

Theosophy

in Australia
March 2009 volume 73, number 1

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students or seekers, belonging to any religion in the world, or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but perhaps a common search and aspiration. The motto of the Society—*There Is No Religion Higher Than Truth*—suggests that the goal and the journey are more important than any conclusions reached along the way.

Theosophy literally means 'divine wisdom', *theosophia*. It is defined neither in the Constitution of the Society nor in any official document. We are left to discover what it is for ourselves, taking as our guides whatever religions or philosophies we wish. Everyone in sympathy with the three Objects is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

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



With this issue we bid farewell to our much loved National President and Editor Linda Oliveira. She and Pedro, our former Education Coordinator, will be greatly missed, but we loan them to Adyar with every good wish for their future work.

Perhaps it is fitting in this transition period to focus on some essential principles of theosophical work. Two of the articles in the present issue briefly discuss the vexed issue of RULES. The subject of rules has the potential to raise the hackles of even the most phlegmatic or easy-going member. Even those who find rules boring, tend to find them EXTREMELY boring. But we have included two pieces on the subject which provide an interesting contrast of views. In *Approaching the Sacred through Committee Work* the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia are described as tools for harmony; while in *Principles and Practices of Theosophical Work* Edi Bilimoria suggests that a proliferation of rules may indicate a lack of harmony. These two views do not contradict each other, but instead provide a fairly well-rounded approach to both the limitations and the scope of committee work.

Conforming to tested principles and practices is one thing; but there is also an undeniable need to innovate. We need not take the writings of our Founders as inexorably fixed in the time of their authorship in every respect, especially when we understand that they contain universal teachings embodying eternal truths. MK Gandhi once remarked that 'Sons should enrich the legacy of their fathers'. And I think that is

quite true in the context of our Society. However, it might also be said that innovation, like improvisation, needs to be on the basis of sound understanding, if it is not to result in a mere cacophony. HPB wisely pointed out in *Key to Theosophy* that the future of the Society will depend to a large extent on '... the amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by those members, on whom it will fall to carry on the work ...'.

Another saying that I am very fond of was penned by the Zen poet Matsuo Basho sometime in the 1600s when he advised his followers: 'Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the wise. Seek what they sought'. This, together with the idea of enriching the legacy of our Founders, appears to offer astute advice to members of the Theosophical Society today. For it seems to me that unless a sufficient number of members actively seek what our wise forebears sought and just as actively expand the meaning of their words, the TS will falter in its progress and soon come to a dead halt. Unless we find new ways to show the contemporary relevance of what our wise founders sought, unless we clothe their teachings in a form appropriate to the times, the TS will cease to be relevant. This need not entail any sacrifice of depth, but it does require sound knowledge and understanding,

It was once said of *The Secret Doctrine* that it was a book written for the future. Well the future is now, so let us embrace it by implementing the original teachings as appropriate to our times.

Address

given at the opening session
of the School of the Wisdom

Adyar 3 October 1980

Radha Burnier

International President



The International Centre of Theosophical Studies was formerly known by the simple name 'School of the Wisdom', which suggests what is the real purpose of such a Centre. It is to gather together for study, enquiry and discussion people who are seriously interested in finding wisdom.

The Theosophical Society is an open Society and one finds people with varied ideals, occasionally and unfortunately sometimes people with no ideals, becoming members of the Society. But within the Theosophical Society there are those who are concerned with how human beings should live. They want to find out the real destiny of the human being and the meaning of life. What is knowledge and what is truth? These are all questions which are of importance to a thoughtful person, to every serious student within the Society. And this Centre is intended to provide opportunities for small gatherings of those who are seriously trying to understand and resolve these questions which are of basic importance. To discover the answers to these questions is, of course, to find wisdom.

It is not necessary to meet together in order to obtain knowledge, but it is much more difficult to tread the path of wisdom. We need help from many sources in order to gain wisdom. We need the aid of silence as well as of discussions. We need the aid of Nature as

well as of man. We need the aid of books, up to a point, and the words of those who have already found wisdom, the Wise Ones. Aid can be obtained in many different ways.

The path of wisdom has been very clearly indicated in those well-known Upanishadic words with which Theosophists are familiar, because they have been printed in *At the Feet of the Master*: 'Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality.' We shall not discuss just now what is meant by the words, 'lead me'. Who is to lead? That would be a subject in itself. But the sentences indicate the direction which has to be followed in the progress towards wisdom.

Everyone who is seeking wisdom has to use his discernment assiduously to find out what is real and what is unreal. This is something which has been reiterated for ages, but it is nonetheless profoundly valid and we can never afford to be forgetful of it. People place so much importance on the incidents which happen in life. There are innumerable happenings, ups and downs, with the pleasures, unhappiness and fears which arise from the way in which the individual meets the trials, the conditions and the environment in which he lives. And one tends to give great importance to each little incident which arises, and there is a reaction either of pleasure or of disappointment, of hope or of fear, of irritation

or of a sense of repose. But possibly none of these incidents is of importance. We do not examine the question whether all that agitates us and impels us in daily life, the situations which arise out of our relationships with fellow human beings, with nature, with animals, with the society in which we live, whether all these incidents have a significance in themselves, or whether they exist in order to awaken in us an awareness, a perception of what is Truth; in other words, whether they exist so that wisdom can blossom from within. Perhaps the incidents have no importance in themselves, they have importance only in awakening wisdom, only in teaching us how to meet what happens in daily life.

We place very great importance on this physical existence with all that is implied in that, but to find wisdom one has to question every preconception and, as we said, not merely occasionally, but consistently, diligently, assiduously; so that finding out what is real and unreal becomes our very life. Unless the student gives his heart to the question of finding wisdom, it will not come. One cannot ask for wisdom in casual terms and hope that it will give us of its beneficence. One has really to sacrifice all else, live a life of renunciation, in order to receive wisdom.

So it requires a certain type of life to be a student of the wisdom. What we study, the lectures we hear, the discussions we have, are of little value if they do not help us to move on continually from the unreal to the real. The unreal, as has often been pointed out, is of a temporal nature. Whatever is temporal is only relatively real. The Buddha said that one of the great truths that every human being has to understand is the truth of impermanence. The mind of man attaches itself to that which is impermanent, it values the security which appears to come from things of impermanence. A state of ignorance alone can in fact make a person think that what is fleeting can give security. If we use our intellect, we see clearly

that a person who clings to what is temporal is like a person who is drowning in the sea and trying to save himself by holding on to a straw floating upon the water. Yet we all do it, because we do not give our minds and hearts to the task of examining how we live and what values we consider to be worthwhile.

In what is material itself, there is nothing wrong. It is in the value we attach to the material and to the temporal that the blindness lies. Matter is part of the one existence. The wind is not different from its movement. The movement of the wind is the wind, and the appearances in the world of matter are part of a greater existence. Out of that outer appearance there do not arise our sorrow, our problems, our tensions, our ill will, or the lack of peace which we create for ourselves. It is our attitude to what exists that generates problems. It is our unwisdom, our ignorance which makes humanity live so chaotically. Through learning what is unreal and rejecting it in daily life, and seeing that clinging to temporal things is the cause of the misery of individual man as well as of humanity, there comes wisdom. Theosophy gives a grand outline of universal processes. It conveys some idea of the constitution of man. We study all that only in order to understand how one should live; what is one's destiny; what is the relationship of the individual to the whole.

The other sentence which we mentioned, 'from Darkness lead me to Light', is also of profound import. The mind has been described in theosophical as well as other literature as the slayer of the real. It is blind in its perception because it does not penetrate into the core, into the essence, it does not have insight, because of its selfishness. The selfishness of the human being creates immense gloom. Only as we find out for ourselves what is the fallacy out of which selfishness arises can we move from darkness to light. The teaching of the Buddha pointed not only to the need to find out the truth about impermanency, but also the truth

about the notion of the self. In the Yoga-sutras also, *avidyā* and *asmitā* are both mentioned as obstacles to realization.

What is the nature of I-consciousness? What is death and what is the nature of immortality? Death has been defined as the perception of diversity. Where there is a sense of separateness, of manyness, and the ignoring of oneness, there is death.

These questions cannot be examined in a brief time. But it is important that we should not dissipate energy in the consideration of non-essentials. The way in which we consider questions should bring us nearer to the wisdom, and not leave us satisfied with mere knowledge and information. The more we study and discuss, the more energy it should evoke for finding out that which is deeper, of more profound value. If these sessions have

that quality, they will be of great benefit not only to the Theosophical Society as a whole, but perhaps even to a wider extent. The Society itself would be a wonderful body if it consisted of seekers for the Truth, not people with superficial aims. And Truth includes within itself everything else which is of eternal value: goodness, beauty, profound peace and so on. All that is of the nature of goodness is in Truth. If we are real seekers for the Truth, then everything else will come of its own.

There is the beautiful saying in the Bible, 'Seek ye the Truth and the Truth shall make you free.' If you seek the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Truth, then all else will be added unto you. If there is an arduous yearning, which in the East has been called *mumukshutva*, a fiery aspiration for that which is immortal and not that which is mortal, it brings all the gifts that are worth having. ❖

The Universal Religion

If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time, which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development.

