



Contact

The members' newsletter of the Brisbane Theosophical Society

2014 Issue 1 January – April



Hildegard of Bingen's Fourth Vision, 11th C

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Brisbane Theosophical Society

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BOOKSHOP & LIBRARY: (Closed on Public Holidays)

Monday and Wednesday10.30 am to 2.30 pm
Friday1.00 pm to 4.00 pm & 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm
Saturday9.00 am to 12 noon

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 RAVINGS

Dear Friends

Well, this is my first letter to you as the new President of the Brisbane Theosophical Society.

First I have to thank Phillipa Rooke on behalf of us all for the great work she has done for us over the last three years. And I am so lucky that I will continue to have her help and advice as Vice President, as well as the continuing help of our Secretary, Phoebe Williams.

I thought I'd give you a brief history of my involvement with the TS, which started back in 1978, with a Diploma signed by John Coates. My activities have ranged from the enthusiastic to the bone idle and back again. I guess the key things have been committee work, including serving as President of the Canberra Branch from 2003 to 2005; working with the Theosophy-Science Group, first under Hugh Murdoch in Sydney and then with Victor Gostin, initiating the TS Science group in Brisbane (now ably led by David Allen); writing a number of articles for *Theosophy in Australia*, and giving talks in Australia and overseas.

One of the areas in Theosophy which I consider of the utmost importance is "brotherhood" and the First Object. I wish I could find an "inclusive" word that would capture the meaning intended by HPB and by our late International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, who also was passionate about brotherhood. Maybe we should run a competition to find a suitable word!

Speaking of Radha, I first learned of her passing while in Bali for the Indo-Pacific Federation Conference in early November. One can hardly find words to describe the incredible service she gave to the Society over so many years. I didn't know her very well personally, although my wife Janet and I did see her at lectures and Schools of the Wisdom on our several visits to International Headquarters, Adyar. This issue of *Contact* will focus on Radha's work and we will reprint a piece of her writing and include a tribute to her. There is a short tribute on our national website, too, and the March 2014 issue of *Theosophy in Australia* will include more about her life.

Finally, we are planning to introduce some modest variations in the program for 2014 and look forward to seeing you at as many meetings as you can attend. Wishing everyone a joyous holiday season and a great 2014,

Yours



The brotherly attitude means taking each person as they are, regarding them with affection, and helping them in the most natural manner and with the grace that is born of not expecting any return. None of us really knows the potentialities of another, what are their true qualities and capacities, to what heights they will presently rise.

N. Sri Ram

BRISBANE LODGE NEWS

Brisbane Theosophical Society Executive Committee for 2014

President: Brian Harding
Vice Presidents: Phillipa Rooke, John Harris
Secretary: Phoebe Williams
Treasurer: Patricia Ossenberg
Committee: Marie Bertelle, Aldo Donadel, Christine Gwin, Robyn Rizzo,

Sub-Committees for 2014

Library: Patricia, Phillipa, Phoebe, Robyn
Bookshop: Brian, Patricia, Phoebe
TOS representative: Robyn
Finance: Brian, John, Patricia, Phillipa, Phoebe
Program: Brian, Marie, Phillipa, Phoebe
Property & Equipment: Brian, Christine, John, Phoebe
Publicity: Brian, Christine, Robyn

Programme Listing

The Lodge programme continues to be in the form of a 3-fold A4 sheet that can be folded into a pocket sized leaflet like the various Theosophical Society brochures. The weekly groups are included in sequential context between the Friday night meetings, so that it is clearer what is on and when. The programme is enclosed with this newsletter. It can also be seen on the website, and the pocket document version can be downloaded as an Acrobat PDF file. If your printer can print double sided, set it to do so with landscape orientation and to flip on the left side.

Library News

Please Note:

Change of Opening Times for the Bookshop and Library in 2014

Monday and Wednesday

10.30 am to 2.30 pm

Friday

1.00pm to 4.00 pm & 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm before the meeting

Saturday

9.00 am to 12 noon

Closed public holidays

Brisbane Lodge Members-only Library and Reference Library

The Members-only Library and the Reference Library are great resources for TS members looking for deeper theosophical insights. They are upstairs and hold a fine collection of old and new books. They are available for the use of members during library opening hours. Ask for the key at the Reception Desk, for access to these collections. They contain some very old and rare books.

OPAC on-line Theosophical Libraries index

The project to index all the libraries of the TS in Australia on the National Libraries on-line system, OPAC, is now nearly complete. If you find a wanted book is in another Lodge library, it can be obtained on loan for members. To access the on-line index, go to the National TS website <http://www.austheos.org.au> You will find it on the drop down menus.

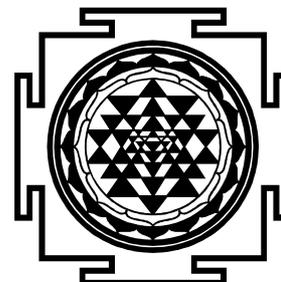
The Campbell Theosophical Library

This is in the Head Office of the TS in Sydney. An index to its extensive collection of books and periodicals is maintained on the TS National website. You need to visit the library to read the material, but there is a service for providing photocopies.

Silent Meditation Retreat

Friday March 14 to Sunday March 16, 2014

Presented by the Brisbane Theosophical Society at the
Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre,
2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook, Qld 4213.



We invite you to join us in the tranquility of this lovely bushland setting, for a weekend of meditation. Whether you are a beginner or a long-term practitioner, this retreat offers the opportunity to experience the beneficial effects of meditation, in the company of like-minded people. With gentle guidance from our facilitator, Rod Bucknell, you will learn how to make meditation an integral part of your life. To facilitate your practice, silence will be observed from first thing Saturday until after lunch on Sunday. You will have a private room, and all meals are vegetarian.

Registration forms are available in the Lodge Library or can be downloaded from the Brisbane TS website, http://www.theosophyqld.org.au/brisb_lodge.htm

Please note also, that our facilitator Rod Bucknell will be giving a talk at the Brisbane Lodge on Friday February 21 at 7.30 pm on *Working with the Thought-stream: a key issue for meditators*.



In My Soul

In
my soul
there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque, a church
where I kneel.
Prayer should bring us to an altar where no walls or names
exist.
Is there not a region of love where the sovereignty is
Illumined nothing,
where ecstasy gets poured into itself
and becomes
lost,
where the wing is fully alive
but has no mind or
body?
In
my soul
there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque,
a church
that dissolve, that
dissolve in
God.

... a member of the Theosophical Society must cease to think of others in terms of nation, caste, race, social position, wealth and so forth and look at every human being as a human being.

Can a member put aside all thought of value based upon external conditions? Can we put aside ideas about colour and social circumstances?

In order to be real Theosophists, we must live intelligently, look objectively at ourselves, see how our thoughts work and in what ways they contradict the fundamental principle of Theosophy. That principle is brotherhood and implies learning to recognise the immortal nature in every person and realising that it is of greater importance than the outer appearance.

Radha Burnier, *No Other Path to Go*



By sufi mystic, Rabiya al-Adawiyyah of Basra. She died in 801AD, and was noted for her asceticism and absorption in God.

