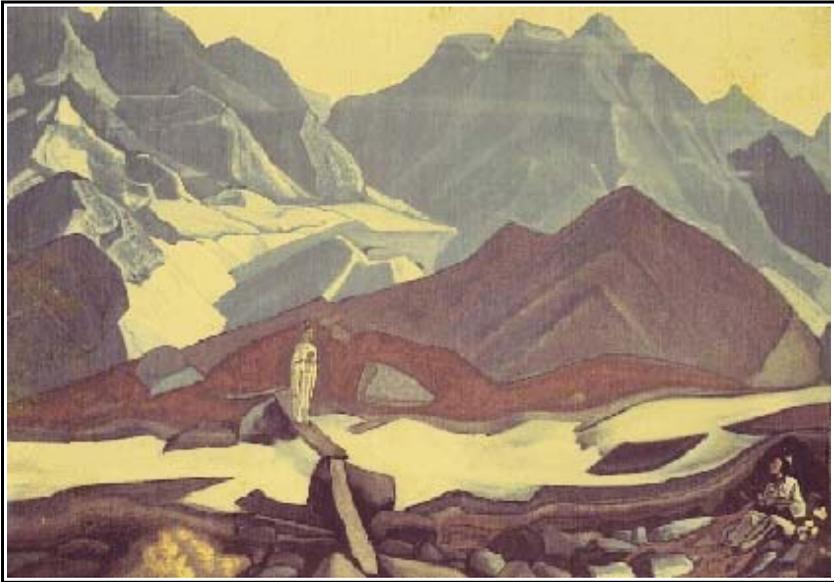




Contact

The members' newsletter of the Brisbane Theosophical Society

2009 Issue 4 October - December



This painting by the Russian artist Nicholas Roerich portrays the Self in a feminine form like Kwan Yin - meeting us more than half way on the bridge of consciousness - from the personality (in the right corner) to the Divine Self (of the higher Path).

The above text and picture were part of the talk on 'The Goddess Sophia' given by Judith Jeffrey and omitted from the condensed transcript on page 11.

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Brisbane Theosophical Society

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BOOKSHOP & LIBRARY: (Closed on Public Holidays)
Monday to Thursday 10:30 am to 2:30 pm
Friday 1.00 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 alwa subject to respect for others. All views expressed in these pages are entirely those of the authors – not of the Society.

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS

Later in this edition of *Contact* you will read an article entitled 'Ignorance' by Sri Ramesh Balsekar, proclaimed as the world's leading teacher of Advaita. The content led me to reflect on another matter often precipitated by ignorance. A habit so easy to fall into which is the seizing upon the words or writings of others and claiming them as truth, often done as a means of avoiding the necessity of thinking and reasoning about the particular subject for oneself. Whether this happens consciously or sub-consciously doesn't really matter, the result is the same, a lack of real understanding of the subject and honest personal conviction. Great spiritual leaders such as Jesus and Buddha and also our own H.P.Blavatsky were very clear on this, suggesting we should not blindly accept what they had to say as truth, but to test it for ourselves to be sure that it rang true in our very hearts. Sri Ramesh again comes to mind as in his book *Experiencing The Teaching*, he cautions us to be wary of blind acceptance...

What we regard as scriptures today, were at one time written by some human being, in your terms some enlightened human being, and when he wrote that scripture, or gave his talks, he must obviously have had certain people in mind to whom his words were addressed. It would therefore not be right to accept such words as suitable for all types of people. Then as time passes, there is the inescapable danger of various interpolations being made and certain inconvenient portions being deleted to suit the changing conditions and circumstances.

That paragraph seems to me to be self-explanatory, suggesting that there is great danger in interpreting words written in the past without possessing a realistic understanding of the conditions of the time and other significant factors. I raise this subject because it is important for us all to remember that the Theosophical Society is independent and no speaker at any TS meeting speaks officially on behalf of the Society any more than any member, past or present, has a right to insist that truth is only as they proclaim it, according to their own words or what others may have said, no matter how well respected they may be. What we know as

Theosophy has no dogma and is based on universal principles and interpretation of the latter is entirely up to the individual. Our health as a Lodge, not to mention our understanding and acceptance of the first Objective, is reflected by the degree of each member's acceptance of the right of all to have a point of view, whether one is individually inclined towards its acceptance or not, and of course one has a right to one's own views as well. Importantly though, none of us should insist on ownership of truth, no matter what its source. Nor should we force what we may at the time consider to be the truth on anyone else.

On another subject; we have had a varied and interesting Friday night programme of speakers and subjects this year and I believe our final programme for 2009 (where did the year go?) will be equally interesting.

My next musings will be in the form of the President's year-end letter, which of course reminds me that we have an AGM and a Christmas break-up early in December. Check the enclosed programme for dates and please do your best to be there as we do need a quorum for the former and a heap of happy, smiling faces at the latter. Make a special effort. I look forward to seeing you all very soon.

