

Theosophy

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The Theosophical Society welcomes students or seekers, belonging to any religion or to none, who are in sympathy with its Objects. The motto of the Society is *There is no Religion higher than Truth*. The word *Religion* in this statement is a translation of the Sanskrit *dharma*, which among other things means practice; way; virtue; teaching; law; inherent nature; religion; and that which is steadfast or firm. The word *Truth* in the motto is a translation of the Sanskrit *satya*, meaning among other things, true, real and actual. It derives from the root *sat*, sometimes translated as boundless unconditioned existence.

Theosophy is not defined in the Constitution of the Theosophical Society, or in any official document. It literally means divine wisdom, *theosophia*, but members of the Society are left to discover what it is for themselves, taking as guides whatever religions or philosophies they wish.

The Three Objects of The Theosophical Society

*To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without
distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.*

*To encourage the study of Comparative Religion,
Philosophy and Science.*

*To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the
powers latent in the human being.*

From the National President ...

Dara Tatray



The biologist and author E.O. Wilson recently remarked on the dangers of focusing on climate change while not paying sufficient attention to protecting the Earth's biodiversity, including the extremely small organisms on which the health of the environment depends. In his view, 'if you save the living environment you will automatically save the physical environment. But if you only try to save the physical environment, you will lose them both'. That, he says, 'is a defensible law' meaning, a law of nature (*New Scientist* 22 Aug 2009 p.23).

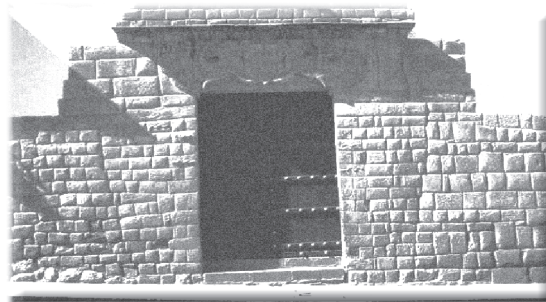
This is something I considered often, when walking past a badly polluted culvert where I would see families of ducks and ducklings swimming about the waterway, plunging their heads into water choked with plastic, discarded shopping trolleys and run-off from the road. Surely here was more than sufficient reason to "save the environment," perhaps the best reason of all. Protecting the inalienable right of every living creature to clean air, unpolluted drinking water and adequate food and shelter is the best reason for protecting the environment. And if we did cease robbing various creatures of such rights, if we ensured that every species had a reasonable standard of living (including our own, which is presently not the case), would the climate not take care of itself? I think it would, and E.O. Wilson appears to think so too. I am inclined to suggest that it is not just a defensible law, as Wilson put it, but also a karmic law (itself a law of nature)

D.T. Suzuki once described the principle of karma as causation morally conceived, and so it is: the principle of cause and effect evident in casting a pebble into a still lake, but applied to the psychic, social and moral fields. The pebble thrown into the lake in the moral field is mainly our intentions, including the deep-seated ones. In the Buddhist understanding, and in the *Bhagavad Gita*, that is what has the greatest effect on outcomes. Intention was perhaps not taken into account in "Wilson's law," that to save the living environment is to save the physical environment on which we depend, but I would argue that the ethical dimension to this is an equally defensible law. Adverse human-induced climate change is a side-effect of things other than pollution. Unless the inner causes of the problem are addressed, ameliorating the ecological impact in our present half-hearted manner will have little effect.

The relevant Confucian ethic would perhaps be 'I cannot flourish unless my neighbour flourishes'. This is true, and our neighbours include human beings in other parts of the world, as well as neighbouring species. Making sure that they are all flourishing, and not just surviving or limping along would at the same time safeguard our own survival and effectively deal with climate change, as surely as casting a pebble into a still lake will send out the inevitable ripples. ☒

The Universal Brotherhood of Humanity

Ed Abdill



In her letter to the second convention of the American section, H. P. Blavatsky wrote:

[There are those] among us who realize intuitively that the recognition of pure Theosophy — the philosophy of the rational explanation of things and not the tenets — is of the most vital importance in the Society, inasmuch as it alone can furnish the beacon-light needed to guide humanity on its true path. This should never be forgotten, nor should the following fact be overlooked. On the day when Theosophy will have accomplished its most holy and most important mission — namely, to unite firmly a body of men of all nations in brotherly love and bent on a pure altruistic work, not on a labor with selfish motives — on that day only will Theosophy become higher than any nominal brotherhood of man.

In that short paragraph, HPB summarized the principal objective of The Theosophical Society. Yet, the ideas contained in that paragraph need to be explored and meditated upon if we are to fully grasp what is meant by Theosophy and what The Theosophical Society was meant to do. We might begin our exploration by considering the evolution of the objectives of the Society. It might be noted that the Objects and their changes were formulated in the nineteenth century when *man* was used for the species, not the male, and brotherhood included all human beings.

At the founding of The Theosophical Society in 1875 its objective was ‘To collect and

diffuse a knowledge of the laws which govern the universe’. In 1878, the objectives were expanded, ending with ‘and chiefly, aid in the institution of a Brotherhood of Humanity ...’. In 1879, the following points were included:

The Theosophical Society is formed upon the basis of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity ... The Society’s plans are declared to be as follows:

- a) To keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions ...
- b) To oppose and counteract – after due investigation and proof of its irrational nature – bigotry in every form ...
- c) To promote a feeling of brotherhood among nations ...
- d) To seek to obtain knowledge of all the laws of Nature and aid in diffusing it; and especially to encourage the study of those laws least understood by modern people and so termed the Occult Sciences.
- e) To gather for the Society’s library and put into written forms correct information on ancient philosophies, etc.
- f) To promote in every practicable way non-sectarian education ...
- g) To encourage and assist individual Fellows in self-improvement, intellectual, moral, and spiritual.

In 1896 the three current Objects were formulated.

Two threads are clear throughout these objectives: Universal Brotherhood; and

methods by which it might be realized. Paramount to such a realization is knowledge. To do the good, we must know what the good is. Hence a common emphasis throughout these objectives is to obtain knowledge and make it available to everyone. Perhaps for that reason the objectives of 1875 emphasized that we must first discover the laws that govern our universe. Clearly we are creatures within this universe and are therefore also subject to the laws that govern it. If we are to live in harmony with nature and with each other as part of nature, we must discover the laws that govern nature and ourselves.

To date, humanity has learned a great deal about physical nature, but very little about inner nature. The third Object of the TS today is 'To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man'. It is in those latent, hidden, occult powers of humanity and the unexplained laws of nature that we are most likely to discover what unites us all at the very core of our being. Psychology and sociology have made a start by seeking to discover principles that rule our mental and emotional nature. But these are soft sciences still in their infancy.

Throughout the changes of objectives, universal brotherhood has been emphasized equally with the intent to discover the laws of our universe. Is there a connection between the two, and if so, what might that connection be? In the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky lists three fundamental propositions on which, she says, the entire Theosophical philosophy is based. The first of these reads, in part:

An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and can only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought — in the words of the Mandukya Upanishad 'unthinkable and unspeakable'.

While that is theoretical, even to Blavatsky's teachers, everything her teachers have discovered points to that unspeakable principle as the root and source of all existence.

For a universe to come into being, that boundless principle must be differentiated. We might say that eternal SPACE crystallizes like water into ice to become matter and form. If so, then we and all existence are but temporal states within an eternal reality. If true, as more and more evidence suggests, then universal brotherhood is not something that we must create; it is fact to be realized. We are all different states of the same stuff. To use another metaphor, we are all unique and distinct waves in an eternal and indivisible sea.

The teachers of H. P. Blavatsky emphasized brotherhood more than once in their letters. In Letter number 12 of *The Mahatma Letters*, chronological edition, KH wrote: 'The Chiefs want a Brotherhood of Humanity, a real Universal Fraternity started; an institution which would make itself known throughout the world and arrest the attention of the highest minds.'

Yet, despite the emphasis on universal brotherhood, from the days of HPB theosophists have fought among themselves every bit as well as all religious groups have fought among themselves from the days of their founders. Perhaps the problem lies in the definition of brotherhood.

To many, Brotherhood means that we should be tolerant of one another, that we should be nice to one another, that we should not say anything negative about one another. Yet in *The Mahatma Letters* and in HPB's writings one finds sharp criticism of members and non-members, warnings about the motives of certain individuals and the danger they posed to the Society, and even biting irony to deflate a personal ego.

In reading the letters, one quickly learns that no matter how much the adepts may have approved of tolerance and civility, universal brotherhood meant something far more profound to them. Perhaps the following statements from the letters will help us to discover what they meant.

In Chronological Letter number 5, KH wrote:

The term “Universal Brotherhood” is no idle phrase. Humanity in the mass has a paramount claim upon us ... It is the only secure foundation for universal morality ... and it is the aspiration of the *true adept*.

