronically you see the pictures in colour.)

Some of the books recently added to Brisbane Lodge library:

- Theosophical Encyclopedia *edited by Phillip Harris*
- Kabbalistic Teachings of the Female Prophets *by J. Z. M. Hieronimus*
- The Mahatma Letters to A P Sinnett (in Chronological order) *by A T Barker*
- Fundamentalism and Freedom *by Peter Cameron*
- Beyond the Mind *by David Frawley*
- The Energy Grid *by Bruce Cathie*
- The Jain Path *by Aidan Rankin*
- The Altitude of Prayer *by Joel Goldsmith*

Peace of Mind – The Only Permanent Remedy

Samdhong Rinpoche

Ven. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, was Director of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi, and is a life member of the Theosophical Society. This is part of an interview with Ms Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu, Chair of The European Federation of the TS, at the European Congress of the TS in Helsinki, Finland, 16 July 2007.

Q. Understanding seems to be the basis of harmony. Can you tell us what is the nature of understanding?

SR: The nature of understanding is to see things as they exist. Seeing things should not be interfered with or overpowered by the thought process. Our mind is deeply conditioned by the process of thought, which prevents us from seeing the thing as it is. Thought comes with an image, a name; it does not touch the thing, the entity at which we are looking. Beautiful flowers are there, my eye-consciousness can have direct contact with the beauty of the flowers and there is no distortion – this is direct perception; I can see it. But thought interferes with a name, an image: this is a red flower, this is called flower, or in the other languages it is called so and so – this is red, this yellow, this is big, this is small – all kinds of other things come with thought. The consciousness connected with the flowers is flowing, moving; the flowers are changing from moment to moment; consciousness is changing from moment to moment, but thought is attached to the past.

Once we perceive a flower, immediately an image emerges in the mind, then if our eyes are shut or the flower is removed, we still carry that image. The image is not the flower, the name is not the flower, but thought mixes up or confuses the image with the reality; and that image prevents us from having pure, real relationship with others. We have affection, love for a friend, but we are unable to see that friend as he or she really is. We have an image of the friend in our mind and we love that image, or we hate someone we do not know, but we make an image in our mind of that person and hate him or her.

So we are not able to communicate. Someone says something and we listen and understand according to our limitations or conditioning. We are not able to listen without the interference of thought and our imagination, images, words, names, and so on. Krishnamurti used to say, ‘Can you listen, can you see?’ It is an important question. We are not able to listen to the other person’s words. When we hear something, we immediately interpret it according to our own conditioning. Once that conditioning is set aside, we will be able to listen to and understand others, but this is not easy. The whole spiritual process consists in removing the thought process and re-establishing direct contact with the subject. When we are able to remove our own thought limitations, listen to others, and see their position, we will have real understanding.

At the gross level, if nothing is said about conditioning or something negative, or ignorance or something similar, even if we talk in ordinary language, we have many presumptions and prejudices. Even one statement can be interpreted in many different ways, one sentence may be interpreted or understood differently by people from various countries according to their own particular needs or selfish ends. With such prejudices and misconceptions, understanding is very difficult. When we have a free mind without any prejudices or preconceptions – just objective, free mind – we will be able to understand.

Life is Your Great Teacher

By Barry Bowden, leader of the Toowoomba TS group

Let's look at the term "life is your great teacher." If we look at our personal life, we may see that our life is in disarray, particularly if we are looking through emotions which tend to upset the mind. Other times it can be quite ordered with most things going well. This can be like a roller coaster, though maybe not that severe.

People that come to us are either friends or "interesting" people, depending on how we see them. If we look at how people affect us then we could say that they are teaching us many things such as patience, even discernment. For instance, if someone can upset us then we are not in control of our self. This allows us to see how and where we need attention, because whenever we have a weakness there is a corresponding gap in our development to our higher vehicles.

There are ways of transforming our weaknesses, which may display as anger, irritability and other forms of impatience, if we firstly meditate on *Patience* as though we were already in total possession of it. Secondly, seeing our self in a situation that we may have formerly failed, and then replaying the situation as though we are in perfect control of our self.

This sounds too easy; however, it will take much more than one time and it should be done daily until we are in possession of say, patience, or whatever quality we perceive as needing a boost. It really is a matter of realizing that the way we think makes mental grooves and to strike out in new directions is quite hard, but if we continue to practise new ways of thinking, soon we will find that it becomes enjoyable. As with any growth, comes joy, this is a natural law. Persistence is the key: we continue to practise. And of course, life will continue to test us by placing "teachers" before us until we have learnt our lesson well.