A Life of Service: a Tribute to Radha Burnier



Reprinted, with permission, from the electronic newsletter of the International Theosophical Order of Service, December 2013. For the full tribute visit the TOS website, <http://international.theoservice.org>

When a person is elected to the office of International President of the Theosophical Society, there are no guidelines to tell the person what their particular message should be. The message or theme of their administration rises to the surface gradually as they conduct the necessary duties of the office. Throughout Radhaji's time as president, one of her main focuses was humanitarian work. In almost every inaugural convention address, she mentioned the work of the Theosophical Order of Service and its importance in the work of the Theosophical Society. In her 1985 address she writes, "I appeal to members everywhere to give their full support to the TOS, seeing that there is widespread distress everywhere. The latest and most tragic example is the famine in Africa which has led to the death of millions. Even though there may not be such extreme need elsewhere, the suffering of people and animals is enormous and the more fortunate among us must do whatever little we can to relieve such suffering."

Radhaji was not inspired to take on these endeavours because of her office, but because of who she was as a person. In 1968, while holding the office of General Secretary of the Indian Section, she started the New Life for India movement with the help of Indian independence activist and philosopher, Achyut Patwardhan and her father, N. Sri Ram, who was International President of the TS at the time. In his 1968 inaugural address, Sri Ram states that the New Life for India's aim "is to promote in public and private life a consciousness of the principles which should govern the conduct of an Indian in relation to his fellow citizens, surroundings and neighbours, in fact, the ancient idea of Dharma, translated into terms of practical conduct and social values. A number of representatives of different groups and organisations, including Mrs Burnier herself and other Theosophists, have been co-operating in this endeavour, which is wholly non-political and has already met with a measure of response, exemplified by the fact that the Governor of Madras, Sardar Ujjal Singh, came to its first public meeting in September last to inaugurate it."

The New Life for India movement's journal *Wake Up India* was revamped in 1988 to make it more appealing to readers.

In her address from that time, Radhaji mentions that the journal was distributed to 3,000 colleges, schools and other institutions. She writes, "By working for the right values, personal integrity and a clear sense of social responsibility, this movement paves the way for the upliftment of the mind into the spiritual sphere. It is hoped the momentum gained for this work in the last year will gather further strength in the near future." The momentum Radhaji mentions started most likely due to a comment she made in her 1985 address when she stated that the response to the call to "lift the moral gloom which lies over India" was "apathetic." She rarely minced words. However, she was also enthusiastic and hopeful when opportunities arose and she encouraged the Indian Section to use the movement as a vehicle to put Theosophy into action.

After taking office, there were many areas that needed attention at Adyar and around the world. Having been born and raised on the Adyar campus, Radhaji had a strong love for Adyar and was very familiar with the various theosophical projects and initiatives that were housed there. One area that

needed great attention was the Olcott Memorial High School. The school was founded by Olcott in 1894 to provide free education to poor students in the nearby areas, and at one time served over 700 students. However, because the school was run through government funds, the teaching staff was not sufficiently qualified and examination scores were consistently low. This raised doubts about whether the school was truly benefitting the students it was supposed to be helping.

Education in the general sense of the term was extremely important to Radhaji. She believed that through education and the development of open-mindedness, we can come to understand the world around us and in turn develop our inner selves. She had been a board member of the school since 1959, and during her administration, Radhaji regularly visited the Olcott School and the HPB hostel that housed some of the boys who attended the school. She carefully considered ways that the school could be improved. When she visited the students, she would ask them directly how they were getting on. While engaging in conversation with them, the childlike nature of Radhaji would shine through. Her voice would become gentler, her body would relax, and she would have a playful tone to her voice.

In an effort to provide different educational avenues for the students and to maintain a more theosophical environment, an endowment fund was started in 1987 to improve the teaching staff and equipment at the Olcott School. By 1988, a centre for educators called "Banyan" was started under the Olcott Education Society (OES). The Banyan programme worked to upgrade the skills of the teachers and "enlarged teacher's perceptions of the educator's role" in a child's life.

By this time, OES became the parent body for the Olcott Memorial School, the HPB Hostel and the Social Welfare Centre (previously known as the Olcott Welfare Society). Radhaji was adamant that the only way to ensure that theosophical values were instilled in the work of these institutions was to make sure they came under the Theosophical Society and they were guided by those who understood the oneness of life. The proof of the success of all this effort was mentioned in Radhaji's 1993 address when she stated that the examination scores of the students at Olcott Memorial High School were "increasing steadily." The scores went from a 32% passing rate in 1988 to a 72% passing rate in 1993.

In her 1997 address, Radhaji proudly announced that the Tamil Nadu Government gave permanent recognition to the Olcott Memorial School after it changed from a government funded school to a self-financing one. This was a huge step toward the school becoming autonomous. By 2001, "a few students achieved distinction in the school final exams." She credited Ahalya Chari and G. Gautama, the former Headmistress and former Principal, respectively, of the Krishnamurti Foundation India School in Chennai, with providing vision and guidance to the school, as well as the Banyan programme.

In her 2004 address, Radhaji commented that the teaching staff were working diligently to make sure students were prepared to meet the world technologically ready. In one of her last addresses, she states that "48 of the 53 students" graduated from the high school; quite a record considering where the school started. As of August 2013, Olcott Memorial School has 459 students (267 boys and 192 girls) and is considered one of the best schools serving the underprivileged in the state of Tamil Nadu.

While formal education was important to Radhaji, she also knew that academics alone cannot give rise to the sensitivity needed to awaken the heart. According to her, exposure to the beauty of nature as well as an understanding of our role in protecting it was crucial. In many of her writings, she stressed the need for humanity to understand our relationship to nature; that we are not separate but a part of a system that must be kept in balance. She believed that by being around nature we can become sensitive to the oneness of life.

In her 1997 address she writes, "The feeling for life in any form is the foundation for the acquirement of spiritual knowledge. To every creature its life is precious; every creature seeks freedom. The ant as much as the elephant or the human being wants to avoid being trapped, injured or destroyed. In the depth of their consciousness, which is the one all-pervading consciousness, there is awareness that life in every form, great or small, is part of a cosmic scheme, by which Divine Will moves all beings towards the unfoldment of their own latent and hidden divinity and perfection."

Changing the attitude of adults was difficult enough, but if children were educated and exposed to this view, they might influence the adults around them. Radhaji therefore housed the fledgling Environmental Society of Madras (of which she was president) on the TS campus in 1987 and stated in her address that "With their awareness of the interlinked and unitary nature of life, members of the Theosophical Society cannot but take interest in environmental protection."

Through the Environmental Society, Radhaji helped campaign to have the beaches of Chennai cleaned and preserved and brought ecological attention to the estuary of the Adyar River. Birdwatchers and conservationists in Chennai found a solid ally in their fight against the urban sprawl, and Radhaji's campaign for environmental awareness inspired programmes in the Olcott School and the Besant Scout Camping Centre.

As she started her second term, Radhaji was profoundly affected by exploitation, whether it was animals, children, or humans. In her address of 1987, she states, "One more question to which members of the Society should address themselves is that of exploitation. The weak are the victims everywhere of those who have greater powers. In vast areas of the Third World and even elsewhere, women spend their entire lives practically as beasts of burden and child bearing machines. The abuse and exploitation of children is a world-wide problem. The exploitation of the weak is so ubiquitous that there is a danger of too many minds becoming used to it and therefore losing the will to resist it and protect its victims. Courage is needed to challenge and fight against injustice, it is only too easy for obscurantists to justify the suppression of people, the confining of women and other immoral acts in the name of religion and tradition."

She once again appealed to members that "the Theosophical Order of Service is an important wing of the Society's activities, and it would be desirable to have more members take part in its varied relief work." She stressed the need that "the avenues for work are numerous: protest against the use of torture, propaganda against factory farming and other cruelties committed against animals, environmental awareness, helping disaster stricken areas, help [for] the aged, the handicapped, the blind, and so forth. Each group is left free to take up programmes which are feasible to it, but the desire to help one's fellow human beings and other creatures is in itself an aid for spiritual realisation, for it cleanses the heart through compassion."