And in Chronological Letter number 33, he wrote:

It is he alone who has the love of humanity at heart, who is capable of grasping thoroughly the idea of a regenerating practical Brotherhood who is entitled to the possession of our secrets. He alone ... will never misuse his powers, as there will be no fear that he should turn them to selfish ends. A man who places not the good of mankind above his own good is not worthy of becoming our *chela* [student] — he is not worthy of becoming higher in knowledge than his neighbour.

In the above cited passage the adept is telling us that the love of humanity can open our eyes to the fact that all individuals are rooted in the One. Simply *believing* in universal brotherhood is not sufficient. Ultimately, the belief must give way to become an insight into its truth. When that happens, we sense the unity of all life, and from then on we are passionately dedicated to awakening that awareness in others.

The current first Object of The Theosophical Society is ‘To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity ...’. But what does “The Universal Brotherhood of Humanity”

mean? Let us go back to the objectives of 1879. In part they read: ‘To keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions...’. In that phrase there may be a clue to the Universal Brotherhood to which the adepts refer.

Intuition means insight, and insight comes from a unifying aspect of the inner self of every human being (*buddhi*). By effort, meditation and an altruistic way of life, we are capable of becoming one with that aspect of the inner self from which all insights derive. From that, in deep meditation, we can get a sense of what the adept calls, ‘humanity as a whole’. When we do, even for a fleeting moment, we have become one with the universal brotherhood of humanity.

The Theosophical Society was organized to form a nucleus of people who have some sense of this brotherhood, a nucleus of people who sense that the Divine consciousness in them is identical to the Divine consciousness in all others. The Theosophical Society was meant to be an organization of people from every culture who have some sense of the underlying unity of all. It was meant to be an organization of people who work together to help others realize their underlying unity with humanity as a whole. Far as we may be from it, that is our ultimate goal. Why is it so difficult to achieve?

In Chronological Letter number 131, the adept warns us:

Beware then, of an uncharitable spirit, for it will rise up like a hungry wolf in your path, and devour the better qualities of your nature ... Broaden instead of narrowing your sympathies; try to identify yourself with your fellows, rather than to contract your circle of affinity ... Friend, beware of pride and egoism, two of the worst snares for the feet of him who aspires to climb the high paths of knowledge and spirituality.

We so often identify as Christians, Jews,

Hindus, Americans, Russians, atheists and even Theosophists. Yet, none of those labels describes who we really are. In fact, there are only human beings. All the labels do no more than describe what we believe, how we have been conditioned, our place of birth, our preference for one religion or another or none. Many may recognize the truth of that, but few feel with every fibre of their being that they are at root one with humanity as a whole. Even those among us who respect all cultures may not sense the divine spark of life in every person they meet. We are likely to judge others by appearances. We see only a Polaroid snapshot of those we meet, and we tend to judge that person on the tiny bit of information that the photo provides. We human beings are extraordinarily complex. One moment we may appear to be saints, and in the next to be devils. It is easy to feel unity with someone who is displaying their saintly side, but not so easy to feel it when they show their diabolical side.

The Theosophical Society is open to all who are in sympathy with its Objects. We are meant to see beyond the appearances of not only race, creed and sex; but to see beyond the irritating faults of the people we meet, especially members of the TS. Universal brotherhood has no meaning if we feel brotherly only toward those whom we like. This is not to say that we should be sentimental and pretend that everyone is a nice person. Some people and some members are not nice. Yet, behind the surface irritants and faults lies the divine spark with which all are united.


This is not to say that we should be blind to the faults of others. That would be reading something into brotherhood that is not there. Brotherhood is not even *personal* affection for everyone. Yet in spite of the faults we see in others, and in spite of the fact that some people try our patience, we can still see the Divine life within them and we can still work with them for the greater good. If we aspire to a realization of the One, then we can change

ourselves in such a way that we can get insight. We can lay aside our own preconceived ideas about people and see beyond appearances to the Divine life that is deep within them as it is deep within us. Simply joining The Theosophical Society will not bring this about. We must have an iron, never failing determination to bring it about in ourselves.

Dora Kunz was a past President of The Theosophical Society in America and a devoted student of *The Mahatma Letters*. In 1955 she gave a talk on the Masters. What she had to say has much to do with the kind of brotherhood meant by the Masters. The following quote is from the transcript of her talk:

There are thousands of members of The Theosophical Society, but there are very few Theosophists. It is very easy to sign a piece of paper and say you want to join the Theosophical Society and that you believe in brotherhood, but brotherhood is something we should live instead of talking about it. The Theosophical Society is the testing ground for brotherhood. It is the place to let ourselves grow, to let ourselves understand that we are not to be dogmatic, to let ourselves learn to get along with one another whether we like one another or not. You must be willing to have differences of opinion. You must be willing to stand the acid test, even if you are called names. It is you who are being tested. If you walk out because one individual says something nasty to you, you are failing the test of brotherhood ... If you could think of the personalities that you meet as the acid test of your own character, of your own Theosophy, you would get a different point of view. When something comes up, ask yourself how you will take it, and ask yourself what it is about you that needs to be changed.

The tests are not easy. They require us to stand firm on the principle of brotherhood

despite subtle or direct attacks on us. Personal injustice is never easy to bear, but nothing truly worthwhile is ever easy. Blavatsky tells us: 'There is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, yet still a road, and it leads to the very heart of the universe'. The thorns and perils come as personal injustice and the arduous tasks required in the self transformation process. There at the heart of the universe is the ultimate unity of all. Those in The Theosophical Society who even dimly sense that unity are forming a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity. Those who sense it work passionately to help their neighbours to sense it. 

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Ed Abdill has lectured widely throughout the United States as well as in Australia, Brazil, England and New Zealand. His erudite and insightful treatment of Theosophy informs his video course *Foundations of the Ageless Wisdom* and his book *The Secret Gateway* (Quest, 2005).

Scientists, in spite of all their professions, cannot be considered as seekers after Truth by any means. Those who are afraid to face facts of existence, make convenient assumptions without justification, confine themselves deliberately to the attainment of very limited objectives by very limited means, who do not even believe really that there is an ultimate Truth underlying the universe, cannot claim to be seekers after Truth ...

As the universe is based upon a Reality which is essentially of the nature of Mind and Consciousness a true and total knowledge of it can be obtained only by going into the realms of mind and consciousness, and by penetrating into their innermost depths ...

I.K. Taimni *Science and Occultism* (1974)

An overview of the works of Rohit Mehta

Patricia Ossenberg



The books discussed here will, I hope, give an idea of the scope of Rohit Mehta's studies into the ancient and ageless wisdom; of his interpretation of theosophy; and of his deep commitment to human regeneration. The result of his breadth of study and depth of understanding is a body of theosophical literature that is perceptive and profoundly practical. Much of it is based on the attitude expressed in the quotation below:

A spiritual man is *par excellence* an integrated individual [who] has resolved his psychological conflicts and has therefore discovered a unifying factor within himself. His actions emanate from this centre of unity ... Such an individual is indeed a great revolutionary force, for he does not operate on the plane of reactions. He is thus the starting point of a fundamental social transformation.¹

The overall aim of Rohit Mehta's work is to assist the growth and flowering of the individual, on the understanding that '... a transformed individual alone can become a nucleus for fundamental social change'.² His approach, focusing mainly on the mind, is one that many students will find both significant and satisfying. Mehta believes that our moral growth has not kept pace with technological achievements, so that our problems have become complex at the psychological level. He argues that we are in need of an integrating factor, which will unify all our varied experiences of life: namely, a mind that has been illumined by that which lies beyond the frontiers of analysis and synthesis.³

Without ignoring the analytical power of the mind, which he employs with remarkable precision, Mehta shows that although our individual and social problems are created by the mind, they cannot be solved by the mind at its own level. Discussing the relevant findings of science, philosophy and religion, he shows that the mind, with its intricate processes of which we are unaware, is an unfit instrument through which to experience Reality or Truth. This is mainly because: 'The mind sees what it projects, and it projects what the memory supplies. We therefore see what memory desires us to see'.⁴

Are we then living in a world of illusion? Noting that the moment we call the world illusory we posit something that is Real, Mehta asks — 'Where does Reality reside?'⁵

While acknowledging the occult aspect of theosophy, which describes reality 'systematically' and with 'scientific exactitude', Mehta places emphasis on the mystic approach, an aspect of theosophy to some extent overlooked until the work of J. Krishnamurti. In *The Fullness of the Void*, a study of H.P. Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, he speaks of occultism and mysticism in terms of totality and wholeness:

By making this last gift [*The Voice of the Silence*], H.P.B. indicated that a new dimension of understanding is imperative if one is to find an explanation of the

Unexplained. To the magnificent scheme of occultism revealed in *The Secret Doctrine* she added the dimension of mysticism so that an earnest student may be vouchsafed not only the understanding of a totality of things but also of the wholeness of things. The Unexplained explains itself to one whose consciousness is inspired by the touch of mysticism.⁶

Mehta recognised ‘the touch of mysticism’ in the work of J. Krishnamurti, which is the basis of *The Intuitive Philosophy*. He sees the main thesis of Krishnamurti’s teachings as summed up in that much-misunderstood statement: Liberation is here and now. Realisation, or freedom from limitation, is always in the present:

