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INSIDE

The Five Seeds

Creating Your Life: Buddhism Working Part 2

The Wisdom of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*

2018 National Convention, Brisbane

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Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasise the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none of which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H.P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties.

The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

*Resolution passed by the General Council
of the Theosophical Society (1924)*



Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organisation entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title, ‘The Theosophical Society’.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organisation.

*Resolution passed by the General Council
of the Theosophical Society (1949)*



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The Theosophical Society welcomes students or seekers from all walks of life, belonging to any religion or to none and who are in sympathy with its Objects. It was formed to assist in showing to people that Theosophy exists, and 'to ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities'. Wisdom is known by a mind that is completely open. Therefore freedom of thought and open enquiry are given special emphasis in the Society. **Theosophy** essentially refers to 'Divine Wisdom', Sacred Knowledge, which is a transcendent state of consciousness. In a secondary sense, Theosophy is an ancient yet distinct stream of enquiry, exploring and interpreting the truths of existence in terms suited to particular ages, e.g. in the teachings of ancient India, ancient China, Platonism, Neoplatonism, and, since 1875, through the contribution of the TS. At the core of Theosophy is the principle of indivisible Unity underlying the diversity of forms.

CONTENTS

74	From the National President
75	The Five Seeds
82	Creating Your Life: Buddhism Working Part 2
89	The Wisdom of the <i>Brihadaranyaka Upanishad</i>
96	Q and A
98	Education
99	2018 TS World Congress
100	National Calendar of Events
101	2018 National Convention
102	Where Tales are Told - poem
103	Review
105	News and Notes
107	Section Directory

The Three Objects of The Theosophical Society

- I. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
~
- II. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
~
- III. To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the human being.

From the National President

Linda Oliveira



The pages of this issue include thoughts by International President Tim Boyd on what he terms the ‘five seeds’, being five Theosophical principles and the possibility of their application.

The metaphor of a seed has universal applicability, because of the continuous cycles it denotes. Seeds, which contain certain potentialities, germinate underground when conditions are favourable. But growth can proceed apace with the addition of sunlight. Similarly, much of human consciousness is hidden from our everyday perception, destined to emerge only in the fullness of time.

The first and fifth seeds mentioned by Tim Boyd – Unity and spiritual evolution – enjoy a mutual relationship. This is because spiritual evolution demands of us an unwavering alignment with the wholeness of life. The seeds of our latent powers such as intuition, compassion, spiritual discernment, insight and spiritual will may be largely hidden, yet will emerge inevitably in the course of time. However, such an alignment may tend to be intermittent in daily life.

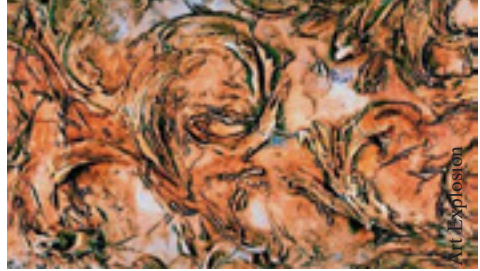
Humanity’s journey towards wholeness is slow and arduous. This is underscored every time there is another story in the media about terror, violence, and so forth.

Individual departures from wholeness are inevitable, for the human adventure requires us to experience separateness before it is possible to move, consciously, towards union with the Source of being. Fragmentation occurs when we judge another person based on his or her appearance, ethnicity, religious affiliation, perceived weaknesses, or any other factor. Therefore, it is we who create separation.

Travel is very accessible to many people today. Meeting individuals from different cultures in their own environments helps foster acceptance and understanding. Viewing far off places from the comfort of our screens is informative, but limited; the immediacy of experience is of a different order. And our first Object points to that increasingly universal and unified consciousness, towards which people possessed of awareness and sensitivity can usefully aspire.

The Five Seeds

Tim Boyd



I want to share a few thoughts about the Five Seeds, some basic Theosophical principles, and the possibility of their application.

There is a need for a conceptual foundation in everything that we do. In the late 1800s when Theosophy was reintroduced to the world it was intended to engage the highest minds. The mental principle is something that needs to be activated, but also observed and utilised appropriately. A familiar example illustrates the point: If you cross a river on a raft, once you get to the other side, continuing to carry the raft with you would be foolish as the raft would have served its function. Similarly, with this mental principle; there are certain things that we need to understand, otherwise it becomes the user and we become the used.

Coping with Extreme Circumstances

About twenty years ago I lived in Chicago. Tibetan monks would stay

at my house when they were visiting the city. Sometimes there would be ten or twelve monks, almost always from the lineage of H.H. the Dalai Lama.

On one occasion, a very old Lama and his attendant came to stay. He was a Rimpoche who did not leave Tibet when the Dalai Lama and others made their exit at the time of the Chinese occupation. For whatever reason, he had to stay behind, and was imprisoned by the communist Chinese. His imprisonment involved ‘re-education’ and its accompanying torture over a period of almost twenty years. In trying to address this situation he looked to the Tibetan Buddhist teachings, viewing this as an opportunity to explore their genuine value.

As a high Lama, this Rimpoche was a Vajrayana practitioner, which included initiations that introduce one to various Enlightened beings. As part of the practice one can actually arise as one of those beings. He tried to take on

one character, so that when he was led around a circle of people who abused him in the prison, he himself would not be abused. On one occasion, he arose as Yamāntuka, the most fearsome of deities. Yamāntuka is said to be so powerful and so terrifying that even the other gods flee when he appears. When the Rimpoche walked around the circle, it was Yamāntuka who was receiving the blows and abuse, but he said that somehow this did not work, so he tried other deities.

Then he fell back on the meditative training he had received during his time as a monk – practices with which he could separate the consciousness from the body. He said that this was also not effective.

However, there was a solution. Rimpoche found that the only fully effective way of approaching his situation was through the simplest and most widely taught Buddhist teaching – the practice of love and compassion.

Reincarnation is deeply embedded in Buddhism. According to Buddhist teaching, every person who exists has been in contact with every other; during some lifetime every person has been a person who has only wished for your wellbeing, and has tried to nurture you. The teaching even goes so far as

to say that every single being was once your mother. He asked what would be our response if any one of us walked into our mother's home, and for some reason suddenly she was abusing us and acting in very unloving ways. Would we want to fight her and destroy her? Would she be someone we suddenly hated for the way they treated us? Or perhaps we would think: 'Something is extremely wrong for some reason, this being who has been so loving has suddenly gone mad, and needs my love and compassion more than ever.' Hence, his experience in prison became something quite different. In facing each one of these people, he saw how deeply they were abusing themselves; how they were cutting themselves off from their higher potential; how they were creating sufferings for themselves that they were yet to experience. It was this transformative teaching that carried him through the harrowing experience.

Knowledge and Wisdom

For those of us who have embraced a spiritual path, the hope is that we never encounter an experience like the Rimpoche's. However, somewhere along our brief life span, we need to put life into its proper perspective. So we turn to such things as Theosophy, which speaks to something beyond this personal moment.