- Noel Bertelle

2009 Brisbane Lodge Committee

PRESIDENT: Noel Bertelle
VICE PRESIDENTS: Phoebe Williams, Geoffrey Harrod
TREASURER: Phillipa Rooke
SECRETARY: Patricia Ossenberg
EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:
Elina Juusola- Halonen
Tina Fiedler
Angela Read
Dennis Armstrong

Webmaster and editor of CONTACT: Geoffrey Harrod. Please send contributions to Brisbane Lodge by email, post or fax (email preferred) – details above.

Brisbane Lodge membership fees are now due

Single member	\$65
Pensioner, student or healthcare card holder:	\$50
Couple membership	\$95
Pensioner couple	\$80

Theosophical Lodges and Groups in Queensland

See the Queensland website - <http://www.theosophyqld.org.au> - for details of all Theosophical centres in Queensland and just over the border – Atherton, Cairns, Brisbane, Byron Bay NSW, Caboolture, Gold Coast, Maleny, Redcliffe, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba-Warwick.

Malignancies

Dr K Arunachalam

Malignancies are of the physical body. If the physical body is considered to be the 'vehicle' then the disease is of the vehicle. Considering the process of the formation and the maintenance of the vehicle and the part played by the DNA, it is possible that there could be a malfunction of the DNA resulting in the malignancy. This malfunction is probably due to toxins inflicted on the vehicle through the DNA. The toxins are on two levels; one being that directly applied to the body such as the toxins of tobacco, asbestos or sun and the like, the other toxins, applied indirectly, are those created by the mind, in the form of tensions and apprehensions, fear etc.

The assessment of the clinical status of a malignancy is done by the estimation of the units of antibodies in the blood of the patient. The virulence or the activity of the malignancy is assessed by the count of the antibodies in the blood. The higher the count the greater the virulence. The virulence is dependent on factors such as that which is inherent on the tumor, and or in the lowered resistance offered by the body to the invasion of the malignancy. One of the factors which is responsible for the lowered resistance is the attitude of the patient to the invasion. The greater the fear and anxiety, the greater the despondency, the lower the resistance. There is this vicious circle being established. The greater the fear, the lower the resistance and the faster the invasion of the tumor.

There are two ways of approach. The first is the complete removal of the tumor in the early stages. This method has great advantages if the tumor is confined and the excision is total. Next is to use cytotoxic drugs which are known to destroy the cells of the tumor directly or by various other means such as methods which reduce the blood supply to the tumor. There is a great deal of research being conducted in this field and considerable success has been achieved. Research in this field is ongoing and the progress is outstanding.

Is there another way of approaching this disease in conjunction with the therapeutics? Is it possible to break the continuity of the vicious circle? The vehicle is the playground of the mind. It is the mind that creates the tension and fear. This seems to a great extent unavoidable. If we are aware of that, what seems to be, need not be insurmountable. There is the possibility of some action be taken to effect a reversal. If the upper part of the vicious circle, which is the mind, can be separated from the vehicle, which is the body, then there is reason to believe that the vehicle can return to harmony and a positive change effected.

Recent studies have shown that malignant antibodies are constantly produced by the various organs of the vehicle proving that there is a constant emergence of malignancies in the body. The initial cells of these tumors are being constantly destroyed by the immune system, when the immune system is healthy, active and ever vigilant. What are the factors which influence the health of the immune system? On top of the list comes foods which do not contain any toxins. The second is general fitness as opposed to athletic fitness. The third, but not the least in importance, is the tranquil mind. There are many instances where there has been remission of malignancies as a result of total surrender in prayer or meditation, not for a cure but for the passionless communion in the silence.

The acceptance of the presence of the tumor and understanding the reason for its emergence is important. In the acceptance of the presence of the tumor comes the acceptance of the consequences. In the acceptance of the consequences a plan for treatment is formulated. As a result there is hope and fear disappears. Once fear disappears one is ready for the next move which is the elimination of the damage caused by the toxins both external and internal.

Treatment methods for the control and elimination of the tumor can be difficult. However, meditative tranquility of a fearless and desireless mind can turn the tide, as has been demonstrated in cases of total surrender in prayer and meditation. In oriental philosophy there are three levels by which tranquility could be achieved. They are, Devotion, Selfless Service and Meditation.

The first is Devotion – devotion not directed towards cure – but a total surrender of one's self to the deity of one's choice. One becomes the deity. In this becoming there is a silence which is overwhelmingly powerful. In that silence there is an automatic remission of the tumor. To put it in another form, the remission is a by-product of the discipline of devotion. The devotee has separated the mind from the body, and the body in itself does not exist in the mind in devotion. The vicious cycle was broken, leading the mind to tranquility.

The second is selfless service in which there is no desire for the fruits of one's action. The desire for the fruits of action is the primary source of the establishment of one's identity of the ego. Many a time, one is disappointed that the recipient of one's favour did not even say 'thank you' for services. The words 'thank you' is important where the recipient is concerned but for the doer it should not be of any significance. Every expectation has its negative effect. If gratification is sought, the effect nullifies the selflessness of the action. Action where no gratification is sought becomes non-action. There is no disappointment nor hurt. Thus non-action is what establishes tranquility. Here again the recurring cycle is broken, and, as a by product, there is remission.