... we cannot *be* what we are not. Thus that which is in the realm of the becoming must remain on that plane and can never transform itself into the being through a process of time ... The method by which [Krishnamurti] takes us to this realization is: Extensive Awareness - awareness with our entire being.⁷

However: ‘It is not the mind that has been made still, but the mind that has become still, which perceives Reality’.⁸ In this early work Mehta gives a concise account of Krishnamurti’s approach, taking care to explain the various phrases and terms used:

Thus Extensive Awareness, Negative Approach and Stillness of Mind can lead us to the emptiness of the mind where alone there is the joy of communion... In this emptiness is born the flower of Love, the flower of Liberation.⁹

J. Krishnamurti and the Nameless Experience is a more detailed study of Krishnamurti’s refreshing and stimulating approach to life, described by Rohit Mehta as ‘... the way of un-compromising negation such as is not to be

found in any religious or philosophical thought of the world.’¹⁰ Many people have found Krishnamurti’s approach intensely frustrating, feeling that it amounts to an on-going exercise in negativity which leaves nothing positive to work with. Recognising the problem, Mehta assures his readers that Krishnamurti’s approach is indeed positive, in that ‘... he asks us to discover the positive in the ground of the negative.’ In the course of addressing this deeply profound matter, the topics discussed in his earlier books are revisited in greater detail. In keeping with his overall aim Mehta explores the implication of Krishnamurti’s approach in order to discover its significance in the context of the individual and social life. Krishnamurti makes a distinction between the free unconditioned human being and the entity that ‘ever strives to conform.’ The latter is ‘content to be tossed about by the external forces of society’, but is unable to ‘deal with the vast problems of society’.¹¹

Rohit Mehta believes that Krishnamurti adds a new dimension to the understanding of the word meditation:

The quality and range of this new dimension can be comprehended when one comes across a startling statement by Krishnamurti saying that there can be no meditation so long as the meditator is present.¹²

Quoting from Krishnamurti’s *The Only Revolution* to explain:

Meditation is a never ending movement. You can never say that you are meditating or set aside a period for meditation. It isn’t at your command ... It comes only when your heart is open. Not opened by the key of thought ... it comes only when you are not there at all, and its bliss has no continuity.¹³

Meditation is the subject of two other books by Rohit Mehta: *Yoga — The Art Of Integration*,¹⁴ a commentary on the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali,

and *The Science of Meditation*, the latter being perhaps the most practical.¹⁵

The importance of a balanced spiritual life is emphasised in *The Secret of Self-Transformation*. Mehta addresses this subject in the context of the two principal spiritual traditions of India, Tantra and Yoga, which he has synthesized in ‘a reunion of psychology and philosophy’, arguing that both energy and direction are needed if we are to solve the problems of the individual and of society.¹⁶ While Tantra denotes the formative power of thought, Yoga indicates the directional power of consciousness: and herein lies the secret of self transformation which brings into existence a nucleus of social transformation.¹⁷

Even though he deals with the profoundest of ideas, Mehta’s books are not hard to read. In well constructed chapters he teases apart the many strands of an issue, looking at each in turn, often considering two separate concepts in juxtaposition — such as quality/quantity, communion/communication — in order to separate certain issues and clarify his point. His ability and readiness to draw from a variety of sources is another factor that holds the reader’s interest and enhances understanding. An intellectual understanding, however, is only part of what is required. Reading his work is a reminder of the urgency to terminate this endlessly self-perpetuating situation. So, although not hard to read, the ultimate challenge posed in his works could not be more profound.

Interestingly, although his works are profoundly theosophical, the word theosophy is not often used — perhaps in keeping with his definition of theosophy as: ‘something Intangible and Immeasurable’; and thus ‘ever the Timeless’.¹⁸ ✻

Biographical note: Rohit Mehta (1908-1995) was born in Surat India and as a young man became involved in the socialist movement. Disenchanted with its philosophy he joined The Theosophical Society, later becoming the International Secretary (1941-1944) and General Secretary of the T.S. in India (1945-1959). He lectured widely in India and in many other parts of the world. In recognition of his contribution to theosophical literature he was awarded the Subba Row Medal in 1955.¹⁹

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According to Plato, most persons are philodoxical (lovers of opinions), rather than philosophical (lovers of the wisdom). Plato himself had no opinions, he said, because he was a philosopher. He could only refer to other people's opinions and try to estimate them. Is it possible for Theosophists to hold any other attitude when eminent men are divided into religious groups, and Theosophical leaders themselves differ, sometimes even on important points, like worship? When authority opposes authority, individual judgement, however feeble, has to pursue a lone enquiry till certitude is established.

That certitude comes only through Intuition, a much abused word. The world is full of "intuitions," the last refuge of those who have no reasons to offer. There is hope of change for those who have wrong opinions, because they can re-think, but where is the hope of change for those who cling to their so-called "Intuitions"? The saying of Pascal, 'The heart has its reasons which reason does not know' may be true, but the heart has first to be elevated to a measure that makes Intuition possible; otherwise, it is the other saying that would apply: 'He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool' (Proverbs xxviii, 26).

No doubt the mind is undependable. It can mistake a rope for a snake, but "Intuition" can do worse; it can mistake a snake for a rope, and this is happening as religious exploitation all over the world and throughout the centuries would establish. But no religious group acknowledges that the fate that overtakes the rest could overtake itself.

Yet there is a way of distinguishing true Intuition from the false. If man is God in chains, and God but man liberated, the mind may be regarded as Intuition in chains, and Intuition as mind liberated. Madame Blavatsky usually spoke of *Buddhi-Manas*, coupling them together. She did not regard them as two entirely different things...

All teachings given to humanity are relative. 'The greatest adept', she says, 'can reveal the universal Truth only so much as the mind he is impressing it upon can assimilate and no more' (*Collected Writings*, IX, p.31). But how much can an average mind assimilate, inhibited as it is, by many fears and ambitions? The ethical basis of knowledge is again suggested...

If the function of Truth is 'to make you free' a test becomes possible. It is by ascertaining how much freedom it has brought, both to individuals and to Society.

From N. Yagnesvara Sastry, "Darkness of Learning", *The Theosophist*, October 1967

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 1 SEPTEMBER 2008 TO 1 AUGUST 2009



My term of office began on 18 January 2009, but the present report will cover work in the Section for the year to date.

The generosity and thoughtfulness of Linda Oliveira, the outgoing *National President*, in ensuring a smooth transition is greatly appreciated by all the Headquarters staff. Not only did Linda leave the National President's office in admirable order, but also managed, once or twice, to locate something for me remotely; whether through recourse to good memory or remote viewing is not for me to say.

Some of the highlights of the year were:

- * Dr Edi Bilimoria joined the Headquarters staff as *Education Coordinator* end of July
- * Preliminary discussions took place with The University of Sydney regarding an academic conference to be jointly organised with the TS in Australia in 2010
- * Parliament of the World's Religions informational booth planned
- * Research began on The Third Object Project
- * Increased support of the TS worldwide
- * The Section's website was redesigned with a new look and new content
- * Contents of the Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals were made available in a searchable format online
- * A slight redesign of *Theosophy in Australia* reflecting a more careful use of language
- * Lodges/Branches around the country put in a tremendous effort to reflect the Objects of the Society in their programmes and activities

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

National President's Work to Date

Since taking office as *National President I* have given talks at the following places or events: the National Convention in Perth; Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney; Hobart Branch; Launceston Lodge; Brisbane Lodge; the School of Theosophy at Springbrook; the New Zealand School of Theosophy; the *Gītā* weekend at Canyonleigh; and the Consciousness and Spirituality weekend organised by Sunshine Coast Lodge. As *National President Elect I* also spoke at the International Convention at Adyar in December 2008.

A great deal of time has been spent developing new documents for the website (see item below) and new material for the training sessions given at the Springbrook School of Theosophy each year. Considerable time has also been devoted to The Campbell Library, as noted below. As *Editor of Theosophy in Australia* I have taken a close look at some of the statements made about Theosophy and the Society in the magazine. Mindful of the fact that this quarterly is one of the main avenues of communication for The Theosophical Society in Australia, reaching members of the TS in Australia and elsewhere, as well as a number of non-members through various libraries around the country, I am trying to make it a little more contemporary without compromising or watering down any of the ancient wisdom teachings. I remain convinced that The Theosophical Society has much to offer intelligent people who may be presently put off either by our ill-deserved reputation for quackery or by a use of language on our part which leads to the impression that the TS is some kind of sect based on the works of Madame Blavatsky.

The task ahead is to understand Theosophy and the Society well enough to be able to portray them simply in the language of today.

My proposal for a talk or workshop at the Parliament of the World's Religions to be held in Melbourne in December this year was rejected due to the heavy volume of submissions. This was a little surprising as the submission entitled *The Scientific Basis of Universal Brotherhood* fitted well with the theme of the Parliament, which is Make a World of Difference: Hearing Each Other Healing the Earth. The proposal was for a talk or workshop based on evidence from science for the inescapable oneness of humanity. It did not mention Theosophy or the Society, other than to point out that brotherhood as a fact in nature has always been its central platform. The *President* of The Theosophical Society, Radha Burnier, has asked me to give the talk I would have given in Melbourne at the World Congress in Rome next year. The TS will still set up an informational booth to be manned by myself, the *Education Coordinator* and a number of Melbourne Lodge volunteers. We intend to create new publicity material (in-house) for the Parliament as well as stock the booth with existing leaflets and perhaps a number of books to give away.