Alfred Einstein once said, ‘there is no problem that can be solved on the same level of consciousness at which it was created.’ What, then, is the solution for violence or war in the world? The solution at that very same level is to exert even greater violence. When it becomes suppressed, we say there is peace, because a greater violence suppresses the lesser. But is this a solution? It doesn’t seem to be. Some other level of understanding needs to be applied.

There is the expression, ‘knowledge is power’. At a certain level, perhaps it is. There are many problems in this world. The recent decision by world leaders that collectively we must move to an energy neutral position is a wonderful breakthrough, but this has occurred

because we are obviously facing severe issues such as pollution of air, water and earth; it is no mystery how these have been spoiled. There are wars and economic imbalances too. Knowing all this should make us start thinking and asking questions. However, the knowledge is not applied. At its own level, no problem can be solved.

On the other hand, there are deeper realms of understanding. Wisdom stands above anything we can identify as knowledge. It has the potential to inform our consciousness. This is the level at which the work needs to begin.

In every age Theosophy appears in the form required. Obviously its reach is beyond our comprehension. In one poem, Robert Browning said that a

man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for? We should always be reaching for that which we are incapable of grasping. Otherwise, what is the purpose of this Wisdom Teaching if it only leads us to where we are? So let us now consider these Five Seeds, which are part of the great riches of Theosophical teachings.

The First Seed - Unity

The idea of Universal Brotherhood, that we accept so easily, is the law of the world these days. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by the United Nations after the carnage of World War II, is enforceable worldwide. In 1875, when the First Object of the Theosophical Society was being formed in the United States, slavery had ended just ten years prior, although its effects were still evident. Worldwide civil rights and human rights movements were formed, and the rights of the individual were proclaimed.

However, the brotherhood that Theosophy speaks of is a fundamental unity of all beings, of all life. So this First Seed introduced with the Theosophical teachings is Unity, Oneness.

In *The Voice of the Silence* there is a quote about compassion which says:

'Compassion is no attribute, it is the Law of Laws'. I remember hearing that quote over the years and asking, 'How does compassion rise to the level of being the one law above all others?' A conventional understanding of compassion is very clearly defined in Buddhist practice as the desire to relieve the suffering of other beings. Basically, it begins with a recognition of suffering. In that process the centre from which one operates expands; it includes another. Anybody who has a family, a loved one, or a pet immediately embraces their need and seeks to alleviate it. Taking this to its logical extreme, in the history of humanity you find great Beings. What has characterised those people? Whether you are talking about a Jesus, a Krishna, a Buddha or a Mohammed, their compassionate nature embraces all beings. So compassion, when expressed in its extreme, is really nothing less than this Law of Oneness, Unity.

Generosity and compassion are hard-wired into us and it takes an lot to resist being compassionate. The main thing that blocks it is our overly analytical minds.

So, the First Seed is this Unity – Oneness.

The Second Seed – Multidimensionality

The Inner Founders of the TS planted the seed of Theosophy into the soil of human consciousness, to mature and ripen within the multidimensional nature of everything. We live in a multidimensional universe and are multidimensional beings. This is profound, because it takes us out of the conventional thinking that we are merely material beings who are born, die and are no more; profound, because it can be experienced. Our own practice can confirm that there are levels of our being that move beyond the physical.

There is a simple meditation on the bodies, practised worldwide within the Theosophical tradition. The process begins with the physical body and the recognition that ‘I am not this physical body’; something else is viewing it. The practice goes on to include the other levels of consciousness with which we are familiar – so, ‘I am not the sensations, feelings, emotions, thoughts, or mind.’ This meditation allows us to become progressively aware of the many levels at which we can function, and also become awakened to the presence of a consciousness that exceeds them all.

So, multidimensionality is the Second Seed, and meditation practice allows us to recognise the various layers of our being.

The Third Seed – No Empty Space

The Third Seed that comes with Theosophical teaching is the idea that there is no such thing as empty space; that this is an intelligent universe, filled with intelligent beings, even though the form and the nature of those beings are not visible to the physical eye. Expressed in Biblical terms, the idea is that we ‘live, move and have our being’ within an all-encompassing consciousness. Our particular expression of that consciousness is just one limited aspect of it, yet we have the capacity to embrace it all.

As there is no empty space, how do we interact with these intelligences within which we live and move? The Mahatma Letters mention how, from moment to moment, we are ‘peopling our current in space’. At every single moment thoughts are flowing out of us, which attract and coalesce with life forms that are unseen. In turn those unseen forms magnify, and give consistent life to, this energy.

We can work with this once we have recognised that there is this inner

I would say that the highest form of prayer is the recognition that there is an over-arching consciousness, which sustains all life. This consciousness pours itself into us, and through us, continually and unendingly, and at a greater capacity according to our ability to open to it. To recognise this is a powerful thing. It is the source of healing.

world within which we participate, like it or not. There is a certain power inherent in this – we can make choices. One choice emphasised in spiritual traditions throughout history and around the world is outstandingly effective. This might be called mantra in India and Tibet, or prayer in the Western world. These work on many levels. There are ways of reproducing sounds or vibrations that set energies into motion. When these are linked to a sufficiently pure intention, deeper levels are accessed. Therefore it is not just words, but the consciousness they are linked to, which gives them genuine power.

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The Fourth Seed – Self-Responsibility

The Fourth Seed is similar to the third in the sense that it relates to self-responsibility. *The Idyll of the White Lotus* is a beautiful story, but at the end the protagonist speaks the three great truths. The third truth says that each person is their own ‘absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to themselves, the decreer of their life, their reward or punishment.’ The truth behind that, is that your condition is not determined by people or circumstances. There are choices to be made at every moment.

Many people say that the purpose of life is to prepare for the moment of death. For most of us that moment is very uncontrolled. In Buddhist practice they walk you through the stages of dying and, at the point of death, the clear light of the Buddha mind appears. Very often at that moment people just move right past, because they’re fearful, or because they’re worrying about what will become of their family, or many things. In most traditions, the way that

we interact with that particular moment determines what lies ahead for us.

Basically we need to become aware, and we do this by making various choices for which we are responsible over the course of a lifetime.

So, self-responsibility is this Fourth Seed and its application manifests in the variety of choices that we consciously make.

The Fifth Seed – Spiritual Evolution

The fifth seed introduced through the Theosophical teachings is that of spiritual evolution. We know about Darwinian ideas on evolution, the survival of the fittest determining the development of different forms. But spiritual evolution is the potential unfoldment of the powers that are latent within us, something not spoken of in other traditions. There is the potential for each of us to perfect the vehicles and the lives that we have. This is the seed that points us in the direction of

an understanding and appreciation of the Masters of the Wisdom. There is a spiritual line of evolution, or unfoldment of the spirit, that connects us from the lowest up to the highest. It would be good for us to dwell on this idea.

So, there are our five seeds: Oneness or Unity, our multidimensional universe and being, no empty space, self-responsibility, and spiritual evolution, together with the necessary applications.



This article is based on a talk by International President Tim Boyd at the 2016 Convention held in Perth.



Creating Your Life: Buddhism Working Part 2 The Five Precepts, Dependent Origination and Enlightenment

Sue Lee



Okavango water lilies, J. van der Crabben, Wikimedia Commons

In a previous article I described some elements of the Buddha's teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path [June 2017 issue – Ed.]; and that following this path leads to liberation from Samsāra. I also explained some reasons why one would seek liberation from Samsāra.