As the Olcott Educational Society seemed to stabilise in its work with the running of the Olcott School, the HPB hostel and the Social Welfare Centre, Radhaji moved her energy toward animals. For years the Blue Cross Animal Hospital had leased TS land to run their clinic. However, reports of unethical treatment of the animals came to the forefront and notice was

given to the Blue Cross to vacate the premises. The Blue Cross refused and a legal battle ensued for eight years. In 2001, the High Court of Madras finally decided in favour of the TS and the day after the Blue Cross left, the TS moved in and started the Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary. In 2003 an airy, well-equipped operating theatre was built and today the dispensary provides service to over 6,000 animals a year with three veterinarians and their assistants on staff. It also works to educate animal owners on humane treatment and the cruelty done to animals in relation to beauty products. Beauty Without Cruelty products were regularly promoted by Radhaji. She stated in her 1993 address that "we need to encourage people to abstain from using products involving cruelty, to protest against atrocities committed against animals, and also to support the work to give our younger brethren a happy and dignified place on earth."

It took almost 20 years to get Radhaji's various projects on a solid foundation and once this happened, the next 13 years were spent exploring and expanding new avenues to ensure the prosperity of these particular endeavours. With the turn of the millennium, Radhaji's 1999 address stated that "many members felt that we should not have a hostel only for boys, but do something for girls as well; so we are inaugurating a Vocational Training Centre for Women." The Vocational Training Centre was housed under the Social Welfare Centre and offered training courses to women so they could obtain suitable employment.

One project Radhaji did not live long enough to see, but which she began planning for, is a technical trade school for students who do not want to pursue a university degree. The school will be housed in the building where the KFI School is now, in Damodar Gardens, after the lease for the KFI school ends in 2014. The trade school will be overseen by the Olcott Educational Society and proposes to offer courses such as electrical engineering, and home health so the sick and aged can live out their lives in their homes.

As the world continued to change around her, Radhaji continued to keep abreast of the needs of society and ways to approach the world in the most theosophical manner. The reader is reminded that the projects mentioned here were in Adyar alone and do not cover all she did elsewhere in India in the area of education for the needy and for the protection of animals, as well as her work for the Society internationally. Her tireless efforts had a profound impact on both the TS and the TOS. Radhaji showed us how to put theosophy into action and what fruit that action will bear through steadfastness, patience and compassion. In her 33 years in office, she never once expected a thank you or recognition. She worked selflessly for the betterment of humanity and, for many of us, became an example to follow. Our gratitude is profound.

May the light of the Master illumine Radha's path and the wings of His love enfold her forever.



To serve is a privilege.

--Radha Burnier

Unlimited Seeing

By Radha Burnier, in *On the Watchtower*

Published in *The Theosophist*, November 2009



Brotherhood is not an Object of the Society as imagined by many people, but 'Universal Brotherhood' is, as mentioned in the first Object of the Society. Universal Brotherhood implies that it must be practised in respect of all persons, rich or poor, important or not

important, doing any kind of work or none at all. It is meant to include all human beings.

Unfortunately the word brotherhood suggests a sexual difference to some people, but this was not meant when the word was used. Brotherhood was a term that included women also and therefore the Society's Object concerned all humanity. In English, there is no word which can stand for brotherhood or sisterhood combined, but the common factor in the two words is what is meant.

The term universal brotherhood means, to all those who know and have eyes to see, a vast, in fact an unlimited, vista. The spiritual level embraces all the other levels including the lowest and the highest and to see what brotherhood is from the spiritual point of view, our eyes must be more and more open as we proceed. We would then see not merely the outer surface of everything, but the inner content and meaning. So brotherhood, or whatever else we may call it – perhaps the sense of unity – will be absolutely natural. We will feel at one with all beings, which formerly was not possible.

Some creatures appear to us as not so nice, or as beautiful and lovable as do the ones we like; but likes and dislikes disappear in the glowing reality of oneness. It is said that the illumined ones see all of life filled with Divine qualities. The impression that some are better than others disappears. So, for the illumined consciousness everything has equal value and is equally lovable.

There is great beauty in the evolutionary process, but we see that beauty only in some places, if at all. A person may have an old face with wrinkles and other signs of age, but it exhibits great beauty all the same. There are some paintings which give this impression. The fact is that in the light of real beauty, old age and youthfulness, the more evolved and the

less evolved, are equally beautiful. Indeed, beauty exists whether there is a form to show it or not. The Divine is all around, and surrounds the person who has a sufficiently developed consciousness, and hence in that consciousness there is truth, knowledge, eternity, deep joy, and so forth. These are not separate aspects of reality, they are like the facets of a diamond, which people may see as separate from each other, but they are all from the one source.

To be aware of this, the Divine in so-called ordinary things, one should put aside thought, except when it is needed concerning ordinary things. If there is thought of this kind, everything is brought down to its own level; and when no such thought fills the mind it is free to see things as they are. Unfortunately, when we realise that there is something more than usual that can make itself known, in searching for it we intend to discover what we already know. The desire to see great art or anything similar is the satisfaction of getting some ideas from the minds of other persons.

There is a story told about a Teacher. He gave a talk one day, it is said, when a bird sitting on the window sang a song. The teacher became silent. When the bird finished he said the sermon was over. There is a song in everything. The whole universe is full of beautiful music, if we can hear. Something of that song shows that the Divine beauty, which needs no object, is present.

But these moments are rare. The silence of the mind, the stillness to hear, are rare and therefore our relationships are incomplete. Can we spend a few minutes without such image-making? Can meditation begin when the mind already has a picture in the background, or, does it commence with an empty mind? The emptying of the mind requires much practice. Even if there is an interval of quiet for a short time, some observation is possible. But the observer thinks that he knows only if he is present. He does not want to subside or die and this is the problem. What can we do to go beyond the level of mental knowledge to perfection or awareness? Perhaps we can teach ourselves not to analyse or do anything else, and just be. This may be what the future holds for everybody – an awareness which makes people see.



What is the essence of theosophy? It is the fact that man, being himself divine, can know the divinity whose life he shares. As an inevitable corollary to this supreme truth comes the fact of the brotherhood of man.

Annie Besant

Theosophical Society? Never Heard of It!

By Brian Harding

Edited from a talk given in Brisbane, 25 October, 2013



1 Introduction

How many times have you mentioned the Theosophical Society in conversation and received a blank stare in reply? Your listener may not have

used the exact words of my title, but it's obvious to you that they've "never heard of it." One of the aims of the Theosophical Society is, in the words of Madame Blavatsky, "to make it known that such a thing as Theosophy exists (1)."

But this begs the question "What is Theosophy anyway?"

While she was National President, Dara Tarray spent a lot of time in discussion on this very subject. One thing she was adamant about, and I think quite rightly, it is not the specific ideas or teaching of any one person, no matter how prominent they are or were in the TS – and that includes Madame Blavatsky herself.

The General Council, in 1924, passed a resolution on Freedom of Thought. This resolution in part reads "No teacher, or writer, from H P Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinion on members."

As explained on the Australian Section website (2), "**Theosophy**, from the Greek, *theosophia*, means 'divine wisdom.' One of our booklets says (1): "Theosophy is the spiritual heritage of all humanity which has been in existence from ancient times..." The word is not defined in the Constitution of the Theosophical Society, or in any official document. Members of the Society are left to discover what it is for themselves, taking as guides whatever philosophies or religions they wish."