Swami Vivekananda, World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893

Principles of Theosophical Work

Dr Edi Bilimoria



Everything in the universe from a grain of sand to a Solar System is governed by law, the Law of Harmony and Interconnectedness. As it says in *The Mahatma Letters*: ‘Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy ... there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man’ (Letter 47, chronological edition). The connection between things goes even deeper when you consider that there is in existence just one “thing,” which may be regarded as spirit or matter, depending on the point of view: everything is an equal but unique expression of the one SUBSTANCE-PRINCIPLE which permeates all of life. This is the ultimate rationale for the universal brotherhood enshrined in our first Object.

The Occult or Esoteric Sciences assert on the basis of DIRECT KNOWLEDGE that there is a plan behind the seemingly chaotic and random phenomena in the manifested Universe; and that each unit in the vast scheme, however great or small, is working out its part in this plan that we call Evolution. Now, just as a building cannot materialise on the sole basis of an architectural plan, but needs the services of builders and craftsman at different levels to actuate the plan, the Divine Plan needs the services of a vast army of agents at all levels who are responsible for working out its infinitely varying parts. These agents are the sages, prophets and spiritual philosophers

who, having attained liberation and fulfilled their lessons on Earth, stay in touch with humanity to carry on the work of the evolutionary scheme.

The Theosophical Society (TS) may also be regarded as such an agent, and one with a definite PURPOSE that we may summarise, however imperfectly, thus:

1. To bequeath to humanity certain deeper truths of life needed for taking the next step in human evolution.
2. To instill fundamental guiding principles, such as universal brotherhood, karma and spiritual evolution into the general thought atmosphere so that it may become possible to usher in a better world order.
3. To foster an understanding of the plan of evolution and inspire co-operation in the great work that is the betterment of the human race.

The founding of the Theosophical Society was part of a definite move to lift the corner of the veil to reveal a little more of life’s deeper mysteries, and so to help humanity take the next step in evolution by showing that such a thing as Theosophy exists; and to do this without a whiff of evangelical proselytizing or dogmatic preaching, because freedom of thought and freedom of enquiry are the foundation of all our activities. There is simply no question of any one person imposing his thoughts and beliefs on another and we are at liberty to follow our own path.

The primary function of the TS may

be summed up in two points:

1. Not so much to spiritualise as to humanise us. Meaning that the general but mistaken belief that we must move away from matter towards spirit might be replaced by the idea that the move is away from personal selfishness towards impersonal unselfishness—something that the International President Radha Burnier has emphasised again and again with great force and clarity.
2. To combat the wave of gross materialism that is spreading all over the world. But this must be accomplished not by a retreat from matter but by revealing the mental nature of matter. Matter is intrinsically just as divine as spirit. Every second of the day we have living proof of the oneness of life; that there is an all-embracing field of consciousness in which we are held in thought; that behind outward appearances there is an INNER REALITY. There are plenty of sincere people working devotedly to alleviate the world's sufferings. But their imperfect appreciation of this inner reality, call it Universal Law, if you like, stultifies their efforts and does not prevent the world plunging into deeper crisis. Thus, it is our task not just to understand but to love this Universal Law before we attempt to practice it.

Primary Functions and Core Precepts of the Theosophical Society

So the TS is not just an ordinary philanthropic body, nor it is merely an academic body dedicated to theoretical study. Rather it is a distinct agency, vehicle or instrument for the spiritual upliftment of humanity based on the facts or laws of nature that each one of us may discover for ourselves. It is a small nucleus in the world of people who are: (a) trying to understand these truths; (b) struggling to put them into practice (the nobler the truth, the more acute the struggle); and (c) aspiring to transmit them to others so that they may learn and contribute in their turn.

It is important to realise that the most effective way, indeed the spiritual way, of eradicating suffering and evil is to deal with them at the primary level of causes. This means tackling things at the level of character and thought—dealing with our inner nature. All conflicts, sufferings and maladjustments owe their origin ultimately to ignorance, *avidyā*—ignorance of certain laws and facts about reality and the higher life. The vast majority of people do not realise the subtle but definite connection between the outer circumstances prevailing in the world and the laws at work. And in the Theosophical Society the emphasis is very much on understanding the causes and laws at play.

It is equally essential that we work with love for the welfare of humanity, with no consideration of personal self or want of personal gain, as we try to apply the principles set out by the Founders and HP Blavatsky (HPB).

Centre of Gravity of Theosophy

That said, what is the Centre of Gravity of Theosophy (or its Heart centre)? Surely TRUTH is our “Religion”, or more accurately, our *dharma* or duty. Our motto is not: ‘There is no religion higher than authority’, or, ‘There is no religion higher than HPB’. It is THERE IS NO RELIGION HIGHER THAN TRUTH. In this connection we would do well to heed Leibniz’s warning:

Most philosophical schools are largely right in what they assert, but not so much in what they deny. The commonest failing is the sectarian spirit in which people diminish themselves by rejecting others (Leibniz, G.W., Die Philosophischen Schriften).

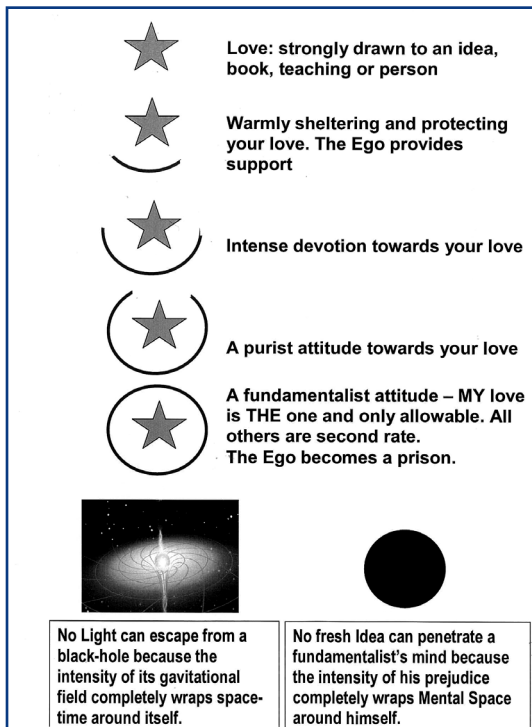
Since each side had part of the truth and was wrong only in failing to recognise what was true in the opposing position, Leibniz asserted that Truth was best served, not by accumulating facts or arguments to one side or another (like adding pieces of a jigsaw puzzle),

but by finding a framework to maximise the compatibility of the various points of view—a reconciling ‘system of harmony’.

This perfectly expresses not only the spirit of non-sectarianism which ought to prevail in the TS, but also the nature of Theosophy as an all-encompassing framework (evident in our second Object). Sectarianism and fundamentalism (virtually the same thing) are to be heavily guarded against. Both significantly diminish us.

What Impedes Our Progress? What Inhibits and Blocks Theosophical Work?

THE BLACK HOLE OF FUNDAMENTALISM- HOW TO BE OR NOT TO BE
A FUNDAMENTALIST



One answer to the above question is undue attachment to a teacher, teaching or book at the expense of the whole. This inability to maintain a global, well-rounded perspective and instead going overboard over one personality or book is, in my opinion, the single most important factor that

accounts for all the schisms, antagonisms and tensions with which the TS has been dubiously blessed ever since its inception. And it still occurs now, in a big way.

It is very important therefore to cultivate and maintain a certain measure of detachment. The worst thing we can do in the TS is to produce a cult of HPB or anyone else. Those who would like the TS to become a Blavatsky Society do us a disservice on two fronts: first, completely ignoring the freedom of thought and personal discovery that lie at the heart of the General Council Resolution; second, ignoring the heavy warning by Leibniz and HPB about the sectarianism that will eat away at the body of the TS like a cancer.

I do not see the business of the TS, its International President or any one of its lecturers, to promulgate one set of doctrines—including *The Secret Doctrine*—over and above any others. Our job is to make available a portfolio of the priceless pearls of the Wisdom available to the seeker, who may then choose the teaching that resonates most with his or her mental capacities, personal circumstances, time and energies.

Of course we are free to give out the teaching that inspires us most—in fact we MUST. But we can do this in the spirit of the generalist, who like any true musician will know that music stands above any of its great exponents. Music comes first—then Bach or Chopin or whoever. Similarly, Truth stands way above any and every one of its exponents. Once that is understood all the sectarian bickering and schisms that have ravaged our Society will cease.

If HPB herself said that the only way she could prove the existence of a wisdom tradition uniting all ages was to gather together a huge mass of evidence from all over the world, then surely we are also free now to draw upon other teachers, modern teachers included, to support the cause of

the perennial wisdom. Theosophy and the ancient wisdom did not spring up from nor end with HPB. Those who say it did perhaps need to examine their level of understanding.

All great teachers are but the musical overtones of the ONE SILENT TEACHER—that Nameless Higher Power in which we live and move; and which stirs within us all.

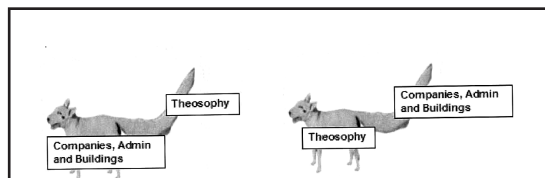
Implementing Theosophy

Implementing theosophy means using theosophy as an IMPLEMENT. How do we do this?