This article gives more detail about the path of Liberation and the nature of existence, according to the Buddha's teachings. I include a description of the life of Mae Chee Kaew, a Buddhist nun whose journal on her long life as a nun, and her final Enlightenment is translated for us in her book.¹

In order to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, there are rules to live by known as precepts, and for the ordinary lay person these are:

- To refrain from destroying living creatures
- To refrain from taking what is not given
- To refrain from sexual misconduct

- To refrain from lying
- To refrain from intoxicating liquors and drugs which cloud the mind

Following these precepts and adopting the steps on the Eightfold path is the way to liberation: freedom from Samsāra and the cessation of suffering.

Dependent Origination is a concept that underlies the Buddhist teachings because it explains why we exist, and the nature of that existence. In this context, 'Origination' means how we originate as beings and how the universe originates. 'Dependent' refers to the fact that our existence is dependent on something. That something is the conviction that we exist; the mind's belief in itself as a being.

Everything that makes us think we are an individual promulgates a belief in ourselves and brings us into being (rebirth) time and time again. This

prolongs the process of being born an individual, as long as we keep on believing that we are an individual.

The Buddha taught that we are not self. We are collection of five aggregates (*khandhas*) that form the personality. This is how he described them:

- Material form: the physical form with its sense faculties.
- Feeling: the affective element in experience, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.
- Perception: the factor responsible for noting the qualities of things and which accounts for recognition and memory.
- Formations: an umbrella term that includes all volitional (will), emotional and intellectual aspects of mental life.
- Consciousness: the basic awareness of an object depending on our understanding and perception.

These are the elements of personality that make us feel that we are a self; an individual.

The Buddha's teaching is that we should view these as mind objects only, not as independent qualities, entities or things. Attachment to our own identity as we perceive it, and to elements of the world around us, strengthen the delusion of existence. Craving for life makes us cling to everything that

makes life meaningful, and it brings us continually back into being: rebirth. So rebirth is dependent on the craving for life and everything about it, and on clinging to it. As my teacher Ajahn Brahm mentions, that is what provides the fuel for rebirth. That is Dependent Origination.

To *cease* the process of rebirth and to attain Nibbāna. The Suttas describe this process:

- Through the total fading away and extinction of craving, clinging is extinguished.
- Through the extinction of clinging, the process of becoming is extinguished.
- Through the extinction of the process of becoming, Rebirth is extinguished.
- Through the extinction of Rebirth, decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair are extinguished.

If you can see that all life results in decay and death and that sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair follow on from this, then you can see a reason to seek liberation from it.

In order to attain Liberation from Rebirth, we follow the Eightfold Path and the precepts. To do that effectively, we will need to overcome the defilements in our nature which

interfere with our progress. These are described in the Suttas as Lust, Hatred, Delusion, Sensual Desire and Ill-will. These are the hooks that keep us devoted to this life we live, and which hinder our attempts to reach higher ground.

Lust is what gives energy to our desire for life.

Hatred is what keeps us hooked on the negatives and it does have a persuasive energy of its own.

Delusion is what keeps the veil in place so that we think all this is real.

Sensual desire is dedicated to the 'pleasant' side of life – the comfort zone.

Ill-will is the soft option of hate: the dulled down version that lets us cling to the negative without feeling so bad about it.

These are the qualities we have to overcome in order to advance, and they can be very compelling.

The Stages of Spiritual Development

While travelling the path to Enlightenment we pass through stages of spiritual development, which the Buddha refers to as entering upon the supra-mundane paths. These are:

1. Stream Enterer – Sky Walker – *Sotapanna*

Unlike the rest of humanity, a Stream

Enterer can no longer be reborn in a lower form than the human. This being is carried inevitably to Nibbāna and has seven more lives to live, which will take place either in the human world or in a heaven realm. This being has eradicated these defilements:

- The view of self among the five aggregates that form the personality.
- Doubt in the Buddha and his teachings.
- Adherence to external rules and observances, either ritualistic or aesthetic, in the belief that they can bring purification.

If Enlightenment is not attained by the end of the seventh life, this being will be reborn in Devachan and will not attain rebirth in a physical world.

2. The Once Returner - *Sakadagamin*. Only one more life.

This being has attenuated to a great degree the defilements of:

- Lust
- Hatred
- Delusion

3. The Non-returner – *Anagamin*

This being has eradicated the defilements of:

- Sensual desire
- Ill-will

4. The *Arahant* – fully liberated one

This being has seen the destruction

of all defilements and has attained freedom from future rebirths. *Nibbāna* is the state that denotes the end of an *arahant's* life. The Buddha describes this as the highest bliss, as the supreme state of sublime peace, as the ageless, deathless and sorrowless, as the supreme security from bondage.

It is apparent that there is a specific pattern in the stages on the Path which is not haphazard or ill-defined. The Buddha taught that one must follow specific steps in life, and to serve this purpose, the Eightfold path and the precepts were set down. Then Stream Entry becomes possible.

Enlightenment and its Shadow

Enlightened Beings have overcome all the defilements, and have seen the truth of existence. They have no attachments: there is no unfinished business and there is nothing to bring them back into being. They have achieved Liberation, and an end to all suffering. In doing so they have seen this:

Peeling away the *khandhas*, the layers of personality, 'cannot be identified as self, as an enduring and substantial ground of personal identity.' That is a direct quote.² Peel them away and there is no heart in the centre of this

Enlightened Beings have overcome all the defilements, and have seen the truth of existence. They have no attachments: there is no unfinished business and there is nothing to bring them back into being. They have achieved Liberation, and an end to all suffering.

onion. There is nothing in there. That is the meaning of the Buddhist 'No Self'. The conviction that we are a self is what we are all clinging to like grim death, as if it were our last chance at something. It isn't; the 'self' is just a clump of aggregates, mind objects.

While it may sound harsh, consider this:

Supposing it's true that you don't exist: you are just an illusion constructed by force fields, a bit like a hologram whose original living model died, leaving a shadow being that is unattached to anything. That shadow being continues to crawl around the face of this planet acting out a life, unaware that it is just a shadow being and really, lacking the will to care very much about its origins. If that were the case, wouldn't you want to know?



Rattanakosin-Budds Wat Bangkok, Arun
Heinrich Damm Wikimedia Commons

You might say: ‘But won’t all the pain, and misery, and death be yours too?’ And I might say: ‘Perhaps in that state, I might have a very different perspective on anything so transient. A universe, after all, is going to have a pan-dimensional perspective and I, at the moment, can only manage three dimensional – on a good day. I can *imagine* a pan-dimensional perspective, but I cannot truly know it.

The complexity of all this is that life is, in fact, important. We all feel that with every fibre of our being – if I may call it that! The Buddha’s teachings are rich and varied on topics that encourage good living and which seem to validate life as something that matters, and that needs to be done well. The Dhamma encourages us to live well and be

happy. See the Metta Sutta. These are not the writings of someone who thinks that life is not important.