The third is contemplative surrender in which the mind moves through one-minded concentration on the object of contemplation to communion in silence with the object of contemplation. Finally the object of contemplation is transcended. There is total meditative silence in which there is absolutely no mentation. This is the most difficult of the three levels, but continued practice and perseverance will bear its precious fruit. In this, there is the severance of the cycle, and body is released from the toxins of a mind which is under the stresses of fear and anxiety. Both mind and the vehicle return to their balance and health. Remission becomes the byproduct.

Meditation is sacred. It is the unconditioned communion with the Inner Reality, the Inner Self, The Pure Soul, Pure Undifferentiated Consciousness. It demands the serious and undivided contemplation of the aspirant on the Inner Reality. The vision is not some thing or a place which is external. The inner Reality is there within us, it is what we are intrinsically. The silence of meditation is the key that opens the door of the mind to that vision and tranquility.

A very rich man came to the Buddha and asked whether he must give up his wealth, his home and his business enterprises and go into homelessness in order to attain the bliss of a religious life.

The Buddha replied that it is not life and wealth and power that enslave man but the cleaving to life and wealth and power.

The Dharma of the Tathagata does not require a man to go into homelessness or resign from the world. But it requires every man to free himself from the illusion of self, to cleanse his heart to give up thirst for pleasure and lead a life of righteousness.

On the Watch-Tower - Surendra Narayan

IGNORANCE

Sri Ramesh Sadashiv Balsekar

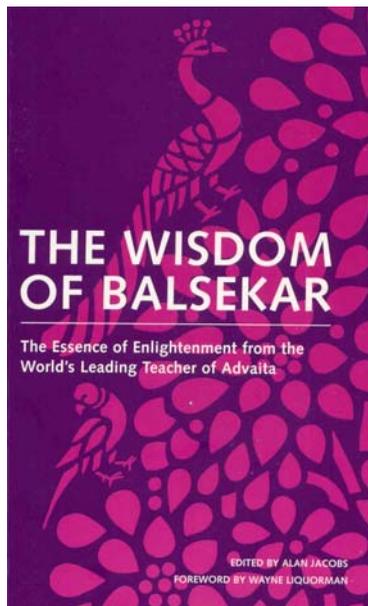
Avidya (ignorance) arises on *vidya* (knowledge) like ripples and waves arise on the surface of the ocean, and *avidya* dissolves in *vidya* just like the ripples and waves dissolve in the ocean. There is truly no difference between the waves and the water; similarly the distinction between ignorance and knowledge is notional and unreal. What exists, when ignorance and knowledge are no longer seen as two distinct entities, is Truth. The reflection of *vidya* within itself is considered *avidya* (ignorance), and when both these notions are abandoned, what remains is the Truth, phenomenally a void but noumenally the potential plenum or fullness. It is the reality in all things like the space within several pots. It causes cosmic movement and phenomenal manifestation without the slightest intention of doing so. It must, because that is its nature, just like a magnet makes iron filings move, merely by its presence.

What a horrendous thing this ignorance is. But it is really only like the second moon in diplopia. It creates an illusion in the mind. One thinks the shore is moving away when sitting in a moving boat. One thinks the train one is on is moving when actually the train is still and it is the other train that is moving away. Ignorance creates the living dream and perverts all experiences and relationships in dualism. And yet the moment there is realization of the real nature of the phenomenal manifestation - that it is really like the child of a barren woman - then ignorance is exposed and annihilated. When the flow of water ceases, the river dries up. When *dualism of ignorance* ceases and conceptualization stops, there is *phenomenal absence* and *noumenal presence*.

Once it is clearly understood that ignorance has no existence, that it is merely an illusion that has arisen as a movement in Consciousness, any further enquiries would be like projecting the future and examining the past of the child of a barren woman!

Ignorance vanishes as soon as it is examined critically. It is because of ignorance that one mistakes the silver in the mother-of-pearl. This ignorance can last only until the mother-of-pearl is seen for what it is. Ignorance vanishes as soon as it is apperceived that all that exists is the universal, infinite Consciousness. All phenomenal manifestations are merely appearances in Consciousness, like a mirror effect, and are therefore illusory. All that exists is Consciousness which can be represented by the personal subjective pronoun 'I'.

Ignorance not being a real entity, no relationship could possibly exist between ignorance and the Self. There can be relationship only between similar entities.



Sri Ramesh Sadashiv Balsekar - THE FINAL TRUTH pp. 184 & 207-8
In THE WISDOM OF BALSEKAR, Watkins Publishing, London 2004

PRACTICAL OCCULTISM

By H P Blavatsky

From *Lucifer*, Vol. II, No. 8, April, 1888



There are many people who are looking for practical instruction in Occultism. It becomes necessary therefore, to state once for all:—

- (a) The essential difference between theoretical and practical Occultism; or what is generally known as Theosophy on the one hand, and Occult Science on the other, and:—
- (b) The nature of the difficulties involved in the study of the latter.