- The balance between theoretical study and practice:
 - too much theory results in useless argument, conflict and division (even sectarianism)
 - too much practice may result in self-centred indulgence. “Classical theosophical” literature is heavily weighted towards the theoretical. We need to invoke the wisdom of sages of equal stature to correct the imbalance; for example J. Krishnamurti, Paul Brunton and Ramana Maharshi.
- A culture of brotherhood based on understanding the facts of nature and not on rules: Brotherhood cannot be legislated. It is incumbent on each one of us. Misunderstanding brotherhood can lead to a peculiar mindset that any form of behaviour must be tolerated because to criticise unethical, lazy or callous behaviour constitutes an unbrotherly attack. Actually, removing those who have been found to be working against the Society or its Objects is an extremely brotherly act as it prevents the TS from being vitiated by adverse forces. However, loads of rules merely throw a spanner in the works and hinder the realisation of unity. In any society the number of rules is directly proportional to the degree of fragmentation and lack of self-responsibility. Unity or brotherhood cannot be acquired or inculcated through legislation; and when there is unity and brotherhood fewer rules are required. I

suggest that the Theosophical Society stands bolt upright from its own inherent strength built on the pillars of truthfulness, compassion and altruism. It should not be treated like a dilapidated building propped up by scaffolding and artificially held together with more and more Rules. Another point about rules: a Rule formed with precision-engineering accuracy but with impure motives will cause difficulties; but a poorly constructed Rule formulated with sincere motive will eventually work its way towards the good.

- Keeping Theosophy at the forefront is easily forgotten: remembering what we have just said about rules, we may put it in the form of a simple question: Does the Doggie Wag the Tail or the Tail Wag the Doggie?



Rules and Admin for Theosophy, or Theosophy for Rules and Admin??

- Efficient methods of working and the correct use of energy: in any TS work we have to ask ourselves, are we using the finest grade of energy? Are we doing things that dissipate energy and flout nature’s laws? If so we might like to consider that the more we understand this law the more we are held to account for transgressing it. Forget, for now, all about Planes of Nature, the Seven Rays etc., and consider whether we have even passed kindergarten in terms of practicing the basic precepts of life. Take for example one of the Golden Rules—THOU SHALT NOT GOSSIP. That people are prepared to listen to gossip, malign someone whom they have never met or hardly know, and listen to just one side of a story—and still consider themselves to be theosophists—is beyond my comprehension. I suggest that we try and bridle this tendency to gossip. It is the

best possible way to UNHEAL ourselves, and it wastes and fragments cosmic energy.

- Networking: the TS is utterly unique but god-forbid that it ever becomes isolated from other spiritual organisations. There are, however a number of cardinal rules for effective networking in the TS —

- the TS should feel genuine rapport towards the aims and methods of groups with whom it chooses to network

- Parallel groups must, reciprocally, feel a genuine warmth and empathy towards the aims and ideals of the TS, and not use the Society as a fertile hunting ground from which to poach members or denigrate the TS in any way

- We should only network with groups not led by just one person or with a strong ethos of guru worship, but with those informed by a spirit of egalitarian enquiry. Note that networking is not the same thing as affiliating. The TS does not join forces with or partner itself with other organisations. Parallel groups can either enrich us, or rob us by scattering our energies.

- Indispensable qualifications and qualities of a theosophical worker: initiative; an experimental attitude; striving after perfection; tolerance and cooperation; a willingness to take a stand, particularly against those who are unjustly attacked; striving to extend the boundaries of knowledge; becoming a specialist in one area within the framework of working as an overall generalist; and above all else, awakening and unfolding our inner faculties.

The objectives of a politician may be gained

by appeal to the selfish materialistic instincts of the human being. An unscrupulous scientist can achieve his or her ends by appeasing intellectual curiosity and appealing to greed. But that surely cannot be our way. We have somehow to awaken the dormant *buddhi-manas* principle, and that can only be accomplished by awakening that slumbering faculty within ourselves so that the public is influenced not so much by what we say, but by the subtle power behind our words. We can only truly communicate to others what we have ourselves ACTUALLY EXPERIENCED FIRST HAND and no amount of eloquent talking can exercise a lasting spiritual influence on others if those spiritual faculties are still buried in us.

Finally, and with all due respect to the parrot family, Winston Churchill once said: ‘when the Eagles fall silent, the parrots start jabbering’.

So I urge all theosophical eagles to:

- dig deep and try to understand our doctrines first-hand in DEPTH

- find out what is going on in the world and in the theosophical world

- work more in the field than in the committee room

- root out any hypocrisy and pseudo-theosophy

- pick up your courage to follow Arjuna’s example and, where unavoidable, fight WITH CLEAN WEAPONS for the true cause of the Eternal Wisdom—Theosophy. ❖



Dr Bilimoria is a Consultant Engineer and an accomplished musician, who has lectured widely on Theosophy for several decades.

APPROACHING THE SACRED THROUGH COMMITTEE WORK

Donald Fern and
Dara Tatray



The world is sustained by the same law of equilibrium and harmony upon which it was built.

Isis Unveiled 1, 318

Every committee has available to it a Guiding Intelligence, which is not the will of some dominant member, but the Rules, procedures, ethics and spirit of that committee, as well as the laws of the land. The nature of the intelligence available to us is indicated in the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia, which point out in Rule 4 that the Society's purpose is the pursuit and dissemination of the Divine Wisdom known as Theosophy. Any committee which functions in accordance with all of the above, to the best of its ability, will likely find itself to be a source of inspiration; and in the absence of a guiding intelligence of this kind any TS committee is likely to be dysfunctional.

A committee room is not normally regarded as a venue from which to approach the sacred. But when you consider the spiritual nature of the work in which the Theosophical Society is engaged; and when you consider the far-reaching influence our committees have in either furthering or hindering that work, it is not so far-fetched to remind ourselves of the sacred trust implicitly vested in our committee members.

A committee can also be surprisingly creative, when new ideas are allowed to take over previously held ones, and the creation of shared meaning takes place naturally and

organically. For this to occur we have to stop defending our ideas and look at things together freshly. This type of looking or attention is a profoundly creative act.

The Theosophical Society is an international organisation composed of Sections throughout the world; each Section being composed of Lodges or Branches, as well as National members not attached to any Lodge. The Rules of all three bodies (International, National and Lodge) are compatible, each having the same core business and the same Objects. A Lodge or Branch is self governing and autonomous **BUT ITS RULES MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH THE RULES OF THE TS AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS** (as per Rule 6(2) of the National Rules).

Members of the Society cannot be members of a Lodge/Branch or Section committee unless they have had twenty-four months membership immediately prior to nomination (with occasional exceptions which must be approved by the national Executive Committee). This should allow sufficient time for a member to become acquainted with theosophical principles and with the ethos of the Society; and most importantly to get a grip on what the TS does not stand for. **IT IS FROM THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF THE COMPATIBLE RULES AND IDENTICAL OBJECTS THAT WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO USE THE NAME AND SEAL OF THE SOCIETY, A LITTLE AS THOUGH IT WERE A FRANCHISE.**

Naturally, that right brings with it obligations. Nothing done in the name of the Society or under its auspices should be to the detriment of its ideals, Objects or reputation. Therefore there is an expectation that, at the very least, all Sections and Lodges/ Branches using the name and Seal of the Society, and especially their elected Committees, act so as to actively promote brotherhood and not demean the good name and character of the TS.

Our committees greatly influence the tone of the Society overall, whether intentionally or not; they are responsible for our programs, and in various ways influence the thought atmosphere of the Lodge or Section under its direction and care. Owing to the importance of committees in the TS, the members of the National Council have discussed the advisability of holding an induction workshop at the beginning of a committee year: not only for the National Council, but also for the national Executive Committee. (This was first discussed at the Regional Workshop held at the National Headquarters 26 & 27 November 2005). It is hoped that some Lodges or Branches will be inspired to take up the practice as well.

An induction workshop would serve several functions, including letting new committee members know more clearly what is expected of them in terms of duties; remind existing members of the same; and provide an opportunity to directly convey something of the culture of that committee. What follows is an outline of some of the things that might be covered in an induction workshop. Each committee, if it chooses to do so, could formulate its own workshop based on the plan below, or something similar.

INDUCTION WORKSHOP FOR TS COMMITTEES

We all come from different backgrounds. Sometimes dominating or assertive behaviour appropriate elsewhere spills over into the

Theosophical Society and its committees. Therefore it is important for all committee members to be made aware of the attitude of cooperation, mutual respect, trust, dedication and participation that is essential to the smooth running of a TS committee. It has been said that to approach the sacred one must sacrifice one's self-centred ways. This sacrifice is just as essential to working together in the context of the Theosophical Society.

Rule: Principle to which action or procedure conforms, normal state of things.

Law: Body of enacted or customary rules recognized by a community as binding.

These two definitions contain a lesson in themselves. Rules get a bad press sometimes, and there is no doubt that they can be cumbersome and uninspiring. But in the context of the TS in Australia we have come to regard our Rules first and foremost as TOOLS FOR HARMONY. Any change to the Rules of a Lodge/Branch must be approved at an Annual General Meeting of the Lodge. To be valid those changes must first be approved by the national Executive Committee, and then they must be approved by the General Council, which is the international governing body.