So the Theosophical Society is essentially a Fellowship of Seekers. We have to seek for this Divine Wisdom ourselves, in our own way. To put it as simply as I can, no-one can follow the Quest for us, they can only provide a guide; just as the Buddha himself only points the way.

2 The Path to Divine Wisdom.

In my own searching, I found Hindu ideas were helpful, but the same approaches can be discerned in other religions, including Christianity. Traditionally there are three Paths in Hinduism -

- a) Bakti marga – the Way of Devotion
- b) Karma marga – the Way of Action
- c) Jnana marga – the Way of Self Knowledge

Bakti is generally the most popular Way. You may be able to suggest famous names whose lives illustrate these Paths.

Before I move on, I would like to add another, perhaps peculiarly Western Path – that of Science, the Way of Natural Wonder. While many scientists, epitomised perhaps by Richard Dawkins, believe there is nothing beyond what they can see, hear, smell, taste or touch, others have found that science points to something beyond itself. A Google search will find the following examples:

Einstein – Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe – a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we

with our modest powers must feel humble.

Sir James Jeans – ...the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine

Paul Davies – There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all... It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe... The impression of design is overwhelming.

Freeman Dyson – The more I examine the universe and the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have known we were coming.

Sir Fred Hoyle – A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics...

Arthur Compton – For myself, faith begins with the realization that a supreme intelligence brought the universe into being...an orderly, unfolding universe that testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered--'In the beginning God.'

John Polkinghorne – I have never thought that the universe was a tale told by an idiot.

Ultimately, as we grow in spiritual wisdom, we will find that we need to embrace all these aspects of the Path, devotion, wisdom, action and natural wonder.

I believe that the Founders of the Theosophical Society had a great desire to help others find their own Paths to Divine Wisdom. As one of our booklets says (1), "It was formed...to help point human beings towards the deeper significance of life beyond the observed psychic and physical worlds." The same booklet says the Society "is dedicated to preserving and realising the Ageless Wisdom which embodies both a world view and a vision of human transformation." As I said earlier, it is a Fellowship of Seekers, "united by a common search and aspiration for Truth...not a common set of beliefs" (1).

I want now to look briefly at aspects of the history of the Society, both international and local.

3 International History

The Society was founded in New York in 1875 by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (a Russian of aristocratic descent), Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (American Civil War army officer, lawyer and journalist) and William Quan Judge (American lawyer and mystic born in Dublin). At that time, Olcott and Blavatsky were living at The Lamasery, 302 West 47th Street. This building thus became the unofficial Headquarters of the Society until its move to India. The following is a potted history of the beginnings of the Society.

1875 – Foundation in New York by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott (elected International President) and William Quan Judge

1877 – *Isis Unveiled* by H P Blavatsky published

1879 – International Headquarters moved to Mumbai, India

1882 – Headquarters moved to a large Estate at Adyar, now a suburb of Chennai, South India

1888 – *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB's monumental legacy, published

1891 – Death of HPB in London

1896 – Final version of the Three Objects approved by the General Council. Death of Judge in New York

1907 – Death of Colonel Olcott, Annie Besant becomes Second International President

4 Local History

The story of Theosophy in Brisbane will doubtless be of interest to Members and friends. Historical information, taken from the address by Florence Haggard at the time of the Golden Jubilee of the Lodge in 1945, can be found on the website of the Brisbane Theosophical Society (3). You can find there also some interesting historical photos and lots of other useful material.

5 Key Aspects of Theosophy

a) Three Fundamental Principles

In the Proem to HPB's monumental *The Secret Doctrine* we read (4, p14 in my Edition) that *The Secret Doctrine* establishes three Fundamental Principles. I haven't written out these in full in order to make clear the key points.

The First Fundamental Principle points to the Oneness of all life – for me, David Bohm's *Undivided Universe* comes to mind and the interconnectedness of all things.

The Second Principle points to the periodic nature of the Universe, and of many phenomena in Nature – the cycle of the seasons, of day and night and so on.

The Third Principle speaks to me of the oneness of all creation, the oneness of our souls with each other and with the Oversoul, the Soul of the Universe. In Christian terms, St Paul tells us we are all one with Christ in the Father. We are all part of the same body – what harms one harms all, what benefits one, benefits all.

b) The Three Objects

The Objects of the Society evolved over a number of years from its foundation in New York. They were finalised in 1896 and have remained the same ever since. Our late International President, Radha Burnier, speaks extensively about our Objects in her very readable book *Human Regeneration* (5) which resulted from two seminars in the Netherlands in July 1990.

I won't discuss these in detail, but I do want to make one very important point. Brotherhood was extremely important to Radha as it should be to all Theosophists. Radha says (5, p14-15) "Brotherhood means something different from what we generally think it is. It implies learning to see that the one unitary life everywhere is wonderful beyond our imagination, subtle, profound, sacred."

She points out that human regeneration is about transformation, fundamental change, about "rooting out" the lower self completely. She says this change involves moving "from selfishness to altruism; from strife, inside and out, to peace; from ugliness [including the ugliness inside of us] to beauty and harmony. It is change from a state of ignorance to wisdom."

Finally, Radha says "universal brotherhood without distinctions is not an idle phrase, a commonplace thing. It is the main work of the Theosophical Society."

So we can see that the First Object is not about forming a nice little chatty social club where we have talks, discuss things with each other and have a cup of tea afterwards. It is about the Fundamental Principles we have mentioned. It is about endeavouring to live that Unity, of endeavouring to directly experience the Oneness of our souls, together with the Soul of the Universe. In Christian terms, it is about becoming one with each other and ultimately becoming One with God. I have emphasised this First Object because it is of major importance to me, too.

The Second Object is also important. HPB tried to relate three disciplines together in *The Secret Doctrine*, which she called "a synthesis of science, religion and philosophy." All three are avenues to truth, valid roads to a single point. Again Radha says (5, p24) "The second object of the TS is not concerned merely with speculative thinking or academic discussions...It is directed towards removal of ignorance, lifting the mind out of the unrealities in which it lives."

The Third Object is about the laws of Nature and human potential. Radha says (5, p24) "All natural laws are an expression of divine intelligence" and she adds "all law is a statement of relationships." She emphasises the need for us "to understand what our potential powers are, what spiritual faculties are latent in human consciousness." She says "...unless we see what the human being is potentially, we cannot create an environment helpful to true progress." And I interpret that to mean helpful to human regeneration, human transformation.

c) Motto and Emblem

I won't spend much time on this – our literature (eg ref 1) explains the meaning of the symbols that together make up the emblem or logo of the Theosophical Society; the serpent swallowing its tail, the interlaced triangles, the Ankh, the swastika and the Sanskrit symbol for the sacred word Aum.

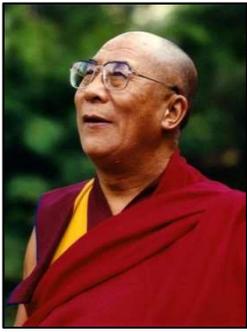
What I do want to mention is the motto – "There is no religion higher than Truth." And here I become personal again. My involvement with the Society began in 1978, and I fluctuated between enthusiasm and idleness – until the 11th September, 2001. I suddenly became angry with religions, especially simplistic, fundamentalist religion. I felt we had to get past these attitudes, or the world would come to a rather sticky end. The TS motto came to my mind. It suddenly dawned on me then that Theosophy could play a big part in raising the consciousness of humanity. I started lecturing again, with a talk entitled "Beyond Fundamentalism."