In amongst these and other activities connected with the office of *National President* it was necessary to find an affordable residence in Sydney, which is no easy matter, pack up my home in Lismore and finally move house. So it has been a time of transition in several respects.

National Headquarters

I have received good advice and tremendous assistance from several of the officers below, but the main duties of the Headquarters staff during the year were:

* Donald Fern, *National Secretary* (Headquarters office administration; accounting; maintenance and management of Section properties; *Administrator* of

both the Springbrook and Canyonleigh properties; *Chair* of the Rules Committee; *Secretary* of The Theosophical Foundation Pty. Ltd. and *Secretary* of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust).

* Zehra Bharucha, *Assistant Secretary* (assistant to the *National President* and the *National Secretary*; minute secretary for the *National Council*, national *Executive Committee*, The Australian Section Theosophical Trust and The Theosophical Foundation; design and layout of *Theosophy in Australia* magazine and publicity material; *Convention Secretary*; administration; overseeing Headquarters office computer network).

* Dara Tattray, until end July 2009 *Education Coordinator* (commencement of several projects mentioned later in this report; taking partial inventory of the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives with a view to expanding the collection of books; lecturing; producing Study Paper 14; conducting the afternoon training sessions at the School of Theosophy; writing new material for the website)

* Edi Bilimoria, from end July 2009, *Education Coordinator* (assisting the *National President* with organising tours for a number of international lecturers; commencement of work on several projects including The Third Object Project outlined below; assistance with programming for the National Convention and events at national TS Centres; proofreading *Theosophy in Australia*; lecturing; ordering books and CDs for the Campbell Library and the Section's DVD/CD resources; liaising with University of Sydney on a joint project outlined later in this report; networking)

* Jennifer Hissey (highly detailed work on the Online Public Access Catalogue; handling enquiries for material from the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives; networking with other libraries in Australia)

* Gil Murdoch (Webmaster for the Australian Section's website; overseeing sound equipment at the national Convention; updating the Union Index of Periodicals and producing a searchable online Index of the same; digitising old audiotapes)

* Richard Larkin, *Membership Secretary* (preparing membership reports, maintaining the membership database; banking; and general office duties)

* Marie Brennan (voluntary work as *National Treasurer*; *Chair* of The Theosophical Foundation Pty. Ltd.; assistance with mailing out the national magazine and some regular correspondence to members)

* Dai Trandang (voluntary assistance at the National Convention in the audio-visual department; managing the mail out of *Theosophy in Australia*; voluntary assistance in several departments of the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives, including the Union Index)

* Brian Parry (*Supporting Lecturer*)

* Romana Villa (indexing for the Union Index and other duties in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives)

* Nora Johnson, Aman Amir, Fareeda Amir, Romana Villa and John Spraggon (assistance with mailing *Theosophy in Australia* magazine)

* Alexandra Furdui, Romana Villa and Ly Mai Ngoc (voluntary assistance for Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives)

Volunteers

As may be seen from the above, a significant number of essential functions are regularly performed by volunteers at our Headquarters. Indeed, The Theosophical Society would not be here if not for all the volunteer workers at Lodges and Section Headquarters around the world. Sincere thanks and deep appreciation is due to them all.

National Council

The biannual meetings of the *National Council* are becoming increasingly streamlined, with a new format trialed in June 2009. Instead of holding a two-hour workshop prior to the Council meeting on the first day, as has been the custom in recent years, all business was conducted in one day, leaving time for a lengthier workshop/discussion on the second. This appeared to work well and will be continued next year. A comprehensive agenda with attachments is sent out well in advance so that all matters to be discussed and all decisions to be made may be given due consideration before a full and frank discussion takes place. With all Council members doing their homework in advance the meetings run very well. The Policies Document created in 2003 has proven to be a useful tool and is reviewed biannually. As considerable work has been done on the Policies Document over the past few years that too is fairly quickly dealt with now. More time may thus be devoted to a consideration of matters to do with the real work of The Theosophical Society and how best to take the Society forward in the twenty-first century.

Lodges/Branches and members may make representations through their State Representatives to the *National Council* regarding issues of concern. Dates for receipt of representations appear twice a year in this magazine. The time and energy given to the work of the Council is greatly appreciated.

As at August 31 the *National Council* comprises: three ex-officio members (the *National President*, *National Secretary* and *National Treasurer*) and six elected State Representatives, each of whom may serve up to two consecutive three year terms:

Hana O'Rourke—New South Wales/
Australian Capital Territory

Harry Bayens—Western Australia

Georgina Fode—Victoria

Paul Robb—Queensland

Ruth Holt—Tasmania

Patricia Hale—South Australia/
Northern Territory

Harry Bayens was appointed *Chair* of the *National Council* and *National Vice-President* until January 2010.

In January 2009 the National Council made the following appointments for a 12 month period:

Executive Committee – see next item

National Treasurer – Marie Brennan

The continuation of the appointment of the *National Secretary* continues to be subject to the determination of the *National Council*.

National Executive Committee

As in previous years, the national *Executive Committee* met monthly during the year except in January. Its members include the ex officio members, the *National President*, *National Secretary* and *National Treasurer*, as well as those members appointed by the *National Council*: Beatrice Malka, Zehra Bharucha, Marlene Bell, Simon O'Rourke and Ken Edwards. One of these members lives in Adelaide and one lives in Melbourne. The time and support given by the members of the *Executive Committee* is gratefully acknowledged.

The first meeting of the year was preceded by a two-hour Induction Workshop covering basic meeting procedures and more subtle matters to do with the quality of our communication and decision-making. Considering the spiritual nature of the work in which The Theosophical Society is engaged, and the influence of its committees, the significance of our approach to the work cannot be emphasised too strongly.

Members of the national *Executive Committee* are also required to be Directors of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust, which is responsible for the Section's properties except for Theosophy House in Sydney.

In December 2008 the following appointments were made by the national *Executive Committee*:

Assistant Treasurer — Beatrice Malka

Editor, Theosophy in Australia — Dara Tatrav

The Executive Committee also appointed several committees for 2008: Finance, Editorial, Public Relations and Promotions, Website and Rules.

EDUCATION

Education Coordinator

I was *Education Coordinator* for the first few months of my term as *National President*, during which time a number of projects were begun in consultation with the incoming *Education Coordinator* Edi Bilimoria, who took up the position at the end of July. The first of these is a long-term project which will take some effort to establish, but which may be of benefit in various ways: and that is a Guide to Resources Available for the Study of Theosophy and The Theosophical Society, to be offered as an online resource, with an occasional publication. The purpose of this is not only to provide a handy guide to available resources, but perhaps more important to highlight the depth and extent of the cultural impact or the cultural footprint of the Society, the authors associated with it, and the subject areas of their interests and concerns. Dove-tailing with this to a certain extent is another project, the aim of which is to create a comprehensive curriculum or syllabus of studies for the TS in Australia, covering the range and reach of what we call Theosophy, from a broad perspective. More than just a syllabus however we envisage that this

curriculum will eventually provide a substantial repository of short courses, workshop outlines, papers and other material that may be used in programming and for educational purposes in Australia and worldwide.

Two shorter term projects are also underway. One is a course on Theosophy and Science to be co-authored by the *Education Coordinator* and the *National President*. The second, which is now gaining momentum, is tentatively called The Third Object Project. Among other things it seeks to trace the development in psychic or psycho-energetic research from 1875 to the present day, with the aim of providing a substantial overview of how things now stand regarding matters related to the third Object. Many of the practices, concerns and theories espoused by H.P. Blavatsky and the early pioneers of the modern theosophical movement now find support in evidence-based research and in the cutting edge of modern science.

Study Papers

Study Paper no. 13 consisted of two articles by Geoffrey Hodson, "The Rod of Hermes," and, "The Law of Correspondences." Study Paper no. 14 was distributed with the June issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, consisting of an article by W.J. Heyting "Is the Theosophical Society True to Its Objects?" originally published in 1929. Study Paper 14 included an introductory preface by the *National President*. A significant number of letters in support of several points raised in this paper have been received.

Website

The Section's website has been redesigned and the new-look, user-friendly, site was uploaded a couple of months ago. This was a substantial project. There is new material on Theosophy and The Theosophical Society, Key Ideas and Selected Similar Organisations. Our Calendar of Events, under What's On is now regularly updated, with past events at Springbrook and Canyonleigh archived on the

site. Details of the National Convention may now also be found on the Section's website.

The Section's website is now sub-hosting the newsletters and/or programmes of Adelaide Lodge, Canberra Branch, Launceston Lodge, Melbourne Lodge, and the Mornington Peninsula Group.