So our RULES ARE TACITLY AND IMPLICITLY RECOGNISED BY THE COMMUNITY. Conforming to them helps safeguard us from dominance by strong-willed or opinionated individuals; and at times when things seem to be going pear-shaped, or even worse, when the intellectual or material assets of the Society are under threat, a skilful committee can bring everything back into line by conforming to the Rules and Laws that we have all agreed to on becoming members of the Society.

A FEW POINTS TO CONSIDER REGARDING THE ROLE OF TS COMMITTEES:

- A committee is a group of people entrusted with the safe keeping of another's property. In the case of a Lodge/Branch or Section

committee, the property to be kept safe includes the assets painstakingly accumulated, generously donated and carefully conserved over more than a century. It also includes what is perhaps more important, our “intellectual property”: namely, the message and purpose of the TS. That too is to be kept safe/clean/whole/not muddled or diluted. Any committee which fails to safeguard the intellectual and material property of the Lodge/Branch or Section under its jurisdiction stands in dereliction of its duty.

- The other primary task of a TS committee is ensuring that the organisation is focusing on the core business of the Society, which is to let people know that Theosophy exists and to pursue the three Objects.

- At all times the promotion of genuine brotherhood should be kept in mind, as this influence is likely to spread out from the committee one way or another.

- A spirit of enquiry and active listening are also important for they allow old ideas to give way to new ones. For this to occur we have to stop defending ideas and look at things together freshly. As said above, this type of looking is a profoundly creative act, which may even be of greater benefit than any particular decision reached.

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES:

For the committee member

- An attitude of cooperation, mutual respect, trust, dedication and participation are essential to the smooth running of a TS committee.

- A desire to speak is indicated by raising a hand. Permission to speak is granted by the chairman not other members of the committee.

- If more than one person has indicated a desire to speak the chairman will allocate an order in which they will be speaking.

- Committee members should be mindful of the fact that they have been entrusted with the

welfare of all members of the Society, not just the majority; and this includes future members.

The following questions may serve as a guide to making creative decisions for the good of the whole:

If the decision is taken—

- **what are the likely positive outcomes?**
- **what might be the negative outcomes?**
- **what are the wider implications?**
- **how will it sit with our core business?**

Taking the time to consider a question from all these angles may help us to reach a good decision objectively and to feel a sense of ownership in the decision.

- This leads to two further points. The first is the need for committee members to actively participate, rather than just make up the numbers as is sometimes the attitude taken.

- And even more important, everyone should be aware of the need for all committee members to abide by the decisions of the committee, whether or not they personally voted for that decision. Once a decision is made it is made on behalf of the committee as a whole. A committee speaks and acts with one voice: one committee = one body.

- Finally the need for confidentiality is paramount. Unfortunately, there is a tendency on some committees to assume that confidentiality is like Parliamentary Privilege, on account of which anything may be said about fellow committee members or other Lodge/Branch members, without fear of the consequences. However, in order to allow a full and frank discussion we do need to be able to speak freely in the committee room, without fear that what has been said will be repeated after the meeting. We must be respectful of others but also speak freely. This presupposes a high level of trust between committee members, which underscores the importance of selecting the right people for a committee.

The role of the chairman

- Foster the right atmosphere and maintain correct procedure so that the work of the committee as described above might take place in an orderly fashion.
- Call for a few moments of silent mindfulness to help centre those present and as an aid to the the art of listening.
- Allow for a full discussion and ensure that—
 - everyone has been heard
 - everyone is respectful and courteous
 - everyone owns the decision
 - no one dominates the discussion.
- Try to reach a consensus. This is not a numbers game, we are all on the same team. A strong thought form based on consensus may have a greater power to act for the good than a decision taken half-heartedly or by three quarters of a committee. If a consensus cannot be reached at first, or if there is any acrimony, then perhaps consider postponing the decision to the next meeting. Time heals a lot of things.
- Allow time for the Secretary to take notes for the minutes.
- Perhaps go over relevant points from the Guidelines for Conduct.
- Work towards the creation of a Policy Document based on Resolutions passed by the committee. This document combined with the Rules may greatly assist in maintaining harmony.

- Give a summary of key points to people intending to nominate so that they know something of what is expected of them and the nature of the committee they are about to join.
- Distribute the agenda along with copies of all important documents in advance of the meeting.

Confucius might have described the ideal committee member along the following lines:

The ideal Chinese thinker is a scholar-official who is informed by a profound historical consciousness, well seasoned in the fine arts of poetry, lute and calligraphy, and deeply immersed in the daily routine of government [He is] engaged in society, involved in politics, and dedicated to the spiritual transformation of the world from within.

We may not all be scholars versed in calligraphy, but being engaged in society, and at the same time dedicated to the spiritual transformation of the world from within, is not a bad description of the ideal TS member. And while we cannot expect each of us to be informed by a profound historical consciousness and to have mastered the fine arts of music and poetry, a committee on the whole is likely to be multi-talented. The real art of chairing a meeting is perhaps to draw on the talents of all the dedicated members present.

Taking an approach similar to that herein outlined is likely to provide not only a creative space but also a profoundly nourishing one for all involved. ☒

Back to Blavatsky

Laurence J. Bendit

Ever since I became theosophically conscious, there have been people whose battle cry (and this, in effect, is what it is) has been "Back to Blavatsky!" There are periodical upsurges of this feeling, then it dies down again. In many cases the warriors have been aiming at denigrating what they call "neo-Theosophy" but which, if they lived in the present, they would realize was really "meso-Theosophy." It represented an era when a number of senior students were endeavoring, without the necessary language or mental equipment, to explain what they thought HP Blavatsky meant. I say "without the necessary language or equipment" because there had not yet occurred the enormous surge forward in the mental climate which one may, rather glibly, equate with the discovery of the inner workings of the atom and with the technological and cultural explosion. These, whatever their negative aspects, have given the student a set of new concepts and created a mental climate in which real "new-Theosophy" could expand, and is expanding, both inside and outside The Theosophical Society itself.

But let us take a look at HP Blavatsky: she really did not belong to the late nineteenth century but to the twentieth or later. Her time is yet to come. But she found herself forced to try to put out material which belongs to the new era while she was enmeshed in a vast cobweb of materialism, prejudice, crystallized thought and dogma, as well as hampered by the absence of a language in which to speak. One can see why she was so often exasperated, why in that exasperation she went in for what we see today as rather futile polemics. Were she here today, she might well call people fools, idiots, flapdoodles—words which appear in the margins of articles and comments in the archives at Adyar—but at least she would have the language in which she could tell us some of the things she wanted to put before us in the hope that they would be understood.

So it seems that, rather than trying to go "back to Blavatsky," the serious student needs, indeed, to try to make mental contact with her. But rather than go back, and fill his mind with brain-knowledge (dry-as-dust, erudite, "factual," etc.), he should run in the other direction and try to catch up with her. In one sense one may speak of "Back to Blavatsky"; but indeed our slogan should be "Forward to Blavatsky," the Blavatsky of the new age. The difference may seem slight, but it is as great as that between death and birth.

Reprinted from *The American Theosophist* January 1991.

Help Wanted— Apply Within

Bree Heidenreich
Talk at School of Theosophy,
Springbrook, May 2006

POSITION VACANT Chela Wanted

Previous experience not essential
but some knowledge could help

JOB DESCRIPTION

A new disciple willing to follow Adept.
Motivated person with courage and pure heart.

EXPECTATIONS

Open and receptive to:
Love, Evolution, Discretion,
Justice, Trust, Truth

Send Resume via clear thought forms
to the highest principle of yourself
and if accepted Adept will reply.

**ONLY SERIOUS APPLICANTS
NEED APPLY**

Ladies and Gentleman, as you can see there is an advertisement for a position vacant as a *Chela*. This position is open to each and every one of us, but, as the advertisement suggests, you need to be willing to follow your Adept. As Master Koot Hoomi said: 'If you really want to be a *chela*, i.e. to become the recipient of our mysteries, you have to adapt yourself to our ways, not we to yours' (*The Mahatma Letters* no. 74 chronological edition).



On-the-job training is provided but this training is more challenging than the longest marathon or Iron Man series you could imagine. You will need to train your physical, mental, spiritual and emotional selves. You must oppose your lower personality and stretch your heart beyond the norm to do good to others. You will need to have an immense Love for all humanity.

The applicant must have discretion at all times:

Candidates ... take the vow of secrecy and silence respecting every order they may receive. One has to prove himself fit for Chelaship ... (*ML* no. 75).

You will need to have a total acceptance of a loving energy in all things ... even if that spark be so small, so dim, that you perceive it as evil. Knowing it has a chance to shine brighter is your motivation to allow it to be possible. Love the seemingly unlovable, the ugly, the naughty, the annoying. But dear applicants, this means you must also use the strength and courage of your intuition; and also be able to discern the appropriate use of power to uphold justice, to right a wrong.

You will need to learn not to segregate those who choose a line of thinking or

belief that is different to yours. Segregation of people “not like us” is what causes ill will and lack of development:

A man can only think in his worn grooves and unless he has the courage to fill up these and make new ones for himself he must perforce travel on the old lines (*ML Appendix 1*).