It is easy to become a Theosophist. Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the meta-physical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer—is a Theosophist.

But it is quite another matter to put oneself upon the path which leads to the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil; a path which also leads a man to that power through which he can do the good he desires, often without even apparently lifting a finger.

Moreover, there is one important fact with which the student should be made acquainted. Namely, the enormous, almost limitless, responsibility assumed by the teacher for the sake of the pupil. From the Gurus of the East who teach openly or secretly, down to the few Kabalists in Western lands who undertake to teach the rudiments of the Sacred Science to their disciples—those western Hierophants being often themselves ignorant of the danger they incur—one and all of these “Teachers” are subject to the same inviolable law. From the moment they begin *really* to teach, from the instant they confer *any* power—whether psychic, mental or physical—on their pupils, they take upon themselves *all* the sins of that pupil, in connection with the Occult Sciences, whether of omission or commission, until the moment when initiation makes the pupil a Master and responsible in his turn. There is a weird and mystic religious law, greatly revered and acted upon in the Greek, half-forgotten in the Roman Catholic, and absolutely extinct in the Protestant Church. It dates from the earliest days of Christianity and has its basis in the law just stated, of which it was a symbol and an expression. This is the dogma of the absolute sacredness of the relation between the god-parents who stand sponsors for a child.* These tacitly take upon themselves all the sins of the newly baptised child— (anointed, as at the initiation, a mystery truly!)—until the day when the child becomes a responsible unit, knowing good and evil. Thus it is clear why the “Teachers” are so reticent, and why “Chelas” are required to serve a seven years probation to prove their fitness, and develop the qualities necessary to the security of both Master and pupil.

* So holy is the connection thus formed deemed in the Greek Church, that a marriage between god-parents of the same child is regarded as the worst kind of incest, is considered illegal and is dissolved by law; and this absolute prohibition extends even to the children of one of the sponsors as regards those of the other.

Occultism is not magic. It is *comparatively* easy to learn the trick of spells and the methods of using the subtler, but still material, forces of physical nature; the powers of the animal soul in

man are soon awakened; the forces which his love, his hate, his passion, can call into operation, are readily developed. But this is Black Magic— *Sorcery*. For it is the motive, and *the motive alone*, which makes any exercise of power become black, malignant, or white, beneficent Magic. It is impossible to employ *spiritual* forces if there is the slightest tinge of selfishness remaining in the operator. For, unless the intention is entirely unalloyed, the spiritual will transform itself into the psychic, act on the astral plane, and dire results may be produced by it. The powers and forces of animal nature can equally be used by the selfish and revengeful, as by the unselfish and the all-forgiving; the powers and forces of spirit lend themselves only to the perfectly pure in heart—and this is DIVINE MAGIC.

What are then the conditions required to become a student of the “Divina Sapientia”? For let it be known that no such instruction can possibly be given unless these certain conditions are complied with, and rigorously carried out during the years of study. This is a *sine qua non*. No man can swim unless he enters deep water. No bird can fly unless its wings are grown, and it has space before it and courage to trust itself to the air. A man who will wield a two-edged sword, must be a thorough master of the blunt weapon, if he would not injure himself—or what is worse—others, at the first attempt.

To give an approximate idea of the conditions under which alone the study of Divine Wisdom can be pursued with safety, that is without danger that Divine will give place to Black Magic, a page is given from the “private rules,” with which every instructor in the East is furnished. The few passages which follow are chosen from a great number and explained in brackets.

1. The place selected for receiving instruction must be a spot calculated not to distract the mind, and filled with “influence-evolving” (magnetic) objects. The five sacred colours gathered in a circle must be there among other things. The place must be free from any malignant influences hanging about in the air.

[The place must be set apart, and used for no other purpose. The five “sacred colours” are the prismatic hues arranged in a certain way, as these colours are very magnetic. By “malignant influences” are meant any disturbances through strifes, quarrels, bad feelings, etc., as these are said to impress themselves immediately on the astral light, *i.e.*, in the atmosphere of the place, and to hang “about in the air.” This first condition seems easy enough to accomplish, yet—on further consideration, it is one of the most difficult ones to obtain.]

2. Before the disciple shall be permitted to study “face to face,” he has to acquire preliminary understanding in a select company of other lay *upasakas* (disciples), the number of whom must be odd.

[“Face to face,” means in this instance a study independent or apart from others, when the disciple gets his instruction *face to face* either with himself (his higher, Divine Self) or—his guru. It is then only that each receives *his due* of information, according to the use he has made of his knowledge. This can happen only toward the end of the cycle of instruction.]

3. Before thou (the teacher) shalt impart to thy *Lanoo* (disciple) the good (holy) words of LAMRIN, or shall permit him “to make ready” for *Dubjed*, thou shalt take care that his mind is thoroughly purified and at peace with all, especially *with his other Selves*. Otherwise the words of Wisdom and of the good Law, shall scatter and be picked up by the winds.