It’s not that this life in its individual form does not matter: it does. It’s just that there is so much more.

I look at the night sky on a clear night and can understand why it has taken so long for scientists to find planets like ours until very recently; it is so big out there. That’s easy to grasp: you just have to look, in every direction.

What is much harder to grasp is that it’s so big in *here*: I have my hand on my heart as I write this, though you can’t see me. It’s so big in here and so far, I have only had glimpses, but they are enough to keep me going.

And at the end of all the arguments, the Dhamma tells us that we don't have to imagine this: we can experience it. Then we will *know*. The teachers of the Dhamma only point the way: we have to take the steps ourselves. In doing so, the beautiful states of meditation reveal such radiance and joy that one can see there is no need to fear anything. Furthermore, regular deep meditation does make one feel much happier and helps one to deal kindly with life's inevitable problems. Light shines unexpectedly, I have found, just when I thought it was dark.

There are many who have achieved this. Modern Buddhism has done much to spell out, in simple language, that which once would have been hidden as privileged information for a few.

Mae Chee Kaew

One such source is the autobiography of Mae Chee Kaew, a simple village girl who lived and died in north-east Thailand, a region rich in the monastic tradition of the Buddha. She became a nun and kept a journal, so we can follow easily her rich and varied existence as she explored the psychic worlds and the teachings of the Buddha. She had wonderful teachers, such as Ajahn Mun, who was the teacher of Ajahn

Chah, who was the teacher of my teacher, Ajahn Brahm. Such a long and interesting life she had, and she very graciously shared her weaknesses and difficulties on the path. In due course and after many hurdles, she reached her journey's end. Her journal describes what actually happens when you become Enlightened. This topic which is shrouded in mystery, is described by one who went before us.

After her Enlightenment, Mae Chee Kaew used these words to explain her state of being:

Body, mind and essence are all distinct and separate realities.

Absolutely everything is known – earth, water, fire and wind; body, feeling, memory, thought and consciousness, sounds, sights, smells, tastes, touches and emotions; anger, greed and delusion – all are known. I know them all as they exist – in their own natural states. But no matter how much I am exposed to them, I am unable to detect even an instant when they have any power over my heart. They are forever changing. But the presence that knows them never changes for an instant. It is forever unborn and undying.

This is the end of all suffering. (p.200) ¹

If anything in what I have said touches you, please find a teacher – a real one, one who is living the life. I am just a messenger. What is the difference between a real teacher and someone

like myself? The Sangha, those living in monasteries as monks or nuns, are the voice of the Dhamma. They give the teachings of the Buddha their voice. As the Dhamma rolls down through the ages, they are its instrument and its conduit, for humanity. They have the time to devote to comprehensive and profound study. Their level of meditation adds such insight to their understanding. They can do the teachings true justice, where the rest of us are a shadow of what they can achieve. Do yourself justice, and find a real teacher.

May all beings be well and happy.

Endnotes:

1. *Mae Chee Kaew: Her Journey to Spiritual Awakening and Enlightenment*, by Bhikkhu Silaratano, Forest Dhamma Publications.

Free downloads at:

www.ForestDhammaBooks.com

2. *Majjhima Nikaya*, Introduction, p.28.



Sue Lee first joined the TS in 1978. She served as President of Perth Lodge and in several other positions. In 2016 she retired as Head of the Physiotherapy Department at a general hospital in Perth. She joined the Buddhist Society of WA in 1995 and attends annual retreats as well as the weekly meditation sessions. The numerous Dhamma talks she has attended over the years informs her knowledge of the Buddhist path.



Vaccha, the speculative view that the world is eternal is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is beset by suffering, by vexation, by despair, and by fever, and it does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to *Nibbana*.

'Aggivacchagotta Sutta' (To Vacchagotta on Fire), *Majjhima Nikaya*

The Wisdom of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*

Luke Michael Ironside



The purpose of this paper is an exploration of the Hindu concept of the Absolute, Brahman, through a selection and analysis of key passages from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the tenth of the *Mukhya* (or 108 major) Upanishads and one of the oldest, with scholars estimating the date of its composition to be about 700 BCE. The text is primarily a treatise on Atman, the Self, and explores subjects relating to metaphysics, ethics, and the relationship between the Self and the Absolute.

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* essentially consists of a series of instructions for disciples, inasmuch as it points the way to the knowledge of the Cosmos as a living organism, in which each emanation is related; in which all Life is One. Much of the Upanishad may be considered as being cosmogonical – concerning itself with the emanation of the Cosmos from the slumber of the Cosmic Night; with the primeval manifestation of

the Logos and its first duality – its distinction between itself and *māyā* – and thereafter, the progressive manifestation of the hierarchies, planes and principles which constitute the worlds. The Upanishad reveals the two contending forces which permeate the Universe: those of manifestation and dissolution – represented throughout the text by the Devas and the Asuras, respectively. To the disciple is revealed the mystery of the workings of these forces, which interpenetrate the world of forms, and the lives of all.

The second chapter of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* begins with a narrative, in which the learned and proud Brahmin, Balaki Gargya, approaches the king Ajatashatru with the offer to explain to him the nature of Brahman – the Ultimate Reality – to which the king responds that he will grant to Balaki a thousand cows, in return for the knowledge of such. Balaki endeavours to expound the sacred wisdom twelve times in

succession, each time providing a definition of Brahman as the soul, or *Purusha*, in various aspects of nature; such as in the sun, moon, lightning, ether, wind, fire, water, and so on. In each attempt at definition, however, the king points out its weakness, as such definitional limitation subordinates Brahman to a particular position in nature, and as such is merely a partial definition. In the light of this refutation, Balaki is thus silenced, recognising the limits of his own wisdom and understanding which he had hitherto held in such high esteem. Although Balaki was undoubtedly learned in the knowledge of the Vedas, the king possessed the higher virtue of wisdom, this springing forth from his love of Brahman. Blinded by his pride, Balaki had sought to conquer the Mystery of Mysteries, yet in the prideful quest, found himself, at the last, both mystified and conquered.

The king Ajatashatru, recognising himself as the wiser of the two, proceeds to enquire of the Brahmin: 'Dost thou know only so much, oh Balaki?' Humbled in the awareness of his own limitation, Balaki responds, 'Only so much, O king'. Ajatashatru, now as instructor, prepares to impart his knowledge: 'Thou hast vainly proposed to me; let me reveal to thee the Divine Wisdom'.

It is worth noting that in the description of the Brahmin, Balaki, he is referred to as 'learned' rather than as 'wise'. Knowledge and book learning he may possess, though he is vain of his learning and by it, conceited. It is this arrogance which, when he approaches the king Ajatashatru, impells him to at once volunteer to impart to him the Divine Wisdom, without waiting for as much as a single question from the king, and to attempt his futile exposition on the nature of Brahman by the mere recital of theoretical knowledge. To each of his definitions, the king responds that such is already known to him, yet to each he adds also the missing element of spiritual fruit, which can be attained only when that theoretical knowledge is transformed into realised Wisdom by the fire of Understanding; like gold from the alchemist's furnace.