The time-consuming and brain-power consuming task of creating a searchable version of the Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals is now complete. Anyone wishing to find an article written by a particular author or on a particular theme simply has to go to Resources on www.austheos.org.au and click on either the Search Index of Australian Theosophical Periodicals or the Search Index of International Theosophical Periodicals. Entering an author or title keyword will pull up all the available entries. Once on DOS and accessible only after downloading a cumbersome search kit, the over 170,000 entries in the Union Index are now available at the click of a mouse.

The web-based publications of The Theosophical Society in Australia are archived in perpetuity by the National Library of Australia.

Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives

The Library was the site of considerable activity during May as a relatively minor renovation to the room resulted in a major reshuffle of books and journals, the end result of which has been a vast improvement to the layout, appearance and workability of the Library. It looks more professional now and much bigger. A new section in the Library is dedicated to evidence-based research into psychic phenomena, and related matters, in support of the third Object. New books will be sourced for this section with a view to creating within the Campbell

Library a comprehensive overview of the territory covered in the third Object.

We received a request from Janet Kerschner, the Archivist at the Henry S. Olcott Memorial Library, Wheaton, to include in the Union Index of Periodicals a periodical called *Ancient Wisdom*, which was produced monthly from 1935 to 1963 for distribution to all the Lodges in the USA. A number of volunteers at Wheaton are prepared to do the work of indexing, and the Olcott Library will then pass the results onto us for inclusion in the Union Index. This offer was gratefully accepted.

Romana Villa has been employed as a casual to work in the library for four hours per week, doing the filing and helping with data entry for the Union Index.

The Archives

Earlier in the year we received a request from the National Museum of Australia for any material related to the theosophical movement in this country, preferably for items with a strong personal story attached to them. A request was made on the Museum's behalf in *Theosophy in Australia*, but thus far there has been little response. There are a number of items of interest in the Campbell Library Archives but after careful consideration and some discussion with the National Museum it was decided not to part with them. The request however reinforces the importance of conserving things in the Archives as carefully as possible, as rare items relating to the spiritual/religious history of this country are not available elsewhere.

Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) Project

Jennifer Hissey, at the National Headquarters, and Pamela Lloyd at Melbourne Lodge, have been progressing well with the monumental task of entering the collections of several TS

libraries in Australia onto a database which when uploaded early next year will give The Theosophical Society in Australia a greater online presence. Adelaide Lodge library will be the next collection entered onto the database once the Campbell Library has been completed.

International Lecturers

Ravi Ravindra who, as a speaker, is well known to most members of this Section undertook an extensive tour in March, visiting Melbourne, Tasmania, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane.

Professor P. Krishna, who is touring the Section in September/October 2009 was the guest speaker at the National Convention in Perth this year.

Supporting Lecturers

Brian Parry continued as *Supporting Lecturer* for the Section during the year. Brian will be giving a number of talks in November 2009, and addressing the National Convention in January 2010. Unfortunately, Denise Frost, who had been appointed *Supporting Lecturer* for 2009, was unable to take up the work due to family commitments. Denise will also be giving a talk at the upcoming Convention.

At the June 2009 meeting of the *National Council* Noel Bertelle was appointed *Supporting Lecturer* for 2010.

FINANCE

The Section has been very fortunate in the year under review to have had its funds managed in such a manner as to minimize the negative effects of the financial crisis. A cautious, conservative approach has enabled The Theosophical Society in Australia to emerge almost unaffected from a very difficult year in which less caution and more greed would no doubt have resulted in severe losses. The Finance Committee and the national Executive

are mindful of the need to conserve the Section's resources and concentrate the major part of spending on its core business. The Finance Committee comprises Marie Brennan (*National Treasurer*), Beatrice Malka (*Assistant Treasurer*), Donald Fern (*National Secretary*) and Dara Tatrav (*National President*). Dr Hugh Murdoch is a consultant to the finance committee. The Annual Accounts of the Section and the Budget for the year ending 31 August 2010 were approved by the *National Council* at its mid-year meeting. Both of these appear as a supplement to the November 2009 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

ANNUAL FUND

Donations to this fund received during the year were matched \$ for \$ by The Theosophical Society in Australia, up to \$8,000. The Fund was used for a number of purposes including the purchase and mailing of copies of *An Introduction to Yoga* to members in the Section, and a proportion of the costs of setting up the OPAC database. The Annual Fund exists for new educational and promotional activities and is not used for building or administration purposes. Over the next twelve months two fairly significant special events will be partly funded through these donations. One is the presence of the Australian Section at the Parliament of World's Religions this coming December, for which new publicity material is due to be produced; the other is the conference at The University of Sydney, to be jointly organised with The Theosophical Society in Australia. More information about that may be found later in this report.

MEMBERSHIP

As at 31 August 2009 there were 1,287 members of the Australian Section, including 157 National Members. Although not attached to any Lodge or Branch, National Members are

not forgotten. In view of the fact that they may be living at a considerable distance from a TS library, a dedicated National Members Lending Library is at their service. Books are posted free of charge and returned at the member's expense. We always look forward to seeing National Members at Annual Conventions, at Springbrook and at Canyonleigh.

In the year under review all members of the TS in Australia received the quarterly, *Theosophy in Australia*, and two Study Papers, as well as the book *An Introduction to Yoga* by Annie Besant. In addition new members received monthly letters from the *National President*.

It may be pointed out once again that of our membership dues, 15% is sent to the International Headquarters in India, and an additional 1% is contributed annually to the work of the Indo-Pacific Federation to which our Section belongs.

SUPPORT TO OTHER SECTIONS OR INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Mindful of the fact that we are part of an international Society, The Theosophical Society in Australia lends support to other Sections or the International Headquarters in various ways. As mentioned above, 1% of membership dues go to support the Indo Pacific Federation. Occasionally requests are received for educational material to be sent to other countries, a request that is gladly met; either by providing publicity material in the form of leaflets, or supplying courses to Sections not so well resourced as ours.

The Australian Section also makes a regular donation to the International Headquarters, to be utilised at the President's discretion. The base rate of this donation is \$3000 annually, but it can be considerably more, as approved by the *National Council*, depending on the Section's finances, and on need. Such funds may be used for Adyar building repairs,

contributions to the wages of workers at Adyar approved by the *National Council*, and contributions to international travel for International Officers residing at Adyar. In the year presently under review the amount donated for these purposes was \$38,000.

Earlier in 2009 the national *Executive Committee* agreed to make a one-off donation to the American Section in support of its excellent work in producing a series of online courses available free of cost, and a large number of talks in MP3 format also available for free downloading. The national Executive also approved \$7,500 in support of the World Congress in Rome next year.

NATIONAL CENTRES

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Queensland

This centre continues to be ably and lovingly managed by Barry Hora, the resident Caretaker, with regular help from a dedicated band of TOS volunteers from Brisbane Lodge. The motive for attending working bees at Springbrook could well be the meals provided by Carolyn Harrod, however ours is not to judge but only to reap the rewards of the spring cleaning and gardening regularly taking place.

October Event: The previous *Education Coordinator*, Pedro Oliveira, now residing and working at the International Headquarters, conducted a much appreciated retreat at Springbrook in October 2008 on *Mysticism: Bridge to Nowhere*.

School of Theosophy, March 2009: The morning sessions of this School were led by Ravi Ravindra on the theme *Science and the Sacred*. A highly enthusiastic motivated group appeared to enjoy these, and the training sessions in the afternoon, which explored various aspects of TS work and how best to present Theosophy and the Society today.

Both Springbrook events were well attended.

Canyonleigh Centre, New South Wales

Bolitho House and its surrounds continue to benefit from the talent and dedication of Charlotte and Ron Stahl, our neighbours at Canyonleigh who work at the centre on a casual basis.

May Event: A three-day exploration of the metaphysics, psychology and ethics of the *Bhagavad Gītā* at Canyonleigh was fully subscribed with a waiting list. A day event is planned for November on the theme *The Sacred Depths of Consciousness*.

Volunteer Caterers, National TS Centres

Nowhere is the presence of volunteers more keenly felt than in the kitchens of TS Centres. If not lost without them we would certainly go hungry without the tender ministrations of the following volunteers to whom we are sincerely grateful: Kay Schiefelbein, Patti and Steve Halls, Rohzi Hicza, Betty McAllister, Dale Fernandos, Jean Carroll and Carmen French. Janet Blake did a fine job of painting the kitchen at Springbrook as a volunteer. That is also much appreciated.

UNIVERSITIES

John Cooper Memorial Prize, University of Sydney

The Australian Section once again funded this prize for research into the perennial philosophy in its Eastern and Western traditions, in memory of John Cooper, an academic at The University of Sydney who was well known to many TS members through his talks at Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney, and elsewhere. The 2008 prize, totaling \$1500 was divided between three undergraduate students for their essays on *How Important is the Goddess in Hinduism?*; *Religion and the Body*; and *What is the Relationship of Western Sex Magic and Hindu Tantric Traditions?*

The Theosophical Society/ La Trobe University Bendigo Perennial Philosophy Prize

In 2008 the \$1500 was shared by two students for essays on *The Australian Aborigines and the Fate of the Nomads* and *The Sad History of Silence*. Very appreciative letters were received from them both. All prize winners lodge their papers with The Campbell Library.