[*Lamrin* is a work of practical instructions, by Tson-kha-pa, in two portions, one for ecclesiastical and exoteric purposes, the other for esoteric use.* “To make ready” for *Dubjed*, is to prepare the vessels used for seership such as mirrors and crystals. The “other selves,” refers to the fellow students. Unless the greatest harmony reigns among the learners, *no* success is possible. It is the teacher who makes the selections

according to the magnetic and electric natures of the students, bringing together and adjusting most carefully the positive and the negative elements.]

4. The *upasaka* while studying must take care to be united as the fingers on one hand. Thou shalt impress upon their minds that whatever hurts one should hurt the others, and if the rejoicing of one finds no echo in the breasts of the others, then the required conditions are absent, and it is useless to proceed.
[This can hardly happen if the preliminary choice made was consistent with the magnetic requirements. It is known that chelas otherwise promising and fit for the reception of truth, had to wait for years on account of their temper and the impossibility they felt to put themselves *in tune* with their companions.]
5. The co-disciples must be tuned by the guru as the strings of a lute (*vina*) each different from the others, yet each emitting sounds in harmony with all. Collectively they must form a keyboard answering in all its parts to thy lightest touch (the touch of the Master). Thus their minds shall open for the harmonies of Wisdom, to vibrate as knowledge through each and all, resulting in effects pleasing to the presiding gods (tutelary or patron-angels) and useful to the Lanoo. So shall Wisdom be impressed for ever on their hearts and the harmony of the law shall never be broken.
6. Those who desire to acquire the knowledge leading to the *Siddhis* (occult powers) have to renounce all the vanities of life and of the world (here follows enumeration of the Siddhis).
7. None can feel the difference between himself and his fellow-students, such as "I am the wisest," "I am more holy and pleasing to the teacher, or in my community, than my brother," etc.—and remain an *upasaka*. His thoughts must be predominantly fixed upon his heart, chasing therefrom every hostile thought to any living being. It (the heart) must be full of the feeling of its non-separateness from the rest of beings as from all in Nature; otherwise no success can follow.
8. A *Lanoo* (disciple) has to dread external living influence alone (magnetic emanations from living creatures). For this reason while at one with all, in his *inner nature*, he must take care to separate his outer (external) body from every foreign influence: none must drink out of, or eat in his cup but himself. He must avoid bodily contact (*i.e.*, being touched or touch) with human, as with animal being.
[No pet animals are permitted and it is forbidden even to touch certain trees and plants. A disciple has to live, so to say, in his own atmosphere in order to individualize it for occult purposes.]
9. The mind must remain blunt to all but the universal truths in nature, lest the "Doctrine of the Heart" should become only the "Doctrine of the Eye" (*i.e.*, empty exoteric ritualism).
10. No animal food of whatever kind, nothing that has life in it, should be taken by the disciple. No wine, no spirits, or opium should be used; for these are like the *Lhamayin* (evil spirits), who fasten upon the unwary, they devour the understanding.
[Wine and Spirits are supposed to contain and preserve the bad magnetism of all the men who helped in their fabrication; the meat of each animal, to preserve the psychic characteristics of its kind.]
11. Meditation, abstinence in all, the observation of moral duties, gentle thoughts, good deeds and kind words, as good will to all and entire oblivion of Self, are the most

efficacious means of obtaining knowledge and preparing for the reception of higher wisdom.

12. It is only by virtue of a strict observance of the foregoing rules that a Lanoo can hope to acquire in good time the Siddhis of the Arhats, the growth which makes him become gradually One with the UNIVERSAL ALL.

These 12 extracts are taken from among some 73 rules, to enumerate which would be useless as they would be meaningless in Europe. But even these few are enough to show the immensity of the difficulties which beset the path of the would-be "Upasaka," who has been born and bred in Western lands.*

* Be it remembered that *all* "Chelas," even lay disciples, are called Upasaka until after their first initiation, when they become lanoo-Upasaka. To that day, even those who belong to Lamaseries and are *set apart*, are considered as "laymen."

All western education is instinct with the principle of emulation and strife; each boy is urged to learn more quickly, to outstrip his companions, and to surpass them in every possible way. What is miscalled "friendly rivalry" is assiduously cultivated and the same spirit is fostered and strengthened in every detail of life. With such ideas "educated into" him from his childhood, how can a Westerner bring himself to feel towards his co-students "as the fingers on one hand"? Those co-students, too, are not of his *own selection*, or chosen by himself from personal sympathy and appreciation. They are chosen by his teacher on far other grounds, and he who would be a student must *first* be strong enough to kill out in his heart all feelings of dislike and antipathy to others. How many Westerners are ready even to attempt this in earnest?

And then the details of daily life, the command not to touch even the hand of one's nearest and dearest. How contrary to Western notions of affection and good feeling! How cold and hard it seems. Egotistical too, people would say, to abstain from giving pleasure to others for the sake of one's own development. Well, let those who think so defer till another lifetime the attempt to enter the path in real earnest. But let them not glory in their own fancied unselfishness. For, in reality, it is only the seeming appearances which they allow to deceive them, the conventional notions, based on emotionalism and gush, or so-called courtesy, things of the unreal life, not the dictates of Truth.