"Intelligence is impartial; no man is your enemy; no man is your friend. All alike are your teachers. Your enemy becomes a mystery that must be solved, even though it take ages; for man must be understood. Your friend becomes a part of yourself, an extension of yourself, a riddle hard to read. Only one thing is more difficult to know— your own heart." (From the Theosophic Classic, "Light on the Path")

If we accept this, then all people we meet, come with something to give us, if only we "open" up ourselves and not judge with our own preconditioning. Instead, put aside all prejudices and just listen with "ears" untainted by the world we live in and maybe catch a glimpse of another world that remains unchanged by our preconditioned ideas. This of course is the inner world that waits until the mind and emotions abate enough at times to shine through.

This other world that many hunger to enter is beyond the constant changes that we feel when we are living with likes and dislikes, and this actually gives us a clue. It is these pairs of opposites (likes and dislikes) that we must leave behind. As Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj says, *"It is madness to split yourself with likes and dislikes."* (from his book, "I Am That")

It's not that we cease to feel; on the contrary, we begin to truly live, unhampered by our conditioning, as we enter the present moment which is the gateway to the eternal now. We just need to practise living in the present moment as often as we can. This can be our focus during the day, trying to keep our mind in hand. This can also depend to a large extent, on our willingness to see one's own faults and naturally in that space with the mind totally silent. It should be a joyful experience to see our faults because, then, we can begin to work in earnestness on our self. Without such awareness we can never really progress on the spiritual

path. We also need to understand others; however we really need to know ourself and that is where self study comes in.

“Study the hearts of men, that you may know what is that world in which you live and of which you will to be a part. Regard the constantly changing and moving life which surrounds you, for it is formed by the hearts of men; and as you learn to understand their constitution and meaning you will by degrees be able to read the larger word of life.” (also from “Light on the Path”)

It is quite amazing to realise that the world that we wish to enter into is all around us and actually teaching us at all times of the day; the whole world around us is alive and interacting with us. As we change, our responses change, then our circumstances change with us. And there is much truth in the statement that “Life is the Great Teacher or Guru”

All we need to do is engage in this “new” world by playing by different rules than before. All people come to us as “teachers” imparting to us all that we need to learn. This could be music to our ears if change is what we want. What it really takes is for us to live within. Within is a world, its main quality is consciousness, no thing or form in sight. As the master K.H. said, *“It is unchanging and unchangeable with regard to which there is only an eternal now.”* (from the Mahatma Letters.) These wise words are written for us not as “dead knowledge” but as realities of the world that is beyond change.

With this in mind it is worth studying the world today. It appears to be controlled madness at times. Is this truly in the hearts of men? If so then wisdom is more needed than ever. The more we understand ourselves the more use we will be to steady this world. Is there a greater task worth striving for?

The Heart of Wisdom

The following is the text that was read out at Noel Bertelle’s talk on The Heart Sutra

Thus I have heard. At one time the Lord was sitting on Vulture’s Peak near the city of Rajgir. He was accompanied by a large community of monks as well as a large community of bodhisattvas. On that occasion the Lord was absorbed in a particular concentration called the profound appearance. Meanwhile the bodhisattva, the great being, the noble Avalokiteshvara was contemplating the profound discipline of the perfection of wisdom. He came to see that the five aggregates were void of any inherent nature of their own.



Through the power of the Buddha, the venerable Shariputra approached the noble Avalokiteshvara and asked him, "How should a son of the noble lineage proceed when he wants to train in the profound discipline of the perfection of wisdom?"

The noble Avalokiteshvara replied to the venerable Shariputra, "Whatever son or daughter of the noble lineage wants to train in the profound discipline of the perfection of wisdom should consider things in the following way.

"First, he or she should clearly and thoroughly comprehend that the five aggregates are void of any inherent nature of their own. Form is void, but voidness is form. Voidness is not other than forms and forms are not other than voidness. Similarly, feelings, discernments, formative elements and consciousness are also void. Likewise, Shariputra, are all phenomena void. They have no defining characteristics; they are unproduced; they do not cease; they are undefiled, yet they are not separate from defilement; they do not decrease, yet they do not increase.