To conclude, the Theosophical Society, says Radha Burnier, "surely has only a single purpose, which is to uplift humanity from the moral and spiritual point of view." The Society does not claim to have conclusive answers, but it does aim to provide an environment for free enquiry and personal growth.

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A Human Approach to World Peace



By His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet

Published on the Dalai Lama's website, <http://www.dalailama.com/messages>

When we rise in the morning and listen to the radio or read the newspaper, we are confronted with the same sad news: violence, crime, wars, and disasters. I cannot recall a single day without a report of something terrible happening somewhere. Even in these modern

times it is clear that one's precious life is not safe. No former generation has had to experience so much bad news as we face today; this constant awareness of fear and tension should make any sensitive and compassionate person question seriously the progress of our modern world.

It is ironic that the more serious problems emanate from the more industrially advanced societies. Science and technology have worked wonders in many fields, but the basic human problems remain. There is unprecedented literacy, yet this universal education does not seem to have fostered goodness, but only mental restlessness and discontent instead. There is no doubt about the increase in our material progress and technology, but somehow this is not sufficient as we have not yet succeeded in bringing about peace and happiness or in overcoming suffering.

We can only conclude that there must be something seriously wrong with our progress and development, and if we do not check it in time there could be disastrous consequences for the future of humanity. I am not at all against science and technology – they have contributed immensely to the overall experience of humankind; to our material comfort and well-being and to our greater understanding of the world we live in. But if we give too much emphasis to science and technology we are in danger of losing touch with those aspects of human knowledge and understanding that aspire towards honesty and altruism.

Science and technology, though capable of creating immeasurable material comfort, cannot replace the age-old spiritual and humanitarian values that have largely shaped world civilization, in all its national forms, as we know it today. No one can deny the unprecedented material benefit of science and technology, but our basic human problems remain; we are still faced with the same, if not more, suffering, fear, and tension. Thus it is only logical to try to strike a balance between material developments on the one hand and the development of spiritual, human values on the other. In order to bring about this great adjustment, we need to revive our humanitarian values.

I am sure that many people share my concern about the present worldwide moral crisis and will join in my appeal to all humanitarians and religious practitioners who also share this concern to help make our societies more compassionate, just, and equitable. I do not speak as a Buddhist or even as a Tibetan. Nor do I speak as an expert on international politics (though I unavoidably comment on these matters). Rather, I speak simply as a human being, as an upholder of the humanitarian values that are the bedrock not only of Mahayana Buddhism but of all the great world religions. From this perspective I share with you my personal outlook – that:

1. Universal humanitarianism is essential to solve global problems;
2. Compassion is the pillar of world peace;
3. All world religions are already for world peace in this way, as are all humanitarians of whatever ideology;

4. Each individual has a universal responsibility to shape institutions to serve human needs.

Solving Human Problems through Transforming Human Attitudes

Of the many problems we face today, some are natural calamities and must be accepted and faced with equanimity. Others, however, are of our own making, created by misunderstanding, and can be corrected. One such type arises from the conflict of ideologies, political or religious, when people fight each other for petty ends, losing sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a single human family. We must remember that the different religions, ideologies, and political systems of the world are meant for human beings to achieve happiness. We must not lose sight of this fundamental goal and at no time should we place means above ends; the supremacy of humanity over matter and ideology must always be maintained.

By far the greatest single danger facing humankind – in fact, all living beings on our planet – is the threat of nuclear destruction. I need not elaborate on this danger, but I would like to appeal to all the leaders of the nuclear powers who literally hold the future of the world in their hands, to the scientists and technicians who continue to create these awesome weapons of destruction, and to all the people at large who are in a position to influence their leaders: I appeal to them to exercise their sanity and begin to work at dismantling and destroying all nuclear weapons. We know that in the event of a nuclear war there will be no victors because there will be no survivors! Is it not frightening just to contemplate such inhuman and heartless destruction? And, is it not logical that we should remove the cause for our own destruction when we know the cause and have both the time and the means to do so? Often we cannot overcome our problems because we either do not know the cause or, if we understand it, do not have the means to remove it. This is not the case with the nuclear threat.

Whether they belong to more evolved species like humans or to simpler ones such as animals, all beings primarily seek peace, comfort, and security. Life is as dear to the mute animal as it is to any human being; even the simplest insect strives for protection from dangers that threaten its life. Just as each one of us wants to live and does not wish to die, so it is with all other creatures in the universe, though their power to effect this is a different matter.

Broadly speaking there are two types of happiness and suffering, mental and physical, and of the two, I believe that mental suffering and happiness are the more acute. Hence, I stress the training of the mind to endure suffering and attain a more lasting state of happiness. However, I also have a more general and concrete idea of happiness: a combination of inner peace, economic development, and, above all, world peace. To achieve such goals I feel it is necessary to develop a sense of universal responsibility, a deep concern for all irrespective of creed, colour, sex, or nationality.

The premise behind this idea of universal responsibility is the simple fact that, in general terms, all others' desires are the same as mine. Every being wants happiness and does not want suffering. If we, as intelligent human beings, do not accept this fact, there will be more and more suffering on this planet. If we adopt a self-centred approach to life and constantly try to use others for our own self-interest, we may gain temporary benefits, but in the long run we will not

succeed in achieving even personal happiness, and world peace will be completely out of the question.

In their quest for happiness, humans have used different methods, which all too often have been cruel and repellent. Behaving in ways utterly unbecoming to their status as humans, they inflict suffering upon fellow humans and other living beings for their own selfish gains. In the end, such shortsighted actions bring suffering to oneself as well as to others. To be born a human being is a rare event in itself, and it is wise to use this opportunity as effectively and skilfully as possible. We must have the proper perspective that of the universal life process, so that the happiness or glory of one person or group is not sought at the expense of others.

All this calls for a new approach to global problems. The world is becoming smaller and smaller – and more and more interdependent – as a result of rapid technological advances and international trade as well as increasing trans-national relations. We now depend very much on each other. In ancient times problems were mostly family-size, and they were naturally tackled at the family level, but the situation has changed. Today we are so interdependent, so closely interconnected with each other, that without a sense of universal responsibility, a feeling of universal brotherhood and sisterhood, and an understanding and belief that we really are part of one big human family, we cannot hope to overcome the dangers to our very existence – let alone bring about peace and happiness.

One nation's problems can no longer be satisfactorily solved by itself alone; too much depends on the interest, attitude, and cooperation of other nations. A universal humanitarian approach to world problems seems the only sound basis for world peace. What does this mean? We begin from the recognition mentioned previously that all beings cherish happiness and do not want suffering. It then becomes both morally wrong and pragmatically unwise to pursue only one's own happiness oblivious to the feelings and aspirations of all others who surround us as members of the same human family. The wiser course is to think of others also when pursuing our own happiness. This will lead to what I call 'wise self-interest', which hopefully will transform itself into 'compromised self-interest', or better still, 'mutual interest'.

Although the increasing interdependence among nations might be expected to generate more sympathetic cooperation, it is difficult to achieve a spirit of genuine cooperation as long as people remain indifferent to the feelings and happiness of others. When people are motivated mostly by greed and jealousy, it is not possible for them to live in harmony. A spiritual approach may not solve all the political problems that have been caused by the existing self-centred approach, but in the long run it will overcome the very basis of the problems that we face today.