But even putting aside these difficulties, which may be considered "external," though their importance is none the less great, how are students in the West to "attune themselves" to harmony as here required of them? So strong has personality grown in Europe and America that there is no school of artists even whose members do not hate and are not jealous of each other. "Professional" hatred and envy have become proverbial; men seek each to benefit himself at all costs, and even the so-called courtesies of life are but a hollow mask covering these demons of hatred and jealousy.

In the East the spirit of "non-separateness" is inculcated as steadily from childhood up, as in the West the spirit of rivalry.

How grand and true appears, thus, to the student of Occultism who has commenced to realize some of the foregoing truths, the answer given by the Delphic Oracle to all who came seeking after Occult Wisdom—words repeated and enforced again and again by the wise Socrates—MAN KNOW THYSELF. . .

THE GODDESS SOPHIA

Condensed (considerably) from a talk given by Judith Jeffrey at Redcliffe on 29 April 2009 and at Brisbane Lodge on 18 Sep 2009.

The Goddess Sophia was revered in the Neolithic Era, veiled during the past 5,000 years, and is now gradually being unveiled again in a new era of recognition of the Sacred Feminine.

Sophia means wisdom - as for example in the Greek word Theo-Sophia - Divine Wisdom. Seeing that the Theosophical Society is named after Sophia, it is most apt to give talks about Her. Scholars have made the distinction between the twin concepts of Logos (the masculine or divine Yang expansive power of the universe) and Sophia (the divine feminine, or Yin receptive power). These terms, Logos and Sophia, are attributed to Gnosticism, at the time of the early Christians. It is interesting to note that in most of our esoteric books, God is called the Logos (or the Word) and the other half of the archetype is simply ignored and not even mentioned.. So when you see or hear the word *Logos*, think of *Sophia* who is left out. And remember that the One gave birth to the two. Hence Sophia is one half of an indivisible whole.

Let us explore how this archetypal or primordial energy (sometimes called the Goddess) has been perceived in the world. This energy is of course beyond gender as we know it. The Goddess is within us all and both men and women could think of Her as being the Divine Feminine aspect of the Universal Self. I shall refer to ***Sophia, Goddess of Wisdom*** by Caitlin Mathews.

I would like to start with a quote by Dr. Rupert Sheldrake - the author of ***The Rebirth of Nature***. In this book he examines the breakdown of reverence for Nature and the earth and I shall paraphrase some of his comments.

"In archaic mythologies, the Great Mother was the original source of the universe and its laws. She was the ruler of fate, time, wisdom, justice, love, - birth, death and rebirth. She was Mother Earth, Gaia or Queen of the Heavens. Our very word for matter is derived from the same root as the Latin word for mother. The earth was sacred both as a source of life and as a receiver of the dead. Even today, people still want to be buried or have their ashes scattered, in their native land. We still have a yearning for this tie with the earth. On weekends, people leave the cities en masse, to experience a natural form of relatedness in the country, once again."

Contrast this with the scientific world view after Newtonian physics, when the world became a vast machine and God, like an all-powerful Engineer.

How did we lose contact with the World Soul, with earth wisdom or Sophia? Archaeologists tell us that in 7,000 BC societies lived in settlements that were not fortified, where art and agriculture (not weapons) were their chief pre-occupation. (Riane Esler: ***The Chalice and Blade***.) People in those times mostly shared their resources and revered the earth. However, between 4,000 and 5,000 BC this way of life was shattered by waves of Aryan invaders.

This new way of life spread out from central Asia and their new thought eventually spread everywhere. Their warrior gods dethroned the goddesses, first of all demoting them to being consorts of male Gods. Violent sky-gods (like Jehovah, Zeus and Thor) came to rule. Fortified cities, warring empires, slavery, hierarchical structures with a patriarchal head, became almost global. Compassion and caring for the earth was denigrated, e.g. the goddess Ishtar, Queen of Heaven and Earth, is mentioned in the Bible as *the Whore of Babylon*.

The rich oral tradition, including the songs and art of most aboriginal people is steeped in awareness of the cyclic processes of Nature. This is a *Yin* or *more-feminine* view of life that was once all pervasive. I say a more-feminine view, as nothing in the universe is wholly masculine or feminine as shown in the Yin/Yang symbol. In our time, the polar opposite of this ancient way of being is predominant. It involves a more-masculine outlook based on linear thinking, i.e. where everything is viewed in straight lines and one thing progresses to another, ever onwards and upwards. But this is a delusion. (Just think of the recent fiscal woes.) With linear thinking, there is no thought of what happens in the ebb-tides or down-times. For any overly-Yang state automatically leads to an ultra-Yin state of inertia.

As we know from theosophical ideas about the evolution of consciousness, mankind was destined to travel from such a state of unconscious wholeness, into our currently fractured, analytical state of mind – and then onto another higher spiral of conscious wholeness - i.e. back to Sophia or the Goddess, but in an informed way.