"This being the case, Shariputra, in terms of voidness there exist no forms, no feelings, no discernments, no formative elements, no consciousness; no eyes, no ears, no noses, no tongues, no bodies, no minds; no visual-forms, no sounds, no smells, no tastes, no tactile sensations, no mental objects. There exist no visual elements, no mental elements, no elements of mental consciousness. There exist no ignorance and no exhaustion of ignorance, no ageing and death and no exhaustion of ageing and death. In the same way there exist no suffering, no origin of suffering, no cessation, no path, no wisdom, no attainment and no lack of attainment.

"Therefore, Shariputra, since bodhisattvas have no attainment, they depend upon and dwell in the perfection of wisdom; their minds are unobstructed and unafraid. They transcend all error and finally, reach the end-point: nirvana.

"All the buddhas of the past, present and future have depended, do and will depend upon the perfection of wisdom. Thereby they became, are becoming and will become unsurpassably, perfectly and completely awakened buddhas.

"Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom is a mantra of great knowledge; it is an unsurpassable mantra; it is a mantra that is comparable to the incomparable; it is a mantra that totally pacifies all suffering. It will not deceive you, therefore know it to be true! I proclaim the mantra of the perfection of wisdom: tayatha gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha. Shariputra, it is in this way that the great bodhisattvas train themselves in the profound perfection of wisdom."

At that moment the Lord arose from his concentration and said to the noble Avalokiteshvara, "Well said, well said. That is just how it is, my son, just how it is. The profound perfection or wisdom should be practised exactly as you have explained it. Then the tathagatas will be truly delighted."

When the Lord had spoken these words, the venerable Shariputra and the bodhisattva, the great being, the noble Avalokiteshvara, and the entire gathering of gods, humans, asuras and gandharvas were overjoyed, and they praised what the Lord had said.

Translation by Stephen Batchelor from 'Echoes of Voidness' by Ven Geshe Rabten



Please make a note and don't forget...

Brisbane Lodge Working Bee: Sat 16 May 9:30am – 3:00pm

Help with vital maintenance on our historic TS home.

What is our Brisbane TOS Group doing to put Theosophy into practice?

Working bee at Springbrook Theosophical Retreat Centre

We had a capacity group for our working bee on the weekend of 7 & 8 February, with 30 people coming from Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba. Thank you to all who helped to put a shine on our national TS Retreat Centre.



We have another working bee planned for 3 & 4 September, prior to the Brisbane TS Meditation weekend. It will once again combine work with relaxation and great opportunities to socialise with fellow Theosophists.

Support for homeless women

We are continuing our support for women at the New Farm refuge who are moving into long-term housing. Non-perishable groceries and personal care items are the most frequently requested items for donations.

If you would like to donate some items for the next bags being delivered, please ask Robyn Rizzo, the coordinator of this project, Lynette Muller or Tina Fiedler about what is needed. Most items on the list cost from \$1 to \$3.

Your support for this project will brighten a woman's life.

Bi-monthly environmental project

1st Saturday of every second month at the Moorhen Flats Environmental Area. We work from 2pm to 5pm and meet on the corner of Deshon Street & Turbo Drive, Woolloongabba.
Next Dates: 2 May, 4 July.

Morning tea for older TOS and TS members

You are invited to join our special guests for morning tea at 11.00am on 24 May 2009 in the Brisbane TS rooms. RSVP: Carolyn Harrod, 3378 8534.

Fundraising painting workshop

Karen Cipressi and Tina Fiedler organised a fabric painting workshop in mid-March. This was a wonderful opportunity for members and friends to share their creativity and support TOS projects. The funds raised will go to the Educational Scholarship program run by the TOS in Pakistan.



Look out for the next workshop on Saturday 4 July.

Join our planning meetings

Planning meetings are held every two months, generally on the 1st Saturday of the month from 10.00 to 11:30 am in the T.S. rooms. All interested people are invited to attend.

The next meeting is on Saturday 6 June.

The Theosophical Society

A worldwide body whose primary object is to promote Universal Brotherhood. The Society imposes no belief upon its members, who are united by a common search for truth. Its constitution declares three objects:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in the human being.

The Theosophical Society has no official doctrine. All philosophies, religions and methods of spiritual practice are within its scope of interest but not endorsed. Material published in this journal therefore does not carry any endorsement or represent any official viewpoint of the organisation.

The Motto of the Society is ***There is no religion higher than Truth.***

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