Theosophical Society/University of Sydney Conference 2010

Plans are now underway for an academic conference, jointly organised by The Theosophical Society in Australia and The University of Sydney, on *The Legacies of Theosophy*. Shortly after the arrival of the new *Education Coordinator* I received an email from Dr Christopher Hartney at Sydney University in the Department of Studies in Religion who along with Associate Professor Vras Karalis (Head, Department of Modern Greek) is keen to organise a conference on the cultural impact of Theosophy. The Society for Religion, Literature and Arts and The Sydney Society for Literature and Aesthetics are also to be involved. The *Education Coordinator* and I are on the organising committee, and we look forward to working closely with the university in this unique co-production, possibly the first of many. We are hoping to invite the participation of the historian and author Michael Gomes, director of the Emily Sellon Memorial Library in New York. Michael may be able to tour the Australian Section for a period of time around the conference, the date of which is yet to be set. He has just written a chapter on Blavatsky and Theosophy for the forthcoming *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism*; is presently working on the unpublished Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge scheduled for release next year; and his abridgement of *The Secret Doctrine* has just been released by Tarcher/Penguin. No doubt Michael would make a valuable

contribution to the upcoming conference and to the Australian Section should he be able to tour in 2010, as is quite possibly the case.

CONVENTIONS

The 2009 National Convention was held in Perth in January, on the theme *Education, Society and Transformation*, with Professor P. Krishna as guest speaker. Unfortunately due to ill health the *President* Radha Burnier was unable to attend as originally planned. Professor Krishna's talks however were well received and the convention overall was a great success, partly due to the sterling effort made by the local hosts, Perth Branch.

The 2010 National Convention will be held in Launceston on the theme *Divine Wisdom in Art, Science and Philosophy*. The guest speaker is the new *Education Coordinator* Edi Bilimoria, supported on the programme by a star-studded cast of speakers, including the art historian and author Jenny McFarlane.

REPORTS FROM LODGES/BRANCHES

It is evident from the range of subject matter covered throughout the year that a number of Lodge/Branches have made a serious attempt at presenting the best of what this Society has to offer. The following outlines are based on reports received from the Lodges/Branches in this Section and are far from exhaustive. What we see here represents many hours of dedicated effort on behalf of quite a number of people. This is gratefully acknowledged.

Hobart Branch, Tasmania (Chartered 1889)

With a huge number of volunteer hours involved, the Branch recently relocated its meeting room, library and office into the freshly renovated front cottage, leaving the building further from the street available for rent. The result is a new lease on life for the Branch in most attractive surrounds with a very pleasant ambience. The library of

the oldest Lodge in Australia (now Branch) boasts some wonderful historic photographs of its eminent founding members. The committee of Hobart Branch has made an effort to steer the programme away from peripheral matters towards the core business of the Society, with the result that over the past few years it has become increasingly focused, which is pleasing to see.

Melbourne Lodge, Victoria (Chartered 1890)

Melbourne Lodge has been trialing a new format for its weekly meetings. It meets twice a week, devoting one meeting a month to members only. It holds seminars on Saturday afternoons when there is a visiting TS speaker; otherwise, Saturdays are devoted to a morning of meditation and study, with a public talk in the afternoon. Study groups were held on the science of yoga, astrology, the creative arts and healing and mandala symbolism. A number of social activities are engaged in as well, including a monthly evening supper for members. Melbourne Lodge supports Mornington Peninsula Group and the Wodonga/Albury Group, both in Victoria; and also regularly offers scholarships for committed members to attend national events. Support of this kind enhances the interconnectedness of the various parts of the TS in Australia.

Adelaide Lodge, South Australia (Chartered 1891)

Adelaide Lodge presents a full programme of lectures, study courses, videos and discussion groups. Activities run throughout the week and on Sundays. Adelaide Lodge provided two members with scholarships to attend the School of Theosophy at Springbrook, a support which is much appreciated. The bookshop produces a newsletter which is sent out to around 500 people four times a year. This has proved to

be an excellent outreach leading to an increase in sales. The Theosophy Science group in Adelaide has been active for many years.

Brisbane Lodge, Queensland (Chartered 1895)

Study groups on *Isis Unveiled*, the works of J. Krishnamurti, *The Secret Doctrine* and meditation are a feature of Brisbane Lodge activities, as is a healthy dose of service via the TOS. Members of Brisbane Lodge frequently give talks at the new groups in Southeast Queensland. Their support is much appreciated. An active Theosophy Science group has been running at Brisbane Lodge for a year or more.

Perth Branch, Western Australia (Chartered 1897)

Perth Branch meets twice weekly holding both a members meeting and a public meeting, as well as running a *Secret Doctrine* study course and an Introduction to Theosophy course. For the last couple of years it has held a School of Theosophy at its Mt Helena Centre. The 2008 School, on the Mahatma Letters, was led by Beverley Champion, former *National President* and member of Adelaide Lodge. As Beverley had broken an ankle she conducted classes from a wheelchair, undeterred. Beverley was accompanied to Perth by two other Adelaide Lodge members, Marlene Bell and Patricia Hale.

Launceston Lodge, Tasmania (Chartered 1901)

Launceston Lodge has been running two study courses: one on the perennial philosophy, and another on the Upanishads. It meets monthly for a public lecture and discussion on a wide range of subjects in keeping with the Society's Objects. The meeting directly following a talk by a visiting speaker is often devoted to a discussion of the talk or matters arising from it.

Blavatsky Lodge, New South Wales (Chartered 1922)

Blavatsky Lodge meets on several days throughout the week, presenting lectures, discussions, study classes, meditation sessions and videos. For some years the pattern has been lectures on Wednesdays and forums or discussions on Fridays, but for the last two or three years an ongoing discussion-based meeting has been held on Wednesday evenings. New members are welcomed with refreshments before receiving their diplomas at Members Meetings.

Newcastle Lodge, New South Wales (Chartered 1941)

Newcastle Lodge holds a study-based members meeting once a month and a public meeting once a month. Subjects covered included the nature of perennial wisdom; concepts of time; and the spiritual laws of success. One of the highlights of the year was a successful self-transformation seminar run by one of its members. It was pleasing to see two Newcastle Lodge members at a Canyonleigh event earlier in the year.

Atherton Lodge, Queensland (Chartered 1950)

Atherton Lodge meets monthly for a talk and discussion preceded by a shared lunch; and twice a month for a study group. The shared meals have added a welcome social dimension allowing people to catch up with one another in a leisurely way. Seminars are held when national and international speakers visit the Lodge. Cosmic consciousness, yoga, life after death and the interface of science and theosophy were some of the topics covered during the year.

Canberra Branch, ACT (Chartered 1971)

In addition to the monthly public talks Canberra Branch has been running a successful discussion group which also meets once

a month, on most months. It produces a quarterly newsletter in which will be found copies of the programme, book reviews and other items of interest. The Branch presented an eclectic mix of talks on the *Gītā* and other ancient religious texts, art, music and various approaches to mysticism.

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Queensland (Chartered 2004)

Australia's youngest Lodge this is also one of the most active, meeting at two locations and servicing several Groups. Social activities have included shared lunches, harbour cruises, a Chinese New Year dinner and a Christmas Break-Up dinner (why not make things as eclectic as possible?). A highlight of the year was a Consciousness and Spirituality weekend attended by 110 people, in addition to the volunteer workers who manned stalls and provided meals. Speakers for this event were drawn from Queensland, Adelaide, the National Headquarters and New Zealand. Sunshine Coast Lodge also organises a weekend at Springbrook once a year, and one or two events at Bribie Island.

REPORTS FROM CERTIFIED GROUPS

Blue Mountains Group, New South Wales

This group meets monthly and is supported by Blavatsky Lodge.

Gosford Group, New South Wales

Two dedicated members of Blavatsky Lodge take the drive to Gosford each month to support this Group, which meets monthly for a talk and also monthly for a study group. Reincarnation, the nature of ritual, the nature of consciousness and meditation have been some of the topics discussed at meetings.

Northern Beaches Group, New South Wales

This group meets monthly.

Caboolture Group, Queensland

Caboolture Group now meets at Burpengary and continues to be supported by members of Sunshine Coast Lodge and Brisbane Lodge. Meetings are weekly. A new outreach is being trialed at Woodford.

Toowoomba Group, Queensland

Toowoomba Group meets twice a month for talks, discussions and study. Regular events at Springbrook and an annual camp at Somerset Dam are a feature of this group's activities, with strong connections with other TS groups in Queensland and with Sunshine Coast Lodge. Continuous support is given to a new group (not a Certified Group) meeting at Warwick.

Mornington Peninsula Group, Victoria

Over 10 years old and still going strong Mornington Peninsula Group meets monthly for several hours of meditation, talks and discussions. A strong ethos of networking with other groups keeps things lively.