In our churches, we have the ceremony of taking bread and wine. Ken Wilbur, in his book ***Up From Eden*** states that this rite of *sharing bread and wine* was originally a ceremony for the Goddess, taken over by Christianity – and then they had the cheek to say that only men could perform it! Consider that Demeter stood for agriculture, hence wheat or bread. While blood, symbolized by wine, was always pertinent to the Goddess, blood being required to create the embryo.

Madame Blavatsky, in ***Isis Unveiled*** states that the ritual of bread and wine is one of the oldest rites in antiquity. Ceres (the goddess especially related to Grain, hence the word cereal) represents the generation of life from the seed. While Bacchus (wine) was the fruit of the vine.

In the Middle Ages, the Virgin Mary was sometimes portrayed as being black-skinned, e.g. in grottoes containing the Black Madonna. This used to puzzle me greatly, until I realized that a Black Mary is the Goddess darkened or eclipsed.

There is a unique Pauline Fathers Monastery in Australia on the main highway to Goulburn, past the Berrima turn-off, with a sign to Penrose Park. The site was obviously an aboriginal sacred site originally. It has a Black Madonna called *Our Lady of Jasna Gora* at the altar, embraced by a huge angel. The stained-glass windows of the church are glorious. There are also a large number of grottoes dedicated to our Lady of Mercy in the grounds, from every country in the world. In the grottoes, you can see all the universal symbols discussed in this talk, from Egypt to Russia. It is well worth a long visit - take your own food. It is open every day, for everyone. (See [http:// their website www.paulinefathers.org.au](http://their website www.paulinefathers.org.au))

The Great Goddess or Sophia did not disappear, as archetypes can never be destroyed. She simply withdrew, like a stream in a desert that goes underground, only to reappear at yet another spring, Riane Esler states that the Goddess whose worship was at the core of a more peaceful and equal society was no longer the supreme principle governing the world, but she was still a force to be reckoned with. Hence Jesus too became the child of the Divine Mother and like earlier divine children became a symbol of the regeneration of Nature, every Spring at Easter. (As you know, even the word Easter is taken from Eostre the name of a Goddess).

The image of Isis and Horus worshipped in Rome as a symbol of the sacred feminine changed into Mary and Jesus about the same time in history - similar story of sacrifice - same archetypal meaning. Thus the midnight blue image of Isis standing on a crescent moon, became Mary, who like Isis was the Queen of Heaven, among other things. The portrayal of Isis with Horus in her arms became Mary with the baby Jesus.

In the last section of the talk I shall explore the subject of Sophia in the context of the medieval legend of the Grail. Here is a short version of one of the Grail legends. It is in a slightly

different form to the more widely known version and is based on a French Celtic source and perhaps because of this, it is very clear in its symbolism. Think of the Grail, or the sacred Chalice as the overflowing cup of abundance, compassion and joy of the Goddess - and you will know what this story means.

A long time ago, before the time of King Arthur, there lived damsels of the wells. (Remember the well is a Goddess site) These damsels would emerge from the wells and offer food and drink from golden cups and minister to travellers. However, a King who ruled a clan called the Amangons and his soldiers attacked the damsels. So they no longer came forth from the wells. (Clear reference to the suppression of the Goddess religions.) Because of this, the land was laid waste and desolate and the people were very hungry. They could no longer find the palace of the Rich Fisherman (like the Fisher King), nor the earthly paradise. (This suggests loss of a former age of relative innocence.) The voices of the wells were lost.

Then, after King Arthur instituted the Order of the Round Table, the account of this outrage against the damsels reached his Knights. They swore they would not rest until they had restored the damsels of the wells and had avenged them by killing the Amangons. But despite their good intentions, they could neither hear the voices from the wells nor see any of the damsels. (In other words the connection with the land was gone with the new wave of thinking.)

They set off in search of the evil knights, who had attacked the damsels, and eventually came upon a mysterious company of knights and maidens wandering aimlessly in the forest. The knights of the Round Table captured one of them and listened to their story. The mysterious company were the descendants of the damsels of the wells and the clan of the Amangons. They were condemned to wander the earth together until they found others who would be inspired to find the Court of Joy, where the grail was housed.

The knights then realized the fruitlessness of their purpose, for to kill the Amangons' kin was to kill the kin of the damsels. So they decided to join the quest for the Rich Fisherman and find the Court of Joy. One knight managed to find the Court, where the kingly Fisherman silently languished and all his kingdom was desolate. The knight asked the right question, which was "Why has this happened, why are you dumb and what ails you?" Then in due course, magically the King was healed and the kingdom was restored to its fruitfulness.

The voices of the damsels are of course the voices of the earth and those who honoured it. Our inability to hear them (the voices of Sophia) has resulted in our environmental degradation. The mysterious company of the descendants of the damsels and the knights who destroyed them is the present state of our evolution - a mixture of the remnants of the former Neolithic consciousness and the present one.

Like us, the knights and damsels are condemned to wander through the desolation of war, famine and chaos endlessly, seeming to be powerless to stop it. Also their king or their leaders did not speak out against this. They had to wait until the knights of King Arthur (symbols of men and women of compassion with the will to find the Grail or the True Way) asked the right questions. Questions such as: "Why is mankind always at war? Why are so many people starving and without clean water? Why is the world in continual chaos? What is wrong with our King or governments who are so powerless to stop it? Why are they not speaking out?" (Remember the King was dumb.)