On the other hand, if humankind continues to approach its problems considering only temporary expediency, future generations will have to face tremendous difficulties. The global population is increasing, and our resources are being rapidly depleted. Look at the trees, for example. No one knows exactly what adverse effects massive deforestation will have on the climate, the soil, and global ecology as a whole. We are facing problems because people are concentrating only on their short-term, selfish interests, not thinking of the entire human family. They are not thinking of the earth and the long-term effects on universal life as a whole. If we of the present generation do not think about these now, future generations may not be able to cope with them.

Compassion as the Pillar of World Peace

According to Buddhist psychology, most of our troubles are due to our passionate desire for and attachment to things that we misapprehend as enduring entities. The pursuit of the

objects of our desire and attachment involves the use of aggression and competitiveness as supposedly efficacious instruments. These mental processes easily translate into actions, breeding belligerence as an obvious effect. Such processes have been going on in the human mind since time immemorial, but their execution has become more effective under modern conditions. What can we do to control and regulate these 'poisons' – delusion, greed, and aggression – for it is these poisons that are behind almost every trouble in the world?

As one brought up in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, I feel that love and compassion are the moral fabric of world peace. Let me first define what I mean by compassion. When you have pity or compassion for a very poor person, you are showing sympathy because he or she is poor; your compassion is based on altruistic considerations. On the other hand, love towards your wife, your husband, your children, or a close friend is usually based on attachment. When your attachment changes, your kindness also changes; it may disappear. This is not true love. Real love is not based on attachment, but on altruism. In this case your compassion will remain as a humane response to suffering as long as beings continue to suffer.

This type of compassion is what we must strive to cultivate in ourselves, and we must develop it from a limited amount to the limitless. Undiscriminating, spontaneous, and unlimited compassion for all sentient beings is obviously not the usual love that one has for friends or family, which is alloyed with ignorance, desire, and attachment. The kind of love we should advocate is this wider love that you can have even for someone who has done harm to you: your enemy.

The rationale for compassion is that every one of us wants to avoid suffering and gain happiness. This, in turn, is based on the valid feeling of 'I', which determines the universal desire for happiness. Indeed, all beings are born with similar desires and should have an equal right to fulfil them. If I compare myself with others, who are countless, I feel that others are more important because I am just one person whereas others are many. Further, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition teaches us to view all sentient beings as our dear mothers and to show our gratitude by loving them all. For, according to Buddhist theory, we are born and reborn countless numbers of times, and it is conceivable that each being has been our parent at one time or another. In this way all beings in the universe share a family relationship.

Whether one believes in religion or not, there is no one who does not appreciate love and compassion. Right from the moment of our birth, we are under the care and kindness of our parents; later in life, when facing the sufferings of disease and old age, we are again dependent on the kindness of others. If at the beginning and end of our lives we depend upon others' kindness, why then in the middle should we not act kindly towards others?

The development of a kind heart (a feeling of closeness for all human beings) does not involve the religiosity we normally associate with conventional religious practice. It is not only for people who believe in religion, but is for everyone regardless of race, religion, or political affiliation. It is for anyone who considers himself or herself, above all, a member of the human family and who sees things from this larger and longer perspective. This is a powerful feeling that we should develop and apply; instead, we often neglect it, particularly in our prime years when we experience a false sense of security.

When we take into account a longer perspective, the fact that all wish to gain happiness and avoid suffering, and keep in mind our relative unimportance in relation to countless others, we can conclude that it is worthwhile to share our possessions with others. When you train in this sort of outlook, a true sense of compassion – a true sense of love

and respect for others – becomes possible. Individual happiness ceases to be a conscious self-seeking effort; it becomes an automatic and far superior by-product of the whole process of loving and serving others.

Another result of spiritual development, most useful in day-to-day life, is that it gives a calmness and presence of mind. Our lives are in constant flux, bringing many difficulties. When faced with a calm and clear mind, problems can be successfully resolved. When, instead, we lose control over our minds through hatred, selfishness, jealousy, and anger, we lose our sense of judgement. Our minds are blinded and at those wild moments anything can happen, including war. Thus, the practice of compassion and wisdom is useful to all, especially to those responsible for running national affairs, in whose hands lie the power and opportunity to create the structure of world peace.

World Religions for World Peace

The principles discussed so far are in accordance with the ethical teachings of all world religions. I maintain that every major religion of the world – Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism – has similar ideals of love, the same goal of benefiting humanity through spiritual practice, and the same effect of making their followers into better human beings. All religions teach moral precepts for perfecting the functions of mind, body, and speech. All teach us not to lie or steal or take others' lives, and so on. The common goal of all moral precepts laid down by the great teachers of humanity is unselfishness. The great teachers wanted to lead their followers away from the paths of negative deeds caused by ignorance and to introduce them to paths of goodness.

All religions agree upon the necessity to control the undisciplined mind that harbours selfishness and other roots of trouble, and each teaches a path leading to a spiritual state that is peaceful, disciplined, ethical, and wise. It is in this sense that I believe all religions have essentially the same message. Differences of dogma may be ascribed to differences of time and circumstance as well as cultural influences; indeed, there is no end to scholastic argument when we consider the purely metaphysical side of religion. However, it is much more beneficial to try to implement in daily life the shared precepts for goodness taught by all religions rather than to argue about minor differences in approach.

There are many different religions to bring comfort and happiness to humanity in much the same way as there are particular treatments for different diseases. For, all religions endeavour in their own way to help living beings avoid misery and gain happiness. And, although we can find causes for preferring certain interpretations of religious truths, there is much greater cause for unity, stemming from the human heart. Each religion works in its own way to lessen human suffering and contribute to world civilization. Conversion is not the point. For instance, I do not think of converting others to Buddhism or merely furthering the Buddhist cause. Rather, I try to think of how I as a Buddhist humanitarian can contribute to human happiness.

While pointing out the fundamental similarities between world religions, I do not advocate one particular religion at the expense of all others, nor do I seek a new 'world religion'. All the different religions of the world are needed to enrich human experience and world civilization. Our human minds, being of different calibre and disposition, need different approaches to peace and happiness. It is just like food. Certain people find Christianity more appealing, others prefer Buddhism because there is no creator in it and everything depends upon your own actions. We can make similar arguments for other religions as well. Thus, the point is clear: humanity needs all the world's religions to suit the ways of

life, diverse spiritual needs, and inherited national traditions of individual human beings.

It is from this perspective that I welcome efforts being made in various parts of the world for better understanding among religions. The need for this is particularly urgent now. If all religions make the betterment of humanity their main concern, then they can easily work together in harmony for world peace. Interfaith understanding will bring about the unity necessary for all religions to work together. However, although this is indeed an important step, we must remember that there are no quick or easy solutions. We cannot hide the doctrinal differences that exist among various faiths, nor can we hope to replace the existing religions by a new universal belief. Each religion has its own distinctive contributions to make, and each in its own way is suitable to a particular group of people as they understand life. The world needs them all.

There are two primary tasks facing religious practitioners who are concerned with world peace. First, we must promote better interfaith understanding so as to create a workable degree of unity among all religions. This may be achieved in part by respecting each other's beliefs and by emphasizing our common concern for human well-being. Second, we must bring about a viable consensus on basic spiritual values that touch every human heart and enhance general human happiness. This means we must emphasize the common denominator of all world religions – humanitarian ideals. These two steps will enable us to act both individually and together to create the necessary spiritual conditions for world peace.

We practitioners of different faiths can work together for world peace when we view different religions as essentially instruments to develop a good heart – love and respect for others, a true sense of community. The most important thing is to look at the purpose of religion and not at the details of theology or metaphysics, which can lead to mere intellectualism. I believe that all the major religions of the world can contribute to world peace and work together for the benefit of humanity if we put aside subtle metaphysical differences, which are really the internal business of each religion.