Each of the definitions given also carries a symbolic, or esoteric, element, where the 'sun' means at once the visible sun of our solar system and the spiritual sun, or Solar Logos; and thus for each answer there is a multiple meaning, with the exoteric meaning sheathing the inner, mystical meaning contained within each. The sun, the soul of which is given by Balaki as the first definition of Brahman, can therefore be considered exoterically as the vital source of heat for life on

earth, and esoterically as standing for that higher corresponding power which nourishes and sustains the higher principles of our complex natures.

In this interpretation, the moon becomes a representation for the psychical nature in its mental and emotional aspects, which, like this twofold nature, shines by the borrowed light of a higher source – the sun – and waxes and wanes in a pendulum swing of incessant flux and influx, like the psychical nature's changing moods.

The definition of Brahman as the soul, or purusha, of lightning, likewise carries a deeper shade of meaning, revealed by the king: as lightning symbolises the transmutation of power, by which the light of understanding pierces through the darkness of *avidya*, or ignorance. Just as lightning, in the phenomenal world, breaks through and dispels the darkness of the looming clouds, so does this inner lightning dispel the ignorance of one's lower nature in the flash of consciousness that is illumination.

The spiritual nature of ether, or *Akasha*, too, is enunciated by the king, as is that of wind as a symbol of the Great Breath, by which Fohat springs forth into manifestation; and of fire also, representing in its highest form

The definition of Brahman as the soul, or purusha, of lightning, carries a deeper shade of meaning, revealed by the king: as lightning symbolises the transmutation of power, by which the light of understanding pierces through the darkness of *avidya*, or ignorance.

the divine fire of spiritual rebirth. Still yet, the definition of Brahman as the soul of water is given its inner meaning by the king, where water is regarded as standing for the reflecting power through the agency of which manifestation and self-consciousness are brought into being. As self-consciousness it may be understood as the mirror of the self, by which we perceive our own natures. In like manner does the king Ajatashatru respond to each of Balaki's definitions. These inner meanings are omitted by Balaki, yet discerned by Ajatashatru, who in his wisdom perceives the unperceived.

The definitions provided by Balaki are rooted in the chasm of duality. As such, each is only a partial definition, failing to adequately explain the whole. This leads us to a definition of Brahman provided in Chapter 2, Section 3, Verse

6 of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, which reads:

Now therefore the description (of Brahman): ‘Not this, not this.’ Because there is no other and more appropriate description than this ‘Not this.’ Now Its name: ‘The Truth of truth.’ The vital force is truth, and It is the Truth of that.

This ‘*neti neti*’ (‘neither this, nor that’) referred to in this verse, conveys the teaching of various schools of Hindu philosophy, that the Absolute – Brahman – may only be glimpsed indirectly through the negation of conceptions about it. This description of Brahman as being devoid of attributes is referred to in Hindu philosophy as *nirguna*, which is contrasted with the conception of a qualified Brahman – the Absolute characterised as possessing qualities (as being *saguna*).

‘*Neti neti*’ corresponds to the *via negativa* of Western theology, in which God is described only by negation – standing in contradistinction to the positive, or cataphatic, approach to theological reasoning. The purpose of the negative approach is to negate the rationalisations of intellectual speculation from the non-conceptual awareness of Ultimate Reality, in which union with the Absolute is attained by the denial of the body, name, form,

intellect, senses, and all such limiting adjuncts which sheathe the underlying Self, or Ātman, which is itself identical to Brahman. *Neti neti* is thus a negation of all the descriptions and conceptions about Brahman, or the Absolute, but not a negation of Brahman itself, which is by its nature undifferentiated and ineffable. As a method of enquiry, *neti neti* seeks to arrive at an understanding of Brahman, or Ultimate Reality, by first understanding what Brahman is not. Being birthless and deathless, beyond the reach of speech and mind, and existing above duality, Brahman exceeds, by necessity, every superimposed formulation and idea of discursive thought. All transitory and temporary things must therefore be negated in the quest to understand Reality, after which only the pure awareness of Brahman remains.

Turning next to the third chapter, we encounter a debate between Yajnavalkya and Gargi Vachaknavi, the ancient Indian philosopher and expounder of the Vedas, in which Gargi questions Yajnavalkya as to the nature of Brahman. Let us here examine his response given in Chapter 3.8.11, in which Yajnavalkya speaks of Brahman as the ‘Immutable’:

This Immutable, O Gargi, is never seen but is the Witness; It is never heard, but is the Hearer; It is never thought, but is



the Thinker; It is never known, but is the Knower. There is no other witness but This, no other hearer but This, no other thinker but This, no other knower but This. By this Immutable, O Gargi, is the (unmanifested) ether pervaded.

Thus, in the light of the non-dual nature of Brahman, there is only ever one Witness – the Real Self, or Ātman, which is itself identical to Brahman. Existing beyond the limitations of attributes and distinctions, it is unable to be seen, heard, thought of, or known. The very act of seeing, hearing, thinking, or knowing implies a separation – an object which may be seen, heard, thought of, or known. What Yajnavalkya is suggesting here is that the awareness of Brahman removes the dualism of the Witness and the witnessed, after which realisation only the Witness itself remains. Or, to use a famous phrase from the twentieth century philosopher, Jiddu

Krishnamurti, it is the realisation that: ‘the observer is the observed’.

In the fourth chapter, Yajnavalkya moves on to a brief discussion of the Self, before concluding that this individual Self, or *Jīvātman*, is in fact identical to the Supreme Self – Brahman. The third section discusses the concept of moksha (or liberation), and postulates that the Self suffers transmigration due to the limitations of *māyā* (or illusion). Breaking free from such limitations, through moksha, the Self experiences the Brahman that is immediate and direct; as *sat-chit-ananda* – or ‘Being-Wisdom-Bliss’. In Chapter 4.3.32, Yajnavalka states that:

It [the Self] becomes (transparent) like water, one, the witness, and without a second. This is the world (state) of Brahman, O Emperor. Thus did Yajnavalkya instruct Janaka: This is its supreme attainment, this is its supreme

glory, this is its highest world, this is its supreme bliss. On a particle of this very bliss other beings live.

When the Self transcends the illusion (māyā) of separation, it becomes as an ocean in which the ‘bubbles’ of the phenomenal world have immersed themselves in the single unity of the ocean’s body. In this state only the witness exists, without any external objects that can be witnessed, because all that exists is the non-dual unity of the Absolute, Brahman. Nothing being separate, there is nothing that the Self may see, smell, touch, or know. The illusion of separation – the distinction between the world and Brahman – is thus the result of ignorance on the part of the observer in which the reality of Brahman is lost amid the mirage of māyā. It is only by the recognition of the unity of all things that the two, the world and Brahman, become one.

In his instruction to Janaka, Yajnavalkya describes this realisation as ‘the supreme attainment ... the supreme bliss’. This total identification of the Self with all that exists is the highest attainment possible to the Self, to which state nothing is comparable. As the supreme bliss, it is contrasted with the relative joys experienced in the state of ignorance; the ‘particle of this very bliss’ on which ‘other beings live’ – i.e., those who are separated from the

supreme bliss by ignorance: by their perception of a difference between the Self and Brahman.