The loss of paradise, the absence of wisdom and our inability to grieve for what we have lost, are the themes of our Grail search. We have lost the vision of the Ladies of the Lake and those who have found it again are not sufficient in number or power (as yet) to heal the land.

(Continued on page 15...)



T.O.S. news

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President: Lynette Muller Vice-President: Tina Fiedler

Making service part of our lives You are most welcome to join in any of our activities

Peaceful Living Seminar

When: Saturday, 3 October 2009 from
10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.

Where: Brisbane TS meeting room.

Cost: a gold coin donation towards the TOS literacy home-schools in Pakistan. Morning tea and a vegetarian lunch will be provided

Program:

Session 1: Approaches to meditation

In this practical session, you will learn various ways of developing inner peace through meditation.

Session 2: Building harmonious relationships

Relationships are central to our lives but it is sometimes difficult to form and maintain positive relationships. This practical session will explore ways of enhancing the important relationships in our lives.

To register phone Carolyn Harrod on 3378 8534.

Support for homeless women

Thank you for continuing to support the women at the New Farm refuge by contributing non-perishable groceries and personal care items. Your caring makes their transition into accommodation a particularly positive experience.

If you would like to donate some items for the next bags being delivered, please drop them into the basket in the main TS meeting room.

Fundraising table

Thanks to the support of the TS committee we have a fundraising table on the Friday nights before TOS meetings. Look out for Christmas goodies on 4 December and stock up on gifts and decorations.

Fundraising painting workshop

We will be holding a Christmas Craft Workshop in the Brisbane Theosophical Society rooms on **Saturday 14 November 2009** from 10.30am to 2.30 pm.



This is your opportunity to meet up with friends and create beautiful painted and printed Christmas T-shirts, hangings, decorations, tea towels, etc .

Cost: \$10.00. includes materials used. Snacks, tea and coffee will be provided.

The money raised will contribute to funding a literacy home-school in Pakistan. **Every \$100 provides a young girl with schooling for a year!**

To register, talk to Lynette Muller or Tina Fiedler at Brisbane TS or email Karen Cipressi: cipressi@bigpond.com

Join us at our AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at 10.00 am on Saturday **5 December** in the T.S. rooms. It will be followed by a short planning meeting for 2010 and a Christmas morning tea.

2010 working bee at Springbrook Theosophical Retreat Centre

We have a working bee planned for Saturday 27 March & Sunday 28 March 2010. It will once again combine work with relaxation and

great opportunities to socialise with fellow Theosophists. The registration form will be in the library in February 2010.



Support our raffle

Our Brisbane TOS Group is raising funds for the SEE PROJECT to provide vision screening, spectacles and cataract operations for the needy in Chennai, India.

You could win this handpainted porcelain doll.

TICKETS: \$1 each or 3 tickets for \$2.

The raffle will be drawn at the TOS AGM on Saturday 5 December 2009 and the winner will be notified by telephone.

See Lynette Muller for tickets on Mondays and Thursdays, or see Tina Fiedler for tickets on Tuesdays and Friday evenings.



The Goddess Sophia (Continued from page 13)

Hence we have the image of the Tarot card the High Priestess, which stands for hidden wisdom, or covert power. The finding of the sick or wounded Grail King (or the wounded masculine bereft of the High Priestess energy) and realizing his plight, is where humanity is now. The next step is feeling compassion for his/our plight and then asking the right questions.

Caitlin Matthews adds that we trivialize the Grail-quest if we think of it only in terms of personal spiritual attainment. For it represents the merging of spiritual ideals with physical needs, such as real hunger in our planet and hence it stands for the need for collective healing.

We are all indebted to Blavatsky and other pioneers of the Aquarian Age, for being the first of many brave souls in the modern era to lift a corner of the veil of Sophia or the ancient wisdom. Without their fierce courage to restate ancient truths, we might have had just the technology, of the new era without holistic, multi-cultural and multi-faith awareness also unfolding. The purpose of the Great Sages promoting the TS (and similar organizations) was to counter the overly-materialistic effect of a Darwinian approach to evolution. For evolution has two sides, co-operation and competition, consciousness and form, or spirit and matter –which are two aspects of the One Energy or a Unified Field.

I shall end with a beautiful invocation to Sophia energy which you can memorise.

*Lead us oh gracious Sophia to Thy limitless love
and to truth and to union with Thee -
to the heart of eternal bliss.
In Thy love we remain forever more.*

Bibliography:

Sophia , Goddess of Wisdom - by Caitlin Matthews.

The Chalice and the Blade by Riane Eisler. See www.rianeeisler.com

The Royal Road, by Professor Stephan Hoeller, Quest Book.

The Rebirth of Nature. by Dr. Rupert Sheldrake.

Up From Eden by Ken Wilbur - a classic about the unfolding of consciousness.

Isis Unveiled by Madame Blavatsky.

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.

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