Wodonga-Albury Group, Victoria

The Wodonga-Albury Group (situated at a place known as Albury-Wodonga to people living in NSW rather than Victoria) meets once a month for talks and discussions, and additionally for meditation meetings. It also opens its library four days per week, which for a small group is quite an achievement.

Theosophy Science Group

A number of TS members with a strong interest in science or a background in science are involved in an informal group concerned with science and its interface with theosophy. Originally based on the Theosophy Research Centre in England, formed in the 1920s but sadly no longer in existence, the Theosophy Science group meets regularly in Adelaide,

Brisbane and Sydney. For decades it was convened by Dr Hugh Murdoch, who handed over to Victor Gostin some two years ago. Dr Murdoch still produces the popular Theosophy Science Newsletter sent around Australia and around the world. Theosophy Science retreats at Springbrook (and this year in Adelaide) are a popular event open to TS members who are not members of the group but who receive its informative newsletter.

The Theosophical Order of Service

The following is based on a report kindly provided by Carolyn Harrod, *National Director*, TOS, and is included here in support of the work of the TOS in Australia.

Nine TS Lodges and Groups around the Section are actively engaged in Theosophical Order of Service activities. TOS members worked in six inter-related areas of service: peace, social and animal welfare, education, healing and the environment. In their local communities they volunteered in aged-care centres, tutored refugees in English, supported a refuge for homeless women, helped in animal shelters, collected toys and clothes for relief appeals and partnered with other community groups for environmental projects. Through conducting seminars, talks and petitions they raised awareness about issues related to the TOS service areas.

TOS members supported two major national projects in 2008-9. They raised funds to support the continuation of four 'literacy home-schools' for children and young women in Pakistan. They also supported the SEE project in Chennai that provides free vision testing, spectacles and cataract operations to needy people. Additionally, individual TOS Groups sponsored students in Pakistan and donated funds to the Golden Link College in the Philippines and educational and social welfare projects at Adyar.

The annual TOS working bee to maintain the buildings and grounds at the Springbrook

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre was again energetically supported by members.

Conclusion

As will perhaps be seen from the above report the TS in Australia attempts to maintain a strong focus on the core business of the Society while engaging in a wide variety of activities. Due to the careful management of our resources over the long term we are in a position to fund new ventures such as the Online Public Access Catalogue and (with The University of Sydney) an international academic conference, as well as engage in research of our own, all of which will perhaps raise the profile of The Theosophical Society and make it more accessible to those interested in a non-sectarian, non-dogmatic approach to the ancient wisdom teachings known by some as the perennial

philosophy and by others as theosophy.

It is high time that The Theosophical Society emerged from behind the cloud of disinformation that has dogged its heels from the 1880s to the present time. I hope that in our collective work in the Australian Section we can, among other things, help restore the reputation of a Society that has contributed so much to the culture of this country, in literature, the arts and the history of thought.

Dara Tatray, *National President* 

Annual Membership Analysis Lodge/Branch Membership as at 31/08/2009

Lodge/Branch	Members	Transfer in	New	Rejoined	Total in	Resigned	Lapsed	Deceased	Transfer out	Total Out	Members	Differences
	31-Aug-08										31-Aug-09	
Adelaide	121	-	6	2	8	3	-	-	2	5	124	3
Atherton	18	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	18	-
Blavatsky	316	1	16	8	25	9	48	5	1	63	278	-38
Brisbane	102	-	13	5	18	-	15	1	2	18	102	-
Canberra	16	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	16	-
Hobart	44	-	4	-	4	3	3	-	-	6	42	-2
Launceston	24	3	4	1	8	-	3	-	-	3	29	5
Melbourne	242	-	16	6	22	7	13	-	2	22	242	-
Newcastle	19	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	21	2
Perth	162	1	19	1	21	-	13	1	3	17	166	4
Sunshine Coast	89	-	13	-	13	2	6	2	-	10	92	3
Sub Total	1153	5	94	24	123	24	102	10	10	146	1130	-23
National	159	6	18	5	29	4	23	1	3	31	157	-2
Total	1312	11	112	29	152	28	125	11	13	177	1287	-25

Calendar of Events National TS Centres ...



Springbrook Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook, QLD

2010 School of Theosophy Friday 19 to Friday 26 March 2010

Theme: **Theosophy and Its Practical Implications**

Presenter: Colin Price, U.K

Certain aspects of the works of H.P. Blavatsky and her Teachers are highly technical but many have direct relevance to our lives today. This School will seek to explore the vastness of Theosophy and its great significance for understanding the meaning of life and the mystery of human consciousness.

Registration Forms enclosed with this issue.

Canyonleigh Centre, Bolitho House, Tugalong Road, Canyonleigh, NSW

Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy

Dates: 10-11 April 2010

An exploration of some of the key ideas of esoteric philosophy to be found alike in Vedanta, Buddhism, the works of Plato, the Kabbalah, Alchemy and the ancient Mysteries.

Registration forms will be sent out with the March issue of the magazine.

Speakers/Facilitators Workshop

An invitational workshop will be held during the year at both Springbrook and Canyonleigh for those interested in honing their skills in the art of speaking from a TS platform and the equally indispensable art of discussion and dialogue. Expressions of interest may be sent to the *National President*. Dates to be advised.

Visitors are asked to respect the National Council's policy of vegetarian food, no alcohol, no non-medicinal drugs and no smoking at the Section's Springbrook and Canyonleigh Centres..

2010 CONVENTION PROGRAMME

16-23 January 2010, Australian Maritime College, Launceston

Theme: Divine Wisdom in Art, Science and Philosophy

PUBLIC LECTURE: Dr Edi D. Bilimoria, *Education Coordinator, TS in Australia*

SPECIAL GUEST: Dr Jenny McFarlane, *freelance art historian, curator and writer*

Saturday 16 January

Arrivals

7.30pm Official Opening of Convention
ANNUAL CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING OF
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA
Agenda
Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies
Confirmation of Minutes of 2009 Convention Business Meeting
National President's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2009
National Treasurer's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2009
Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended 31 August 2009,
and Auditor's Report thereon
Budget for the Year Ending 31 August 2010
Appointment of Auditor
Announcement of Newly Appointed Officers
Announcement of Ballot Results: State Representatives
Vote on Notices of Motion
Place and Time of Next Convention
Resolutions of Goodwill
Any Other Business

Greetings to the Convention
Introduction – Guest Speaker/s
Introduction – Workshops

Light Reception Tea

Sunday 17 January

6.30am Yoga
7.30am Morning Attunement
9.15am Dara Tatray, National President, *On Defining the Divine Loosely*
11.00am Brian Parry, Supporting Lecturer, *The Problem with God*
2.30pm Public Talk: Edi D. Bilimoria, Education Coordinator
Nature Mirrors the Divine: In Her Laws and In Her Art
7.30pm Illustrated talk: Isolda Sultemeyer, *Elvis: The Song of His Soul*

Monday 18 January

6.30am Yoga
7.30am Morning Attunement
9.15am Lynne Hume, *Shamanism as Philosophy and Experience*

- 11.00am Short talks:
 Mervyn Haines, *Towards a New Synthesis: The Emerging Paradigm in Religious Thought*
 Olga Gostin, *An Interface of The Dreaming with Christianity*
- 2.30pm Jenny McFarlane, "Inner vision" *Australian Artists and The Theosophical Society 1890-1930*
- 7.30pm Illustrated talk: Lynden Thomas, *The Incredible Art of Remedios Varo & the Spiritual Quest*

Tuesday 19 January

- 6.30am Yoga
- 7.30am Morning Attunement
- 9.15am Plenary Session Structured Workshop
On the Use of the Word Theosophy in the TS: And Other Critical Matters
- 11.00am Short Talks:
 Simon O'Rourke, *The Spiritual in Film*
 Paul Robb, *The Wertheim Sisters: From Hyperbolic Space to Pythagoras's Trousers*
- 2.30pm Workshops:
 * George Wester *The Art and Science of the Path Ideal*
 * Phoebe Williams *Journey of the Human Soul as Revealed through Colour and the Arts (materials provided)*
 * Rosanne DeBats *The Art and Science of Crop Circles (illustrated workshop)*
- 7.30pm Edi D. Bilimoria, *Musical Yoga: The Transmission of the Legendary Kiss*

Wednesday 20 January

- 7.30am Morning Attunement
 OUTING AND PICNIC LUNCH
- 7.30pm Variety Concert - Vocal and Instrumental to suit all tastes

Thursday 21 January

- 6.30am Yoga
- 7.30am Morning Attunement
- 9.15am Short Talks: Laws of Nature Reflecting the Divine
 Victor Gostin, *Gaia and Adapting to Climate Change*
 Barry Bowden, *Working with Formative Forces in Nature*
- 11.00am Short Talks: *There is Wisdom in Action*
 Carolyn Harrod, Jay Wilson and Shirley Tolhuis
- 2.30pm Workshops:
 * Georgina Fode, *Mandala Art — Creative Journey of the Soul*
 * Carmen French, *Relativity, Philosophy and Mind* based on Paul Brunton's Notebooks
 * Philippa Rooke, *Felting — Divine Wisdom: A Reflection*
- 7.30pm Illustrated talk: Dianne K. Kynaston *Architecture to Inspire the Soul*

Friday 22 January

- 6.30am Yoga
- 7.30am Morning Attunement
- 9.15am Panel: On the Power/s Latent in the Human Being
 Harry Bayens, Hana O'Rourke and Denise Frost
- 11.00am Invitation to 2011 Convention, Brisbane

7.30pm Closing of Convention (National President)
Entertainment organised by Launceston Lodge

Saturday 23 January Departures

The ultimate perception does not originate in the brain or any material structure although a material structure is necessary to manifest it. The subtle mechanism of knowing the truth does not originate in the brain.