Key to an understanding of the relationship between the Ātman and Brahman is an exposition by Yajnavalkya found also in the fourth chapter, in which the king Janaka proposes the question: ‘What serves man for light?’ In response, Yajnavalkya provides an answer which essentially evades the question: ‘it is the sun that serves man for light.’ The king enquires further: ‘How about when the sun has set?’ ‘Then’, Yajnavalkya says, ‘it is the moon that serves man for light’. ‘And when this has likewise set?’ – ‘Then it is the fire that serves man for light.’ ‘And when the fire also is extinguished?’ – ‘Then it is the voice.’ ‘And when the voice is silenced?’ ‘Then is he himself (Ātman) his own light.’

This is merely a precursory overview of the rich treasure chest of *theosophia* that is the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Many other insights and ideas undoubtedly lie hidden within its depths, and I will leave it to the lips of those wiser and more knowledgeable than I to impart the pearls of further wisdom which may one day pave the paths of our own evolutionary trails through the spiritual landscape. I hope,

for now, that this humble analysis may serve to awaken the appetite for further study and reflection, as we – students all – unlock, one by one, the many hitherto unexplored corridors of the universal School of Wisdom of which all and each form a precious part.

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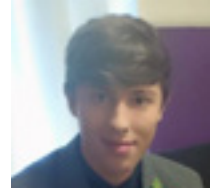
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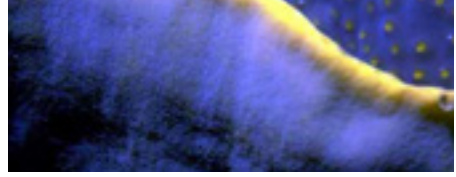


This article is adapted from a lecture delivered at the School of the Wisdom, Adyar, in 2016.

Luke Michael Ironside is a lecturer and writer on theosophical and esoteric topics from the UK. He has lectured extensively at theosophical lodges and groups in England, India, and the Philippines, and his writings have appeared in various theosophical journals. He currently resides in the Philippines, where he serves as the President of the Pandacan Lodge.



Q and A



The answers below were given by the Q and A panel during the 2017 National Convention. Panelists: Sue Lee (Perth - facilitator and participant), Kevin Davey (Adelaide), Ruth Holt (Tasmania) and Gloria Yiangou (Sydney).

Do you believe in the following? Life is like a restaurant, learn how to order what you want from life, like you do in a restaurant, and then trust that because you ordered it, it will be put before you.

SL: The subtext is that if I want something and think positively, it really should happen. So, how come it did not? It was not the way I thought it would be and was not so great. If you are still into wanting things, you need new things because the old ones tend to wear thin. Actually, I think the potential is in the things that happen which you did not order. The beauties of life often lie in what you don't expect. But even those not so nice things that we did not order are quite interesting. Not long ago, my house was broken into. A window was smashed and had to be fixed. I had been looking into the hindrances and the defilements, wondering how I was doing. I thought about hatred, but honestly did not hate the person who smashed the window – although I was

irritated. All I could think was, 'What a waste of a life, I hope that he finds a better way of making a living.' Tests like these are good. I did not order this one, but it was certainly useful.

Would you comment on the following: Your media are owned and controlled by those who wish to keep you entertained and unaware. They keep you from life and act as a substitute for experience. They peddle a chosen version of reality and completely ignore others.

KD: The media are a big problem. We need to listen carefully to what we are told and analyse it. Media have their place, but listen to the messages coming through.

RH: Do not necessarily believe everything that you hear through the media. Understand that you never get the full story, or very rarely anyway. I would say do not watch the news, turn it off. Perhaps leave it on for the weather and do your own research.



GY: I have two solutions – one immediate, and the other long-term. One is to turn off the television, do not read any newspaper and perhaps practice selective hearing. However, the longer term solution is to practice *viveka* and *vairagya*. *Viveka* is discrimination – you can choose what you want to listen to or know. *Vairagya* is dispassion and non-attachment.

SL: It is regrettable that we do not have a perfect news service. But nothing is perfect in our world. This is what Ajahn Brahm would call media *dukkha*. Single people tell him they are lonely and he calls it single person *dukkha*. Or a person whose child is going off the rails may experience parental *dukkha*. We are here in the phenomenal world, which is going to be full of *dukkha*.

**Comment on the following:
Everything is a dance of energy
that is free and simply locks itself
into shape and form, because your
perceptions are trained to see reality**

**in a certain way. Shift your reality
by shifting your perceptions.**

SL: This sounds very Buddhist because in Buddhism you look at your perceptions, which form your whole life. As a Buddhist I would be quite cautious about calling them reality. We could say that those particular perceptions are your reality at the time. It is an interesting experiment to examine your perceptions – break them apart, dissect them. Because the more you dissect them, the more they disintegrate. Then you see other things within these, dissect them in turn, and so on. Looking at yourself is a very interesting exercise because the one thing you can be certain of is that your perceptions will change, your life will change. If you look back at how you viewed a certain thing years ago, it will not be the same view now. Circumstances will be different, as will the way in which you see the same thing. Your current reality is changing before your eyes, and you realise that this is not very real either! Reality is a relative term to a Buddhist.

Education

Pedro Oliveira

On the Monad

An enquirer recently asked the following question: ‘I have found the first course* very easy to understand and helpful. I’m just not sure of the meaning of ‘Monad’, would you be able to explain it to me please? In my reply I wrote that the word Monad comes from the Greek word *monos*, meaning ‘one’. In Theosophy it represents our highest and deepest consciousness, indivisible and undivided, completely unconditioned by the process of experiences and reincarnations.

In technical terms, the Monad is *Ātma-Buddhi*, that is, the perfect union of the One, Ultimate Self, which is also Spiritual Will, with the purest form of Intuitional Wisdom which always perceives what is true in every situation.

Most of our lives on earth gravitate between the principles of *Manas* (mind) and *Kāma* (desire). It is only when the mind begins to exercise more clarity regarding its many attachments that it can begin to move towards the sphere of *Buddhi*. But only those who are truly advanced on the Path can move still further and eventually reach



union with the Monad (*Ātma-Buddhi*), which represents Enlightenment.

The passage below shows how vast is the Monad’s pilgrimage. The Sanskrit word ‘*mahamanvantara*’ means the complete period of cosmic activity in the universe, lasting for a colossal amount of time:

Every Spiritual Individuality has a gigantic evolutionary journey to perform, a tremendous gyratory progress to accomplish. First — at the very beginning of the great Mahamanvantaric rotation, from first to last of the man-bearing planets, as on each of them, the monad has to pass through seven successive races of man. ... Each of the seven races send seven ramifying branchlets from the Parent Branch: and through each of these in turn man has to evolve before he passes on to the next higher race; and that — seven times.

The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett, Letter 61, Appendix

*The ‘first course’ mentioned in the first paragraph refers to the basic course on Theosophy, which is available from the National Headquarters along with sixteen other interesting courses. Go to: <http://austheos.org.au/printed-media-study-courses/>

**11th
WORLD CONGRESS
OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY**



Singapore, 4 - 9 August 2018

Venue: Ramada and Days Hotels Complex, Zhongshan Park

Theme: TBA

TS members have the opportunity to attend a World Congress of the TS every seven years or so. These infrequent events provide an excellent opportunity to meet members from around the world. Singapore is an attractive and popular city, and our hosts will be the members of Singapore Lodge.