Applicants must be willing to change their lifestyles and thought forms. This may mean completely changing the routines of one’s life. No alcohol to dull the senses; abstinence from meat-eating; silence of thoughts; not succumbing to modern stimulants like mainstream media in television and newspapers: ‘Thrice fortunate they who can break through the vicious circle of modern influence and come up from the vapours!’ (*ML54*).

After all:

It is upon the serene and placid surface of the unruffled mind that the visions gathered from the invisible find a representation in the visible world ... (*ML 65*).

Finally, the need for independent thought is most important. Illumination is not given to us by the Adepts, that is our work. Those who are serious about Chelaship must look within and find the courage to be that which they truly are.

Please ... no time wasters.

ONLY SERIOUS APPLICANTS
NEED APPLY. ☒

References:

Barker, A. T. c. (1993). *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. & K.H.* Quezon City, Philippines, Theosophical Publishing House.

The Personal and the Metaphysical Are Not Necessarily Distinct

Question: There seems to be a tendency within the Society to attribute importance to subjects of a universal or metaphysical nature and to consider personal problems and situations as belonging to our lower nature. Do we only discuss purely metaphysical topics?

Ravi Ravindra: I might start with a confession—I myself am rather addicted to metaphysics. However, from the point of view of any Society or group of people wishing to be of help to anybody else, it is necessary to meet people where they are. If somebody is so occupied with their personal problems, it doesn’t necessarily help to say, well, we are interested only in metaphysical problems; which may be true. On the other hand, personal problems are really endless, without limit in fact; and the Society is really interested in the vertical evolution of consciousness. I think it is quite rightly interested in the metaphysical perspectives of the evolution of consciousness, which does not necessarily avoid or ignore the personal. You know the story about the woman whose child died and she takes the dead baby to the Buddha, thinking that perhaps he could revive the child. Instead he asks her to bring him a mustard seed from a family in which nobody has died. This shows that even a personal issue can bring one to greater enlightenment.

Question and Answer session, *World Congress*, Sydney 2001

MEDITATION and SCIENCE

Dr Alek Kwitko

How important is meditation in daily life? How important is it that we convey the benefits of meditation to others in today's modern world with its fast pace and turmoil? What is the ultimate benefit of meditation?

In *The Key to Theosophy* Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB) likens meditation to 'silent and unuttered prayer'. (1) But she says that unlike the common meaning of prayer —asking for something, it is more like Plato's perspective on prayer, that of inviting the Good, that universal Supreme Good, 'of which we are a part on earth'. For HPB it is through meditation that supreme spirit becomes manifest. That is certainly the ultimate benefit, and if that is what we aspire to then meditation is a prerequisite.

For those with an interest in Yoga the *Theosophical Glossary* tells us that meditation is one of five powers, or *bala*, to be acquired in Yoga practice. (2) The others are wisdom, energy, memory and full trust. In *Meditation A practical Study* Adelaide Gardener paraphrases Patañjali to describe the purpose of meditation as:

the alteration of the polarity of the personal mind so that it becomes no longer automatically responsive to the emotions and the senses, but rather turns naturally, for stimulus and direction, to the Divine Self, the Root of all. (3)



Others like J. Krishnamurti would call this change a radical mutation of the mind. Today a computer operator might refer to "a new operating system" to describe the alteration of mind that meditation can bring.

Meditation for the 21st Century

But what is the role of meditation in today's modern, fast paced and often chaotic world? How could we convey the potential benefit of meditation to those caught up in the material world, particularly the young? How might we also re-inspire those theosophists who have let their meditation practice run down or even lapse? Perhaps along the following lines ...

Have you noticed how the pace and frustration of the twenty-first century is getting to us? We are more stressed than ever. Many of us work long hours leaving precious little time for ourselves and our families. Added to this pressure there is the increasing debt load placing us under chronic strain: plus peer pressure, Big Brother and social norms to contend with; not to forget road rage, supermarket rage, telephone rage and terrorism! No wonder we are stretched beyond our limits. This pace, stress and fear is causing dis-ease, which will inevitably lead to clinical DISEASE. Already there is a growing world-wide pandemic of anxiety, depression and related mental disorders. These mental illnesses are what medical authorities estimate will become the number one health issue of the twenty-first century, surpassing all others.

What is the real answer? Could meditation be a possible solution? What really is meditation and what are its proven benefits? Is there real science to back it up?

The word meditation is used to mean different things. When we see someone assuming a characteristic physical posture we might call this meditation but that is more correctly termed MEDITATION PRACTICE. The resultant mental experience of awareness and increased capacity is also often called meditation but would be better termed the MEDITATIVE STATE. The subsequent process of remarkable self investigation that one could then pursue would be to utilise the MEDITATIVE MIND. The single word meditation is often used to imply part or all of these meanings according to the context or a particular teacher. Most theosophists tend to be quite inclusive in their understanding and use of this broad term.

To allay any residual fears about meditation, it is good to reassure people that meditation is now widely accepted even amongst some traditional clergy and is increasingly studied scientifically. It is also useful for the novice starting meditation practice to be reassured as to what meditation is not. Meditation is not to be misinterpreted as somehow losing control over one's mind. There is no loss of control. In fact we are more aware of ourselves, and more in command. The everyday non-meditative state is the one in which we are most out of control. Nor is meditation anything like day dreaming. It is NOT wasting time. But meditation is not a panacea offering instant enlightenment either. It is a tool which we can choose to use or not.

Benefits of Meditation

So what are the benefits of meditation? Physically we become more relaxed and invigorated. That can't go astray in this hectic world. Mentally we are more alert and more aware, but calmer at the same

time. Functionally we become highly capable yet remain detached; hence we are less likely to react inappropriately to our emotions or to anything else.

In this meditative state and with this meditative mind we are conceptually freed from the limitations of thought. The potential is there to become truly connected and empowered; to merge with being itself; to be one with all that is. So meditation can lead us to the truest expression of our innermost self.

But do we really need to meditate? Why should we? When the Buddhist scholar Professor Samdhong Rinpoche was asked this question recently he countered with the question: 'Why should we eat?' He saw meditation as a comparable nourishment of the mind. Without it our mental development both in physical brain structure and functional improvement would not be optimal and our ultimate capacity to explore our full potential would not be realised. So without meditation we are retarding our mental development and stunting the growth of our consciousness. Our minds remain unruly and disordered, untrained, undeveloped and dysfunctional. Without meditation we are at the mercy of destructive internal processes—our thoughts and emotions, of which we are largely unaware and which rule us instead of the other way around. Basically, non-meditators are living in a suboptimal state.

How does meditation work? To try to answer this scientists have studied subjects before and after meditation and compared groups that do or do not meditate. The research tools used include simple measurements like BP skin conductance, hormones in the blood, EEG brainwave measurements and more sophisticated brain imaging scans. In general, science is explaining and confirming traditional wisdom.

Let us first consider the EEG (brainwave) alterations in meditation. The brain utilises

electrochemical energies and these emanate from the brain and can be measured on the scalp by electrodes. With meditation these patterns change and these changes can be measured. What then do we find? In 2003, the brain researcher Richard Davidson, and others at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, conducted an experiment with a typical group of high stress, high-tech Silicon Valley employees. Half were taught very basic meditation which they practiced for eight weeks; the other half did not meditate.

What they found was an increased EEG wave activity in the left frontal area of the brain in the meditators, and no change in the control group. Even when the meditation practice was ceased after eight weeks, the brain effect continued to persist for more than four months.(4) A remarkable sustained effect!

What might an increased activity in the left prefrontal region of the brain mean? This is the area of positive emotions associated with happiness and fewer negative thoughts. The left frontal and prefrontal area is not only associated with positive emotions but also with intelligence, reasoning and integration of thought; in other words, with higher brain functioning. Many of us would no doubt want a boost there. In contrast, the right prefrontal lobe is associated with anxiety and negative emotions. We probably wouldn't want to over-stimulate that area.

But can meditation also have an effect on other parts of the body apart from the brain? Science again supports traditional wisdom concerning the benefits of meditation. In tests, even the immune system was boosted. Davidson found an improved immune response in the meditation group under study: the bigger

the left frontal EEG signal, the better the immune boost to a flu vaccine administered to them all. In the following year Davidson teamed up with Antoine Lutz, and, with the enthusiastic support of the Dalai Llama, studied eight experienced Buddhist monks compared to a group of novice meditators. (5) The long term meditators showed a prominent brain wave function, that of Gamma wave synchronicity. Gamma waves synchronise widely different areas of the brain, a very

useful capacity to have because it means that everything is working more efficiently, more optimally.

The fact that the meditative EEG brainwave pattern is noticeably different to that of sleep, thinking and even hypnosis has been

known from as early as 1963 from a study of Japanese Zen masters by Akira Kasamatsu and T. Hirai. (6) Then, using the latest PET brain scans, researcher Andrew Newberg studied Franciscan nuns in deep silent prayer and also a group of Buddhist monks. (7) The findings were remarkably similar to the Kasamatsu study. There was again an activation or lighting up on the brain scan in the left prefrontal area of the brain in meditation, the area of higher intellect. There was also reduced activity in the right parietal lobe, the brain region for generating our concept of time and space. Newberg even postulated that the meditative state might be a more accurate representation of reality than the normal everyday state because of the contamination of our minds by representations of time and space.