David Bohm 1977

Results-Election of State Representatives

As announced in the June 2009 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, nominations were called for one *State Representative* for each of the Electoral States of Queensland, South Australia/Northern Territory and Tasmania. As only one valid nomination was received for all three states, no ballot was necessary. The following members were elected to office:

Queensland:	Paul Robb (re-elected)
South Australia/Northern Territory	Patricia Hale (re-elected)
Tasmania:	Denise Frost

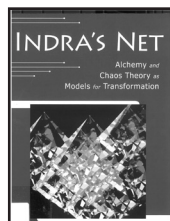
The term of office for the above *State Representatives* is for a period of two years from the date of declaration of these election results. The *State Representative* will represent the Lodges (Branches), Groups and Members in the State in all meetings and affairs of the *National Council*. They shall also liaise with all Lodges (Branches), Groups and National Members in their Electoral State and shall represent their views to the *National Council* and to the National Society Officers, as appropriate. As well, they shall receive and deal with representations from individual Members within their Electoral State, and shall refer the representations where requested or deemed necessary.

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Reviews...



INDRA'S NET

Robin Robertson -

Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing House, 2009

In order to write a book that draws together ancient alchemy with modern chaos theory as a backdrop to models for psychological transformation, the author must have a foot firmly planted in each camp and be able to don many hats, that is, if the result is not to be mere patchwork from various sources glued together. The author is somewhat of a polymath; therefore well up to the task. As Vice-President of a large computer software development firm, so an expert in mathematics and cybernetics, he is well qualified to explain the ideas behind chaos theory. He also evinces considerable insight into the vast and tangled array of alchemical texts from diverse traditions. However, it is his experience as a Jungian analyst and clinical depth psychologist, combined with his writing skills, that enables him to draw out the parallels between the alchemist's vision of discovering the philosopher's stone to transmute base metal into gold, and chaos theory which posits unexpected and huge outcomes from tiny initial changes (the flutter of a butterfly in Brazil might cause a tornado in Texas) to show how these insights can enrich the transformative stages in the personal life of a spiritual seeker.

But all this is no mere conjecture, for to use the familiar expression, the author has walked the talk. He explains how in his mid-thirties when at the peak of his hubris feeling smug, self-satisfied and triumphant, his whole understanding of reality fell apart

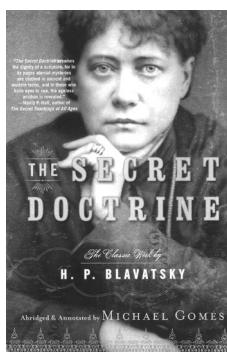
and, like Osiris, he felt cut into many pieces without any moral base and drifting on the sea of the unconscious. This led him on a journey of some thirty years when every single thing he held stable in his life was taken away, only to be returned in unimaginably transformed ways when he was "reassembled". This personal experience of the suffering depression of the dark night of the soul and ultimately transformed emergence into light and vitality he likens to the principal alchemical stages of nigredo (darkness), albedo (shining light) and rubedo (infused vitality). The modern scientific equivalents would appear to be chaos (understood as a condition of undifferentiated potentialities), bifurcation of a system into new possibilities and emergence into a completely new state.

Two themes constantly pervade the book. Firstly, he shows how post-Newton science advanced into territory far removed from the hermetic ideas of alchemy (and the great Newton who stood at the pivot point between alchemy and science had no difficulty in reconciling the two), but with the discovery of chaos theory, ideas similar to alchemy have taken on a modern guise. The second theme is how ideas from alchemy and chaos theory can be used as tools for personal self-transformation.

The book is a fine example of that famous prophecy in *The Mahatma Letters*, 'modern science is our best ally'. It shows how the hermetic legacy can be enriched using modern scientific ideas and put to good use on our inner development and individual quest for meaning in life. ✨

Edi D. Bilimoria

NEWS and NOTES



Major Publishing Event

The Secret Doctrine, the classic work by H.P. Blavatsky, is now available in a handsome, portable edition, abridged and annotated by Michael Gomes and published by Tarcher/Penguin (2009). To have had *The Secret Doctrine* published by Penguin is a major achievement in itself, but the present work also manages to make accessible to the reader of today a nineteenth century classic of esoteric literature, that was itself based on arcane all-but-incomprehensible texts. Had this been achieved by watering the original down, applying a whitewash of political correctness and sanitizing it of its occult content, then I would say that the garbage bin would have been the best place for it. As it happens however the Gomes version of *The Secret Doctrine* has not tried to make it palatable for the weak by sacrificing the mystique of the original; and I have the book displayed on my desk at work, where everyone can see the beautiful photograph of the young HPB adorning its cover.

As the original is around 1500 pages in length

and the present abridgement occupies but 250, a great deal has been left out: including the interesting, entertaining and erudite polemic of its often bombastic author. What remains however is ‘the timeless vision of the stanzas’, as Michael Gomes quite rightly puts it: a vision which is as ahead of its time and as alive now as it was in 1888.

Appointment of Supporting Lecturer for 2010

In June the National Council appointed Noel Bertelle, President of Brisbane Lodge as *Supporting Lecturer* for the Australian Section during 2010. Please direct any requests for speakers to the *National President*, who coordinates this programme.

Visit of Colin Price

Plans for Colin Price’s tour of the Section in March/April 2010 are well in hand, his tour culminating with the Easter Event at Mt Helena near Perth, and taking in the School of Theosophy at Springbrook. Colin served as National President of the TS in England from 1999-2008 and is Treasurer of the European School of Theosophy. He is a regular lecturer at TS events in England and elsewhere.

Visiting Speakers

Preliminary plans are underway to have two other outstanding authors and speakers tour the Section over the next two years: Michael Gomes, possibly late in 2010, in connection with The University of Sydney conference mentioned in the National President’s report published in this issue; and in 2011 David Lorimer of the Scientific and Medical Network.

Besides his active involvement with the SMN, David Lorimer is also Vice-President of the Swedenborg Society and of the Horizon Foundation, the International Association for Near-Death Studies in the UK. He has lectured at Theosophy Science weekends and Summer Schools in England, and we look forward to being able to host him throughout the Australian Section. Colin Price and David Lorimer co-chaired a conference on Archeo-Astronomy at King's College, London jointly organised by the TS in England and the Scientific and Medical Network. Lodges/Branches will be approached regarding his tour shortly.

Annual Subscriptions for Overseas Publications

Please note that Annual subscriptions to *The Theosophist*, *The Adyar Newsletter* and *The Quest* can no longer be made through the National Headquarters. Subscribers need to contact the publications directly (address inside the magazine) and arrange their own subscriptions. Further information is available on the following web sites:

The Theosophist and Adyar Newsletter:

<http://www.ts-adyar.org/magazines.html>

The Quest:

<http://www.theosophical.org/publications/questmagazine/index.php>

October Event at Springbrook

The attendance of 19 at the recent live-in event at Springbrook on the theme *Human Enquiry and Transformation* was much appreciated by the organizers, considering the last minute programme change due to the sudden departure of Professor Krishna, who had to return to India due to ill health. Fortunately we were able to

draw on the talents of the *Education Coordinator* who conducted the afternoon sessions. We were sorry that Professor Krishna and his wife Minakshi were not able to complete their tour of the Section, visiting only Sydney and Canberra; however he is now fully recovered and we wish him well. I would like to thank all the Lodges for stepping in and organising alternative programmes at short notice.

Grateful Thanks

After many years of dedicated service as a link/facilitator for the Correspondence Course, and as a member of the *T in A* Editorial Committee since 1993, Noel Duzevich has decided to retire. A former *National Lecturer* for the TS in Australia, Noel also served on the executive committee of Perth Branch for almost ten years, including two years as its President. For many years she ran a study group on *The Secret Doctrine* as well as an introductory course on Theosophy. Her work on behalf of the Section, especially as Correspondence Course facilitator has been gratefully appreciated.

New Release from TPH Adyar

A compilation of Radha Burnier's On the Watch-Tower notes, spanning the years from 1980 to 2007, is due for release in December 2009. *The World Around Us* will provide a useful reference to the insightful monthly editorials of *The Theosophist*, which have examined some of the most pressing issues of the day, in the light of the ancient wisdom teachings. The clear note of human regeneration that has been sounded in the monthly editorials of the President has inspired a generation of TS members, and will no doubt continue to inspire for years to come. ✨