Cost:

The following package rates include accommodation from 3 August (check in) until 9 August (check out). They include the conference fee, breakfast, lunch and dinner from 4-8 August 2018, and breakfast on 9 August.

Days Hotel (*)**

SGD\$1,165, twin-share

SGD\$1,589, single occupancy

Ramada Hotel (**)**

SGD\$1,306, twin-share

SGD\$1,801, single occupancy

Registration:

Registrations with Singapore Lodge are now open. Go to the international TS website at: <http://www.ts-adyar.org/event/11th-world-congress>

See also: singaporelodge.org/tswc2018.htm

Additional information will be provided as it comes to hand.

Please note: Early registration is recommended as places are limited.

National Calendar of Events



Springbrook Centre

Theme: 'Science and the Ancient Wisdom'

arrivals Thurs 19 Oct – departures Sun 22 October 2017

Non-members are welcome to attend as well as TS members. Bring a friend!

Presenters: Dara Tatrav (National Secretary), Pedro Oliveira (Education Coordinator), Dr David Allan and Dr Brian Harding

Cost: \$150 members/\$180 non-members

Registration deadline: Thursday 5 October, earlier if possible.

Enquiries to: Pedro Oliveira, Education Coordinator
edcoord@austheos.org.au tel. 02 9264 7056 (Mon-Thurs)

Canyonleigh Centre

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

Theme: 'Pearls of the Orient'

Sunday 12 November 2017 10.30am-3.30pm

TS members and non-members are welcome to attend this one day event.

About this event: We will explore together Eastern sacred teachings and teachers. Intending presenters are asked to forward their request to participate, and the item they wish to present, to the coordinator, Dianne Kynaston, well before the event so that a formal programme can be planned.

Cost: \$10 per person, catering not provided

Bring: vegetarian food to share for lunch and drinks

Enquiries to: Dianne Kynaston, diannedeva@gmail.com or 02 9969 1087

Canyonleigh Centre

Theme: 'Towards Stress Free Living: Cultivating Stillness'

arrivals Fri 23 March – departures Sun 25 March 2018

Presenters: Linda Oliveira (National President), Pedro Oliveira (Education Coordinator), Marie Bertelle (meditation leader) and Brian Parry (former National Lecturer)

Cost & more information on this rescheduled event: <http://austheos.org.au/whats/>

Enquiries to: Pedro Oliveira, Education Coordinator
edcoord@austheos.org.au tel. 02 9264 7056 (Mon-Thurs)

Registration forms and further information are at: <http://www.austheos.org.au/whats/>

**2018 NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
IN AUSTRALIA**
for TS members
Sat 20 – Sat 27 January



Venue: St. John's College, University of Queensland, St. Lucia
Theme: 'The Quest for Truth, Science and the Spiritual Search'

Featured Speaker:

Professor Emeritus Richard Silberstein, neuroscientist Richard Silberstein is a long-time TS member. With over 30 years of neuroscience research experience, he is the originator of SST brain imaging technology. Richard has published over 180 papers in the form of conference presentations, journal articles and book chapters and is an invited or keynote speaker at various international scientific meetings. We are very fortunate that he has made himself available to speak at our Convention.



Cost: \$735 for 7 nights, subsidised price, includes accommodation, meals and all sessions.

Accommodation: St. John's College advises that all accommodation rooms will have ceiling fans, with shared bathrooms. Many of the rooms have a shared en suite.

Registration fee: \$40

Registration form: <http://austheos.org.au/whats/>

Registration deadline: for guaranteed rooms, live-in registrants, Thursday 30 November.

Enquiries to: Jennifer Hissey, Convention Secretary
email: catalogue@austheos.org.au

Register soon. We look forward to seeing you in Brisbane!

Where Tales are Told

Namaste Series: 14



Where Prayer flags flutter and fly on an autumn breeze in the morning's sun,
 Where Chapel bells ring, as sound travels like birdsong across distant valleys,
 ringing to all,
 Where pilgrims and peoples bow, towards the Dome of the Rock, towards the
 Kabah in Mecca, in full obeisance,
 Where menorah candles alight, Jewish peoples move in remembrance, towards
 the Temple Mount in Jerusalem,
 Where the Bodhi tree and its Leaves, point a way... and remind one gently of this
 impermanence,
 Where the Tao, the way of yin-yang, moves in dynamic life balance within the life
 circle ball of the Whole,
 Where the Hindu becomes awake within the dream, all that is is made right in the
 quest for Truth,
 Where the whole circle is grasped firmly from above the cross, in the Ankh of Life,
 Where one listens, from within these old cratons, as land waves ripple in ancient
 rocks, across tilted rolling fields of Earth,
 Then no matter what coloured garment is worn in our movements to understand
 and acknowledge the Whole,
 It is that essence of love within our hearts which makes us at one, in all its forms,
 with all of Life.
 In the breath of a smile, in a twinkle of the eye, there is always the moment of
 presence, and the interweaving touch of the One

Dr Helen Lambert

Review

***Madame Blavatsky: The Case for her Defense* (abridged and edited by Daniel H. Caldwell), Walter A. Carrithers Jr., The Blavatsky Foundation, Fresno, California, 2017, pb, \$37.52 Book Depository**

This book is a very detailed and very passionate defence of Madame Blavatsky and the controversy surrounding the Hodgson Report released by the Society for Psychical Research in 1885.

The author, who passed away in 1994, has written about this affair before in his book *Obituary – The ‘Hodgson Report’ on Madame Blavatsky*. This new book, edited by Daniel Caldwell, now looks at some other aspects of this case.

He examines the key role of the Coulombs (the handyman and housekeeper at Adyar at the time) who claimed to have assisted Blavatsky in the creation of fraudulent psychic



phenomena at the TS headquarters. The Coulombs are of course known to those interested in Theosophical history for their less than ethical conduct during their employment at Adyar, but Carrithers examines in depth their correspondence with Blavatsky as well as a pamphlet written by Emma Coulomb at the time. He demonstrates how Richard Hodgson used this pamphlet and their testimony in his report without acknowledging his source.

The Coulombs' evidence is highly contradictory, which severely dam-

ages the charges laid against Blavatsky by Hodgson in his report. Carrithers regards Hodgson's report as deliberately deceitful considering the evidence available to him when compiling his report.

Carrithers also takes an in-depth look at the Mahatma letters and the Blavatsky/Coulomb correspondence, as to their authorship and the use made of them by Hodgson.

The book is organised into four sections, the four chapters of the first section being summaries of the book which include brief biographies of Blavatsky and Hodgson, plus an outline of how his report was made. This makes it easier for the reader who may not want to go into the second and third sections that deal with the psychic phenomena at Adyar and the Mahatma letters in very great detail. In these chapters Carrithers systematically goes through the evidence and demolishes Hodgson's claims point by point, revealing the very possible forgery of some of Blavatsky's letters by the Coulombs. A final section deals with additional discoveries by the author about this case.