What other benefits of meditation has preliminary scientific research shown? These are wide ranging. During meditation oxygen consumption drops 10-20% so there is a beneficial oxygenation of the body. The state



of rest experienced during meditation is in fact better than sleep—a benefit to insomniacs. Blood lactate and cortisol, which are nasties in the blood associated with stress, are lowered in meditation. Furthermore, in meditation, levels of serotonin and melatonin increase, and these are natural antidepressants. So we might be able to avoid using Prozac and similar antidepressant drugs. And there is yet more potential benefit. Ladies why not save on makeup and those anti-aging creams? Meditation is a free source of natural DHEA which has youth promoting and anti aging properties; and the effect is more pronounced in women than men.

Studies have shown that meditation lowers blood pressure and reduces heart disease by about 11%, and vascular disease by 15%. There is even a small reduction in cancer rates in regular meditators; and those who have cancer and meditate can better cope with pain and suffering. The list of proven medical benefits from meditation goes on and on. Cholesterol and blood sugar are lowered. Asthma, migraine, depression and irritable bowel are improved. Chronic pain is better tolerated. Meditation generally reduces the stress effect on our body (which puts our body in defensive mode) and hence helps our body to heal itself. Subjectively long term meditation can also promote insight, wisdom and greater inner self development. Some even report a marked increase in deep intuition and insight, even direct perception—the so called sixth sense—and other special abilities (which should not be the primary motive). Meditation is the key to any self awakening program as it allows us to better tune into our true inner self: thus realising the need for change in our lives, helping us question old thoughts and habits, and discover our true tastes, abilities and purpose.

Many might assume that the meditative state will be too hard to reach. I like to say that it's easier than you think; it's even easier than thinking. We only have to quieten

our thinking and still the chattering mind. What is left is the meditative state, which spontaneously arises any time we allow it to do so. It is our underlying or basal condition. In a sense we have nothing to do but allow its release. But instead we busy our minds with lots of thoughts which constantly stir things up. We add and add things instead of simply letting our minds come to rest so that all the turbulence and residue can settle. The mind is like a glass of turbid water: let the cloudiness of our thoughts settle and a natural awareness and clarity will emerge.

In simple terms there are just two styles of meditation, each with endless variations: mindfulness (pure awareness) and visualization (conceptualizing). The particular posture or routine is not that important; these are only starting points. Use whichever works for you and then try to discard the physical trappings more and more so that you can meditate anywhere at any time and for as long as you choose, even a few seconds. Then you can take your meditation with you everywhere.

Summary

In summary, the verifiable benefits of meditation include important medical and health outcomes, as well as a marked improvement in relaxation, refreshment and calm, with fewer negative thoughts. It leads to better attention and focus; and a greater ability to manage stress. Sounds to me like just the thing to help us cope with the twenty-first century.

Meditation practice can be thought of as *MIND BUILDING* or *MIND SCULPTING*. In meditation the brain builds beneficial neuronal connections which we can crudely see with brain scans. At its simplest level meditation is a calm and alert awareness that is highly capable and beneficial; a state, which, if we so choose, allows us to investigate how the mind really works. That mind is capable of more than we have ever imagined. ❀

References

1. HP Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, The United Lodge of Theosophists, Los Angeles, 1920, p.8.
2. HP Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary*, The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles, 1966, p.48.
3. Adelaide Gardner, *Meditation A Practical Study*, Quest, Wheaton, Ill., 1968, p.21.
4. Richard Davidson et al, "Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation", *Brain and Cognition*, 52, 2003, pp.129-132.

5. Andrew Newberg, available <http://www.activemeditation.com/Research/MedicalArticles/Monks.html>

6. Akira Kasamatsu and Tomio Hirai, "An Electroencephalographic Study of the Zen Meditation (Zazen)", *Folia Psychiatrica et Neurologica Japonica*, Vol. 20, No. 4. December, 1966, pp. 315-36.

Dr Kwitko is a Consultant Physician, Procedural Gastroenterologist and medical research scientist, now retired. His interest in science and spirituality continues apace in his exploration of the metaphysical aspects of life.

Gifts and Bequests

to Further the Work of
The TS in Australia



The Theosophical Society in Australia is the fine organisation it is today as a result of the work of its volunteers and officers, the good thoughts of its members and non-members, and the gifts and bequests received from both members and non-members.

All gifts and bequests received are used carefully and responsibly to further the work and the Objects of The Theosophical Society in this country.

The following form of words is provided for those members who wish to make gifts or

bequests in their wills to The Theosophical Society in Australia:

“To The Australian Section Theosophical Trust (whose registered office is 4th Floor, 484 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000) to be held in trust for The Theosophical Society in Australia.”

Please note that The Australian Section Theosophical Trust is a company formed to hold moneys, investments, real or personal property in trust for The Theosophical Society in Australia as the latter is not incorporated.

Tour

Dr Ravi Ravindra

March 2009



Dr Ravi Ravindra

TS member Dr Ravi Ravindra was born in India and has lived and taught religion and physics in the West for many years. He is a retired Professor of Comparative Religion and Adjunct Professor of Physics at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada and is the author of a number of books. An engaging speaker, he has directed the School of the Wisdom at Adyar, India. He also spoke at the 2001 World Congress of The Theosophical Society in Sydney.

For further information about the presentations below, please contact TS Centres directly. Contact details are inside the back cover of this magazine.

NATIONAL TOUR DATES

Sat 07 March	Seminar, Melbourne Lodge	11.00am
Sun 08 March	Seminar, Ross, Tasmania	10.30 am
Mon 09 March	Public talk, Hobart Branch	8.00pm
Wed 11 March	Public talk, Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney	2.30pm
Wed 11 March	Public talk, Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney	7.00pm
Fri 13 March	Public talk, Northern Beaches Group, Sydney	8.00pm
Sun 15 March	Seminar, Adelaide Lodge	11.00am
Tues 17 March	Public Talk, Perth Branch	8.00pm
Thurs 19 March	Public talk, Sunshine Coast Lodge	7.00pm
Fri 20 March	Public talk, Brisbane Lodge	7.30pm

SATURDAY 21 - SATURDAY 28 MARCH - SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY, SPRINGBROOK

Calendar of Events
National TS
Centres ...



Springbrook Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road,
Springbrook, QLD

2009 AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY
Sat 21 - Sat 28 March 2009
Theme: 'Science and the Sacred'
Guest Speaker: Dr Ravi Ravindra, Canada



The above event is now full.

DIARY DATE: Springbrook October Event
Presenter: Professor P. Krishna, India
Theme: 'Human Transformation and the Enquiring Mind'
Dates and Further information to be announced in the June 2009 issue.

Canyonleigh Centre, Bolitho House, Tugalong Rd,
Canyonleigh, NSW

'Tools for Survival and Flourishing
The Metaphysics, Psychology and Ethics of the
Bhagavad Gita'



Saturday 2 May- Monday 4 May 2009
Arrivals Saturday 2 May Departures Monday 4 May 2009
Presenter: Dr Dara Tatray
REGISTRATION FORMS INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE

The aim this weekend is to present some of the key teachings of the Gita focusing especially on its background metaphysics; and to try to arrive at our own understanding of these teachings, not necessarily based on anyone else's interpretation. Sessions will cover an introduction to the Gita and our approach to it; the dharma teaching; the ideal of human perfection in the Gita; the relative merits of desire and desirelessness; and deep ecology, which movement drew a great deal of inspiration from the Gita.

Please Note: 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.

Theosophical Order of Service



The Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) was founded by Dr Annie Besant in 1908 to provide an opportunity for participation in activities which promote the first Object of the Theosophical Society: 'to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour'. Dr Besant believed that while the study of Theosophy was important, it was also essential to put the concepts into action; to make Theosophy practical and an avenue for positive action on the issues of the day.

The TOS offers a way of putting 'theosophy into action'. Local groups choose their own focuses based on members' interests and the particular needs of their community. If you care about people, animal welfare, the environment, healing or peace and are interested in participating in the work of your local TOS group, ask at your lodge for a contact, or alternatively contact the National Coordinator at the address below.

The TOS in Australia publishes a national newsletter three times a year. It provides information about national and international activities and ideas for group and individual service projects as well as sharing news from local TOS groups. You can register at tos.australia@gmail.com to receive a free email copy.

Thanks to the generosity of the Theosophical Society in Australia, the TOS has web-pages hosted on the TS website (www.austheos.org.au).

I invite you to visit to find more information about the TOS, local group activities and current news and projects.

At the TOS Annual General Meeting during the National Convention in Perth, it was decided to have two major national focuses for donations in 2009. One is the SEE Project run by the Chennai TOS. In collaboration with a local Eye Hospital, eye tests are conducted in slum areas and spectacles and cataract operations are provided for those who need them. The second national focus for donations is continuation of our support for four literacy home-schools established by the TOS in Pakistan. These enable children, young girls and women to learn basic reading, writing and arithmetic. Classes are taught by a local teacher in her own house. The TOS provides basic teaching and classroom materials and a small salary to the teacher.

Thank you to all who generously sent donations last year to support projects run by TOS groups in Asia. All of your donations go to these service projects because the administrative work is done by volunteers.