Despite the progressive secularization brought about by worldwide modernization and despite systematic attempts in some parts of the world to destroy spiritual values, the vast majority of humanity continues to believe in one religion or another. The undying faith in religion, evident even under irreligious political systems, clearly demonstrates the potency of religion as such. This spiritual energy and power can be purposefully used to bring about the spiritual conditions necessary for world peace. Religious leaders and humanitarians all over the world have a special role to play in this respect.

Whether we will be able to achieve world peace or not, we have no choice but to work towards that goal. If our minds are dominated by anger, we will lose the best part of human intelligence – wisdom, the ability to decide between right and wrong. Anger is one of the most serious problems facing the world today.

Individual Power to Shape Institutions

Anger plays no small role in current conflicts such as those in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, the North-South problem, and so forth. These conflicts arise from a failure to understand one another's humanness. The answer is not the development and use of greater military force, nor an arms race. Nor is it purely political or purely technological. Basically it is spiritual, in the sense that what is required is a sensitive understanding of our common human situation. Hatred and fighting cannot bring happiness to anyone, even to the

winners of battles. Violence always produces misery and thus is essentially counter-productive. It is, therefore, time for world leaders to learn to transcend the differences of race, culture, and ideology and to regard one another through eyes that see the common human situation. To do so would benefit individuals, communities, nations, and the world at large.

The greater part of present world tension seems to stem from the 'Eastern bloc' versus 'Western bloc' conflict that has been going on since World War II. These two blocs tend to describe and view each other in a totally unfavourable light. This continuing, unreasonable struggle is due to a lack of mutual affection and respect for each other as fellow human beings. Those of the Eastern bloc should reduce their hatred towards the Western bloc because the Western bloc is also made up of human beings – men, women, and children. Similarly those of the Western bloc should reduce their hatred towards the Eastern bloc because the Eastern bloc is also human beings. In such a reduction of mutual hatred, the leaders of both blocs have a powerful role to play. But first and foremost, leaders must realize their own and others' humanness. Without this basic realization, very little effective reduction of organized hatred can be achieved.

If, for example, the leader of the United States of America and the leader of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics suddenly met each other in the middle of a desolate island, I am sure they would respond to each other spontaneously as fellow human beings. But a wall of mutual suspicion and misunderstanding separates them the moment they are identified as the 'President of the USA' and the 'Secretary-General of the USSR'. More human contact in the form of informal extended meetings, without any agenda, would improve their mutual understanding; they would learn to relate to each other as human beings and could then try to tackle international problems based on this understanding. No two parties, especially those with a history of antagonism, can negotiate fruitfully in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and hatred.

I suggest that world leaders meet about once a year in a beautiful place without any business, just to get to know each other as human beings. Then, later, they could meet to discuss mutual and global problems. I am sure many others share my wish that world leaders meet at the conference table in such an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding of each other's humanness.

To improve person-to-person contact in the world at large, I would like to see greater encouragement of international tourism. Also, mass media, particularly in democratic societies, can make a considerable contribution to world peace by giving greater coverage to human interest items that reflect the ultimate oneness of humanity. With the rise of a few big powers in the international arena, the humanitarian role of international organizations is being bypassed and neglected. I hope that this will be corrected and that all international organizations, especially the United Nations, will be more active and effective in ensuring maximum benefit to humanity and promoting international understanding. It will indeed be tragic if the few powerful members continue to misuse world bodies like the UN for their one-sided interests. The UN must become the instrument of world peace. This world body must be respected by all, for the UN is the only source of hope for small oppressed nations and hence for the planet as a whole.

As all nations are economically dependent upon one another more than ever before, human understanding must go beyond national boundaries and embrace the international community at large. Indeed, unless we can create an atmosphere of genuine cooperation, gained not by threatened or actual use of force but by heartfelt understanding, world problems will only increase. If people in poorer countries are

denied the happiness they desire and deserve, they will naturally be dissatisfied and pose problems for the rich. If unwanted social, political, and cultural forms continue to be imposed upon unwilling people, the attainment of world peace is doubtful. However, if we satisfy people at a heart-to-heart level, peace will surely come.

Within each nation, the individual ought to be given the right to happiness, and among nations, there must be equal concern for the welfare of even the smallest nations. I am not suggesting that one system is better than another and all should adopt it. On the contrary, a variety of political systems and ideologies is desirable and accords with the variety of dispositions within the human community. This variety enhances the ceaseless human quest for happiness. Thus each community should be free to evolve its own political and socio-economic system, based on the principle of self-determination.

The achievement of justice, harmony, and peace depends on many factors. We should think about them in terms of human benefit in the long run rather than the short term. I realize the enormity of the task before us, but I see no other alternative than the one I am proposing – which is based on our common humanity. Nations have no choice but to be concerned about the welfare of others, not so much because of their belief in humanity, but because it is in the mutual and long-term interest of all concerned. An appreciation of this new reality is indicated by the emergence of regional or continental economic organizations such as the European Economic Community, the Association of South East Asian Nations, and so forth. I hope more such trans-national organizations will be formed, particularly in regions where economic development and regional stability seem in short supply.

Under present conditions, there is definitely a growing need for human understanding and a sense of universal responsibility. In order to achieve such ideas, we must generate a good and kind heart, for without this, we can achieve neither universal happiness nor lasting world peace. We cannot create peace on paper. While advocating universal responsibility and universal brotherhood and sisterhood, the facts are that humanity is organized in separate entities in the form of national societies. Thus, in a realistic sense, I feel it is these societies that must act as the building-blocks for world peace. Attempts have been made in the past to create societies more just and equal. Institutions have been established with noble charters to combat anti-social forces. Unfortunately, such ideas have been cheated by selfishness. More than ever before, we witness today how ethics and noble principles are obscured by the shadow of self-interest, particularly in the political sphere. There is a school of thought that warns us to refrain from politics altogether, as politics has become synonymous with amorality. Politics devoid of ethics does not further human welfare, and life without morality reduces humans to the level of beasts. However, politics is not axiomatically 'dirty'. Rather, the instruments of our political culture have distorted the high ideals and noble concepts meant to further human welfare. Naturally, spiritual people express their concern about religious leaders 'messaging' with politics, since they fear the contamination of religion by dirty politics.

I question the popular assumption that religion and ethics have no place in politics and that religious persons should seclude themselves as hermits. Such a view of religion is too one-sided; it lacks a proper perspective on the individual's relation to society and the role of religion in our lives. Ethics is as crucial to a politician as it is to a religious practitioner. Dangerous consequences will follow when politicians and rulers forget moral principles. Whether we believe in God or karma, ethics is the foundation of every religion.

Such human qualities as morality, compassion, decency,

wisdom, and so forth have been the foundations of all civilizations. These qualities must be cultivated and sustained through systematic moral education in a conducive social environment so that a more humane world may emerge. The qualities required to create such a world must be inculcated right from the beginning, from childhood. We cannot wait for the next generation to make this change; the present generation must attempt a renewal of basic human values. If there is any hope, it is in the future generations, but not unless we institute major change on a worldwide scale in our present educational system. We need a revolution in our commitment to and practice of universal humanitarian values.

It is not enough to make noisy calls to halt moral degeneration; we must do something about it. Since present-day governments do not shoulder such 'religious' responsibilities, humanitarian and religious leaders must strengthen the existing civic, social, cultural, educational, and religious organizations to revive human and spiritual values. Where necessary, we must create new organizations to achieve these goals. Only in so doing can we hope to create a more stable basis for world peace.