If you are able to support the Pakistan Literacy Home-School Project or the SEE Project in India, donations can be made by sending a cheque, made out to The TOS in Australia, to: Ms Janice Scarabottolo, PO Box 7418, FISHER ACT 2611.

Yours in service

Carolyn

Historical Material Related to the World's Parliament of Religions



Swami Vivekananda (centre) at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions

The first World's Parliament of Religions was held in 1893 in Chicago, in connection with the Chicago World's Fair, which was partly a celebration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' landing in the "new world", and in part the resurrection of a city that had been practically razed to the ground in the great fire of 1871. This year it is to be held in Melbourne, Australia; as it happens, not long after another terrible conflagration.

The text of many of the addresses given at the Parliament of Religions in 1893 was soon made available in a publication edited by Rev. John Henry Barrows. A copy of the two volumes was donated to the Adyar Library, Madras, by Dr Barrow. In an anonymous review of the publication in *The Theosophist*, January 1895, it was described as 'the most valuable brief of religious beliefs ever published'. This remark was followed by a comment concerning the aims of the Parliament:

As the now confessed object of the promoters of the Parliament of Religions was the vindication of the superiority of Christianity, we can understand the very strong bias of this religion which pervades Dr Barrows' work. However, as many visitors at the Congress were of opinion that the religions of the East were by no means thrown into the shade by the blaze

of Christianity, we may safely leave readers to judge for themselves whether the lesser object of vindicating Christianity was accomplished, or the far greater and nobler one of emphasizing the underlying unity of all religions.

Not having read Dr Barrows' work I cannot say whether or not it exhibits a strong bias towards the Christian faith, but I was interested to find the following remarks of his on the website of the Unitarians and Universalists of the Free Religious Association, from the Preface to the volumes in question:

RELIGION is the greatest fact of History. This book will show that it is one of the most picturesque and interesting. These volumes are enriched with views of Eastern Temples, painted and tiled Pagodas, superb and stately Mosques, humble meeting-houses and all the beautiful forms of Christian architecture in Europe and America.... This book records a grand event, the most important incident of the greatest of World Expositions. In preparing for it, the editor of these volumes has been brought into friendly and delightful relations with Catholic Archbishops, Greek Priests, Jewish Rabbis, disciples of the gentle Buddha and followers of the gravely-wise Confucius. Pleasant friendships have been formed with men of a score of Christian denominations.

Contact with the learned minds of India has inspired a new reverence for the thought of the Orient. He has seen in imagination Milton's 'Dusk faces, with white silken turbans wreathed.' And, in the disciples of Zoroaster and of the Prophet of Islam, he has found the spirit of the truest human brotherhood ... In this book will be found Theology, Science, Philosophy, Biography, History, Poetry, Experience, Political and Social Wisdom, Eloquence, Music, the rich lore of the head, the richer literature of the heart, Revelations from God, the story of Man's outreachings toward the Infinite, his triumphs and partial failures, his hopes and despairs, the bewildered efforts of noble souls... (1)

Still on the subject of the Parliament of Religions we find the following entry in Colonel Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*:

How great a success it was for us and how powerfully it stimulated public interest in our views will be recollected by all our older members. Theosophy was presented most thoroughly both before the whole Parliament, an audience of 3,000 people, and at meetings of our own for the holding of which special halls were kindly given us. A profound impression was created by the discourses of Professor G.N. Chakravarti and Mrs Besant, who is said to have risen to unusual heights of eloquence, so exhilarating were the influences of the gathering. Besides those who represented our Society especially, Messrs Vivekananda, V.R. Gandhi, Dharmapala, representatives of the Hindu Vedanta, Jainism, and Buddhism respectively, captivated the public, who had only heard of Indian people through the malicious reports of interested missionaries, and were now astounded to see before them and hear men who represented the ideal of spirituality and human perfectibility as taught in their respective sacred writings. Said one Chicago editor: 'We have been for years spending millions of dollars in sending missionaries to convert these men, and have had very little success; they have sent over a few men, and have converted everybody'.

Colonel Olcott then includes a report made to a London newspaper by Annie Besant:

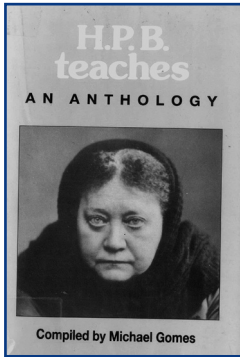
The Theosophical Congress, as said one of the leading Chicago papers, was a rival of the Parliament itself in the interest it excited. The plan of the Department of Religion was a good one. Each body strong enough to hold one had a congress of its own on one or more days, fixed by the committee; in addition to this chosen speakers occupied one session in presenting the views of their body to the Parliament. The Theosophical Society was given two days for its congress, the evening of the second day being devoted to the presentation of Theosophy before the Parliament. The hall originally granted to it seated about 300 people, but it was so densely packed before the first meeting opened, that the managers gave us another hall seating about 1,200. This was promptly filled, and at each succeeding session the crowds grew, filling passages and packing every inch of room, until at our fifth session two adjoining halls were offered us, and we held two overflow meetings in addition to our regular session. The sixth session was the presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament, and some 3,000 people gathered in a large hall. So intense was the interest shown that the management most generously offered us the use of the great hall for an additional meeting on the following night, and it was packed with eager listeners. (2)

The Theosophical Society was represented by William Q. Judge, Annie Besant and Isabel Cooper-Oakley, among others. ✠

References:

1. <http://www.prism.net/user/fcarpenter/parliam.html>
2. H.S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume v, TPH, Adyar, Madras, 1975, p.35-7.

Reviews...



*HPB Teaches:
An Anthology*

*Compiled by
Michael Gomes*

Published by Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, 1st Reprint 2006, 526 pp

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who preferred to be known as HPB, wrote almost one thousand articles, essays and letters to journals between 1874 and 1891, in addition to her more well-known books. Her subjects encompassed metaphysics, psychology, philosophy, ancient religions, zoology, natural sciences, occult symbolism, spiritual evolution, after death states, cycles, doppelgangers, human destiny and guidance on moral and social issues.

Michael Gomes must be commended for his excellent work in the difficult task of selecting just forty for this anthology. The articles are divided into seven sections, in chronological order, and each section is prefaced by a short introduction by the compiler. The whole is completed by an excellent index.

The first section—American 1874-1878—begins with “A Few Questions to Hiram”. This article was HPB’s response to an article on Rosicrucianism, published in the July 1875 Boston Spiritualist weekly, the *Spiritual*

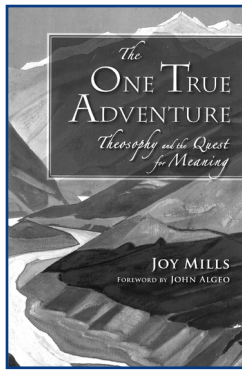
Scientist. HPB described this article as ‘My first Occult shot’. The six following sections cover Bombay 1879-1882; Madras 1883-1885; Europe 1886-1887; England 1887-1888; Blavatsky Lodge, London; England 1889-1891. The subjects treated include The Number Seven, Stars and Numbers, Reincarnation in Tibet, *Chelas* and Lay *Chelas*, Have Animals Souls?, Christian Science, Genius, and Hypnotism and it’s Relations to Other Modes of Fascination.

Even more remarkable is the fact that HPB was not proficient in the English language when she first began her literary output. In the last article, “My Books”, she wrote: ‘Until 1874 I had never published any work in any language’. But she gave full credit to those who helped to correct her faulty English.

Her exceptional and beautiful descriptive powers are at their peak in her short story “Karmic Visions”, believed to be a record of the reincarnation of Clovis, King of the Franks (466-511 CE.) as Frederick III (1831-1888), King of Prussia, Emperor of Germany.

In all her works there is a vitality which engages the mind of the reader. In this anthology every article stands alone, and one can dip into it at will. It will enhance any theosophical library and be a valuable addition to the home library.

Noel Duzevich



The One True Adventure: Theosophy and the Quest for Meaning

Joy Mills

Published by Quest Books, US\$ 24.95pb, 356pp

Some years ago Anton Lysy put an idea to Joy Mills: to compile an anthology of her essays. Subsequently, Lysy, Dean of Studies at the Theosophical Society Headquarters in America, spent hours in the Olcott Memorial Library searching through old journals to find Mills' past writings, examining and selecting those which would be the most suitable. The project did not take off immediately, but lay in a fallow state until revived by David Bruce, Director of the Department of Education at Olcott. Bruce was responsible for reviewing and categorising the articles into four topic areas, which eventuated in the anthology published in 2008 by Quest Books—*The One True Adventure: Theosophy and the Quest for Meaning*.

A Grande Doyenne of the Theosophical Society, Ms Mills has served as National President of the American and Australian Sections of the Society, and as International Vice-President. She is also an accomplished essayist. This anthology spans 60 years of her writings and the four categories into which the essays are grouped—The Human Condition; Our Hidden Potential; Esoteric Teachings and Self-Transformation—have

been set chronologically within each group.

The typeset is fairly large for easier reading; the index is more than adequate and the cover featuring Nicholas Roerich's *Chandra-Bhaga* adds to the overall aesthetics. Mills accompanies us on a journey which is the evolutionary progress of our Pilgrim Soul, offering not only knowledge but her wisdom. She presents guidelines, with the three objects of the Theosophical Society featuring as directional signposts for us on this heroic journey of transformation, which traverses the state of 'non-knowing and bondage to the realm of the Gods'. Reflecting the richness of the symbolism and allegory of the text, the title itself is evocative, recalling the original Old French *aventure*, a word containing a wealth of meaning, but basically signifying both *karma* and *dharma*, the keys which accompany the traveller. She points out that *karma* is only one half of the key that unlocks the meaning of existence as we travel the pathway that leads on to the gods—*dharma* is the other half that unlocks the meaning and purpose of existence.

Joy asks questions and does not always answer them. She directs, as an experienced guide, but the quest is ours. To understand ourselves and our world, the search must be our own. The path, also, is ours. She points us to advice given by HP Blavatsky: Follow not me, nor my Path, but the Path I show, which leads to the Masters.

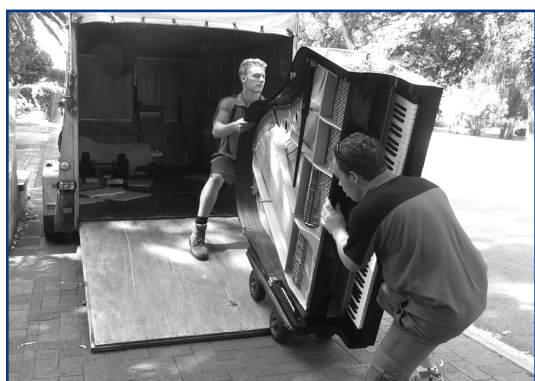
Thomas de Quincy, writing around 1840, compared the functions of the literature of knowledge, which teaches, and the literature of power, which moves the reader. In her essays Ms Mills does both and ultimately inspires; and by adhering to the comments made by John Algeo in the Foreword of this book, 'to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest', we could be well facilitating our own personal journey.

Janice Scarabottolo

NEWS and NOTES

Special Thanks

The June issue will be devoted to articles and other material related to the annual convention, but in the meantime a special vote of thanks must be given to the members of Perth Branch who made convention this January such a delightful event. Their most astonishing feat must surely have been to have produced a grand piano at the 11th hour just prior to the superb (mainly) classical vocal concert which they organised for the delight and entertainment of the delegates. Fortunately a number of photographers captured the conjuring up of the piano and then its dematerialisation. Dr Helen Lambert kindly sent in this photograph, which even in grayscale may give some indication of the feat involved in the loan and transportation of



the Hudson & Son piano. It was loaned to the Perth Branch by Peter Hudson's Piano World and had to be disassembled for transportation to the venue, at the expense of Perth Branch.

Annual Appointments

The National Council and the national Executive Committee have made the following appointments for 2009:

National Vice-President: Harry Bayens

National Treasurer: Marie Brennan

Assistant Treasurer: Beatrice Malka

Education Coordinator: Dara Tatray (to June) and Edi Bilimoria from July

National Executive Committee: The three ex-officio members (National President, National Secretary, National Treasurer); Beatrice Malka; Zehra Bharucha; Ken Edwards; Simon O'Rourke; Marlene Bell.

Supporting Lecturers: Denise Frost and Brian Parry were appointed from June 2008 to June 2009

Education Unit

As was announced at the Annual Convention Business meeting, the National Council has appointed Dr Edi Bilimoria the Education Coordinator, following Pedro Oliveira's move to our International Headquarters. His taking up the position will depend on a successful visa application, which process is currently underway. In the meantime two new initiatives are soon to begin. The first is the creation of a *Guide to Resources Available for the Study of Theosophy and the Theosophical Society*. This is a long-term project which will result in an online resource, and an occasional printed publication, the

aim of which is to facilitate and encourage study by making those resources more readily accessible and hopefully more enticing. The second educational initiative is in very early stages of planning. The Education Unit will be putting together a comprehensive syllabus, in a structured series, covering the range and reach of theosophical studies from a broad perspective. Once this has achieved some semblance of structure, Lodges and Branches will be asked if their members would like to participate in the co-creation of a number of units or segments of the course/s. Those wishing to participate could select a topic from the syllabus and perhaps arrange a study group along those lines with a view to producing something which could be used by the Education Unit and made available to members in the TS nation-wide. A rough template on which to base the finished product might go out with the topics list, and the final result will be polished up by the Education Unit (if necessary). Eventually this would result in a substantial bank of lectures, workshops and short courses available for use in programming for the TS in Australia. The Education Unit at present consists of Dara Tatray, Edi Bilimoria (*in absentia*) and Ruth Holt (in Tasmania).

The National Museum

We have received a request from the National Museum of Australia for photographs, posters, books, programmes or other items relating to the theosophical movement in this country. Their preference would be for items with a strong personal story attached to them. These may relate to the Garden Schools, the early years of radio 2GB, the establishment of Lodges, the establishment of TS bookshops, international speakers; anything to do with the TS or the wider theosophical movement in Australia. Should the Museum acquire any objects from us it would help future curators plan exhibitions relating to spirituality or religion in Australia. Any member who is

willing to part with anything of this nature, or who wishes to discuss the matter, may contact Alison Wishart on (02) 6208 5466. It should be noted that not all objects acquired by the Museum go on display, and not all objects offered are accepted. Information about the Museum's collection is available online at www.nma.gov.au/collections.

World Congress Italy 2010

The Societa Theosofica Italiana is hosting the next Theosophical World Congress, from 10-15 July 2010, and would like to issue an invitation to all Australian members. The venue chosen for the event is Summit Roma Hotel and Convention Centre, Via della Stazione Aurelia 99, on top of a hill in the main hotel district of Rome, just six kilometres from St Peter's Cathedral—a hop, skip and a jump to Vatican City. For those not wishing to hop, skip or jump all the way there, good transport connections are available. And all this in quiet, relaxing surrounds. The cost is 88 euros per person in a shared room and 110 euros per person in a single room. This price includes accommodation and three meals daily. A shuttle service is available to and from the airport. The Italian Section has very generously kept the cost to us at a minimum by paying the additional costs involved in hosting the convention, such as meeting room hire.

The World Congress occurs roughly once every seven years, beginning in Paris, 1921, under the Presidency of Annie Besant. The discussions and talks at the first Congress were devoted largely to the theme of educating the young. A brief report on the event in *The New York Times* mentioned that it was attended by 1,400 members representing thirty-four nations. That fact was followed by the interesting observation that the many German delegates present were found to be speaking 'their own language freely'; and the French delegates mingled 'with their former enemies, in conformity with the

theosophical idea of brotherhood' (*The New York Times*, July 27, 1921). In 1921 that would, indeed, have been noteworthy, and it serves as a reminder that the creation of a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity ought not be taken for granted. Sydney hosted the ninth World Congress in 2001 and we look forward to the upcoming event in Rome, one of the great cities of the world. The theme of the next Congress is yet to be announced. More information about the venue may be found at www.srh.it.

The 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions

The theme of this Parliament is *Make a World of Difference: Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth*. It will focus on indigenous peoples around the globe, highlighting the Aboriginal communities of Australia, but also general issues of deepening our spirituality and recognising the humanity of the other. Some of the main speakers include His Holiness the Dalai Lama; Fr. Laurence Freeman, Director of The World Community for Christian Meditation, UK; Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, Founder of JUST, Malaysia; and Dr. Karan Singh MP, former Minister for Education and Culture, India. Negotiations are currently underway for the Australian Section Headquarters to host an exhibition at the Convention Centre in conjunction with Melbourne Lodge. The National President has submitted a proposal for a talk or interactive workshop entitled *The Scientific Basis of Universal Brotherhood*. Decisions regarding program acceptance will be made by June 2009. The summary of the proposal follows:

If we wish to cultivate harmony among the religious, spiritual and other traditions of the world, without which there can be no peace on earth, it would be helpful if more of us understood that universal brotherhood is not just an ideal towards which we might strive, it is the truth about

reality. Universal brotherhood as a fact in nature has the potential to heal cultural, religious and social rifts. It refers to our physical and spiritual oneness, to our shared origins and shared IDENTITY in the âtman or universal Self which permeates all of matter and nature as the source of our lives, the final goal of our endeavours and the space from which all of matter arises.

This identity of origin and goal is the ultimate rationale to the brotherhood of mankind: each of us is literally made of the same stuff. The physicist David Bohm once remarked that the truth about reality is undivided wholeness, if we are fragmented we must blame it on ourselves. This paper presents some of the scientific evidence for wholeness and unity, in support of the first Object of the Theosophical Society.

The National Library

The National Library of Australia sought permission to archive the web-based publications of the Theosophical Society in Australia, from the Section's website. Permission was granted to archive our online publications in perpetuity. This will serve to enhance the online presence of the TS and its growing connection with academic institutions in this country.

National Council Submissions

The National Council will meet again in June this year. National members and Lodges/Branches and Groups who wish to present their views to the Council through their State Representatives should note that the deadline for submissions will be 30 April 2009.

Book Gift

Enclosed with this issue is the book *An Introduction to Yoga* by Annie Besant, which is being sent out free to members courtesy of the Annual Fund.