Living in society, we should share the sufferings of our fellow citizens and practise compassion and tolerance not only towards our loved ones but also towards our enemies. This is the test of our moral strength. We must set an example by our own practice, for we cannot hope to convince others of the value of religion by mere words. We must live up to the same high standards of integrity and sacrifice that we ask of others. The ultimate purpose of all religions is to serve and benefit humanity. This is why it is so important that religion always be used to effect the happiness and peace of all beings and not merely to convert others.

Still, in religion there are no national boundaries. A religion can and should be used by any people or person who finds it beneficial. What is important for each seeker is to choose a religion that is most suitable to himself or herself. But, the embracing of a particular religion does not mean the rejection of another religion or one's own community. In fact, it is important that those who embrace a religion should not cut themselves off from their own society; they should continue to live within their own community and in harmony with its members. By escaping from your own community, you cannot benefit others, whereas benefiting others is actually the basic aim of religion.

In this regard there are two things important to keep in mind: self-examination and self-correction. We should constantly check our attitude toward others, examining ourselves carefully, and we should correct ourselves immediately when we find we are in the wrong.

Finally, a few words about material progress. I have heard a great deal of complaint against material progress from Westerners, and yet, paradoxically, it has been the very pride of the Western world. I see nothing wrong with material progress per se, provided people are always given precedence. It is my firm belief that in order to solve human problems in all their dimensions, we must combine and harmonize economic development with spiritual growth.

However, we must know its limitations. Although materialistic knowledge in the form of science and technology has contributed enormously to human welfare, it is not capable of creating lasting happiness. In America, for example, where technological development is perhaps more advanced than in any other country, there is still a great deal of mental suffering. This is because materialistic knowledge can only provide a type of happiness that is dependent upon physical conditions. It cannot provide happiness that springs from inner development independent of external factors.

For renewal of human values and attainment of lasting happiness, we need to look to the common humanitarian heritage of all nations the world over. May this essay serve as an urgent reminder lest we forget the human values that unite us all as a single family on this planet.

I have written the above lines
 To tell my constant feeling.
 Whenever I meet even a 'foreigner',
 I have always the same feeling:
 'I am meeting another member of the human family.
 This attitude has deepened
 My affection and respect for all beings.
 May this natural wish be
 My small contribution to world peace.
 I pray for a more friendly,
 More caring, and more understanding
 Human family on this planet.
 To all who dislike suffering,
 Who cherish lasting happiness –
 This is my heartfelt appeal.

Love alone can unite living beings so as to complete and fulfil them ...

For it alone joins them by what is deepest in themselves.

All we need is to imagine our ability to love developing until it embraces the totality of men and of the earth.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin



2014 TS European Federation Congress in Paris

“Bridging Science and Spirituality”

30 July to 3 August 2014

Adyar Theatre, 4 Square Rapp, 7th Arrondissement, Paris

The aim of the Congress is to bring together members and sympathisers from Europe and the world, and to investigate together the connection between science and spirituality today. Special guests are being arranged.

Detailed information can be found on the website of The European Federation of the Theosophical Society – www.ts-efts.org .

Registration is available via the website of EFTS. If any urgent information is needed the email address is congress@ts-efts.org The Adyar theatre has a website: www.theatre-adyar.fr



T.O.S. news

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Email: geoffrey.harrod@gmail.com
President: Geoff Harrod Vice-President: Dianne Manning

Annual General Meeting Report

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday 30 November, 2013. The office bearers for 2014 are:

- President: Geoff Harrod
- Vice-President: Dianne Manning
- Secretary: Janet Harding
- Treasurer: Carolyn Harrod.

Robyn Rizzo is the TOS Representative to the Brisbane Theosophical Society Committee.

TOS members work as volunteers in a number of areas, choosing ones of particular interest to them, such as community service, education, healing, animal welfare and environment.

In addition, the group chooses several projects to support each year with donations and voluntary work. For information, talk to one of the committee or visit www.theosophyqld.org.au

Meetings in 2014

All interested people are invited to attend the planning meetings which are held quarterly from 10.00 to 11:30 am in the T.S. rooms. Meeting dates in 2014 are:

- Saturday 1 February,
- Saturday 3 May,
- Saturday 9 August and
- Saturday 6 December (AGM).

Thanks for your donations to the Philippines Emergency Appeal

The TOS sends many thanks to all who donated at the AGM of the Brisbane TS to the appeal for the Philippines emergency. The Brisbane TS generously matched the collection, so we were able to send a donation of \$1,025. This brings the total donated to the emergency appeal by members of the Brisbane TOS and TS to \$3,025. Our donations were sent to the Philippines TOS through the TOS in Australia in November and December 2013.

The following report was received from Vic Hao Chin of the Philippines TOS.

The Philippines TS and TOS have mobilized its lodges and study groups to help those stricken by the super typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda).

Speedily raising funds in the Philippines, the lodges purchased, packed and distributed food, water and construction materials within two or three days to Ormoc in Leyte and Sara in Iloilo. This was done in coordination with local public officials known to members of the Theosophical Society. Reports and photos of the distribution were posted on the Facebook page of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines.

Numerous TS and TOS groups around the world, including individual members, have spontaneously raised funds and sent donations through the TOS in the Philippines. As of this writing, the TS/TOS in the Philippines is again shipping about 10,000 plyboards and other construction materials such as tarpaulins, mats, nails as well as clothing to Samar, Leyte, Cebu and Panay – a total of five 20-foot (38.5 sq.metre) containers – so that families whose houses were completely demolished by the storm can start reconstructing their houses. The plyboards which cost more than P1 million (US\$25,000)

were donated by a private construction company. For Iloilo, with the assistance of Dr Josephine Bundoc, the shipping and land transport of the boards for free have been arranged through the office of Senator Franklin Drilon. The local distribution is being coordinated by Victor Lo, President of the Iloilo Lodge of the TS, and Jeneda Salcedo-Orendain, a provincial board member of Iloilo. In Cebu City, the distribution is being handled by the Satsang Study Group members led by Silvia Ludo and Letty Lim. For Cebu and Samar, the shipping arrangement is currently being negotiated with cargo shipping companies and truckers with the help of Victor Penaranda, Vice-President of the TS in the Philippines.

The TS/TOS intends to pursue longer term assistance to the affected communities by assisting in the education and youth development of selected towns after their emergency needs have been met.

Most TS members in these areas have been spared by the storm, but a number of members in Western Leyte have houses that have been destroyed or severely damaged by the storm. No casualty among TS members has been reported.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to you for the spontaneous support, donations and messages of many theosophists and TOS groups around the world and within the Philippines. Your donations have enabled the TS/TOS in the Philippines to help quickly and on a wider scale.



Plan of action for the next 3 years

One of the main items of work at the International TOS Conference in 2013 was the joint development of a *Plan of Action* for the TOS for 2014-2018. The Brisbane TOS has identified a number of areas from this international plan on which we can work at a local level.

Over the next three years we are focusing on:

- increasing awareness of the TOS within the TS
- increasing awareness of the TOS in the wider community
- support for animal welfare issues, including a cruelty-free lifestyle
- support for local social welfare projects
- starting a Healing Circle

We'll bring you news of activities related to these areas throughout the year.

The Theosophical Society

The Theosophical Society is a worldwide body whose primary object is to promote Universal Brotherhood. The Society imposes no beliefs 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.***

If undeliverable return to
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