Although the manuscript for the book was probably written in the 1980s, the writing style has a very 19th century feel to it, which may or may not appeal

to readers. I mentioned that the book is a passionate defence of Madame Blavatsky, but that defence sometimes gets overheated and intemperate, which is a great pity because it detracts from the evidence Carrithers provides, which speaks for itself. A more dispassionate style would have had a greater impact on the reader.

The book can best be regarded as a reference work for serious students of Theosophical history. For those general readers who may not want to delve into this topic in such great depth or who are interested in the life of Madame Blavatsky, I would recommend Sylvia Cranston's biography of *HPB, The Extraordinary Life and influence of Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*, or a recent biography by Gary Lachman, *Madame Blavatsky: The Mother of Modern Spirituality*.

Richard Larkin



News and Notes



members of Perth Branch at its 120th anniversary celebration

Perth Branch's 120th Anniversary Celebration - and a Time Capsule

Perth Lodge (known these days as Perth Branch) was established on 22 June 1897. Fast forward to 18 June 2017, and it is still going strong. A well prepared overview of the Branch's history was presented during its mid-year 120th anniversary celebration. Everyone in attendance signed the visitors' book, whether they were a current member, past member or a visitor, with some 54 people attending on the day.

Along with this birthday celebration of the establishment of the Perth

Branch, a project has been initiated which is almost certainly a first for this Section. This Branch is planning to bury a time capsule on its property (with an appropriate location plaque) by the end of this year, to be opened by future members on or after 22 June 2097, destined to be the Branch's 200th anniversary.

Interested Perth Branch members have been encouraged to contribute to the time capsule a sealed letter addressed to future members, or items such as labelled photos, a small memento, a video or audio message. A copy of the *West Australian* newspaper from

22 June 2017 will be placed in the capsule, as well as a list of the names, addresses and membership diploma numbers of the Branch's members at the time of its burial. Included, too, will be some current photos of the premises and Hyde Park (immediately opposite), along with the Branch's *Link* magazine, among other things. This is sure to be a fascinating discovery when it is eventually opened, well into the future.

Melbourne Lodge - Sale of Building



In July a historic Special General Meeting of Melbourne Lodge was held at which approval was given for the sale of its Russell Street building in Melbourne city. The story was also featured in some major Melbourne newspapers. We wish the Lodge all the very best during the next eighteen months, when it will be seeking a new

premises to purchase. The Lodge's stated intention is to find another smaller building in or near Melbourne city for its activities, which include a lending library and an excellent bookshop.

Krishnamurti Videos on YouTube

The Krishnamurti Foundation Trust in the United Kingdom, which holds the copyright for all Krishnamurti media, has recently made the decision to upload all of J. Krishnamurti's videos to YouTube, for which they have created their own official YouTube channel. So far, 570 full-length videos have been uploaded. The videos include, besides Krishnamurti's talks over several decades, his many dialogues and discussions with scientists, scholars, psychologists and religious personalities.

The use of one gender to cover both genders is avoided as far as possible in this magazine. However, quotations from writings in which one gender is used in this way are printed as originally written. This applies both to older writings and some contemporary ones.

Section Directory

Australian Section National Headquarters

Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street,
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Ph: 02 9264 7056 / 9264 6404
Fax: 02 9264 5857
www.austheos.org.au

Campbell Theosophical Research Library:
campbell@austheos.org.au

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Branch, Chartered 17/7/1971:
Postal Address: c/- 53 Chataway Crescent,
Fadden ACT 2904
Meet: Friends Meeting House, cnr Bent
& Condamine Streets, Turner ACT 2612
7.30pm 1st Monday of month (Feb - May, Sep - Dec)
Emeritus Faculty ANU: 2.00pm 1st Saturday of
month (June - Aug), discussion group 2.00pm
3rd Saturday of month
President: Dr Grahame Crookham
Tel: 0490147020
email: tificrook@tpg.com.au
Secretary: position vacant
Newsletter Editor: Janice Scarabottolo
Tel: 02 6288 7656 email:janton@netspeed.com.au

New South Wales

Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:
Postal Address: PO Box 319, St Leonards NSW 2065
Meet: Suite 8, 599 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards
NSW 2065 (entrance in Albany Street)
Telephone: 02 92676955 Fax: 02 9283 3772
Email: contact@tssydney.org.au
www.tssydney.org.au
Meet: 1.00pm Wednesdays
President: Marie McArdle
Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:
Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,
Mayfield NSW 2304
7.30pm 2nd Friday each month
<http://www.austheos.org.au/newcastle/>
President: Tony Buzek
Secretary: position vacant

Tel: 0452 633 132
Email: gnlodgetheos@gmail.com

Blue Mountains Group:

Meet: Members' Lounge, Blue Mountains
Cultural Centre, 30 Parke Street (above Coles),
Katoomba NSW 2780
Meetings every Monday, 2.00pm
1st Monday of month - Public Meeting
Subsequent Mondays - *Secret Doctrine* Study Group
Coordinator: Donald Fern
Tel: 02 4757 1910

Gosford Group:

Meet: The Narara Community Centre,
Pandalala Road, Narara NSW 2250
8.00pm 2nd Tuesday each month
Coordinator: Marianne Fraser
Tel: 02 4339 7118, 0400 713 273
Email: marifraser256@gmail.com
Secretary: Roni Ostergaard
Telephone: 02 4358 1413

Northern Beaches Group:

Postal address: c/- The Manor,
2 Iluka Road, Mosman NSW 2088
Meet: c/- 22 Laitoki Road
Terrey Hills
NSW 2084
8.00 pm 3rd Friday each month
Coordinator: Dianne Kynaston

Queensland

Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:
Postal Address: 14 Herberton Rd,
Atherton QLD 4883
Meet: Meeting Room, Community Services
Tablelands, 38 Mabel St, Atherton
2.00pm 2nd Saturday of month except Jan.
President: Max Brandenberger
Secretary: Chris Pang Way
Tel: 07 4091 5156

Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:
355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000
Tel: 07 3839 1453
Email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au
www.theosophyqld.org.au
Meet: 7.30pm Wednesdays, library open 6.30-7.30pm
President: John Harris
Secretary: Lynette Muller

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,
Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556
7.00pm Thursdays
Acting President: Pam Walsh
Tel: 0427 713 061 (Pam Walsh)
Email: theosunshinecoast@gmail.com
Secretary: Pam Walsh

Toowoomba Group:

Meet: 49 Lindsay Street, Toowoomba
1st Wednesday at 7pm and 3rd Sunday
at 2:30pm each month
(Meditation 1pm & Study Group at 1:30pm)
Annual Springbrook retreat each Winter
Coordinator: Gayle Thomas
Tel: 0438 331 885

South Australia*Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:*

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: 08 8223 1129
Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au
<http://www.austheos.org.au/adelaide>
Meet: Members Meeting 10.00am 4th Friday of
every month. Please contact Lodge for additional
meeting dates.
President: Kevin Davey
Acting Secretary: Travis James

Tasmania*Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:*

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000
Tel. 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)
www.theosophicaltas.websyte.com.au
Meet: 7.30pm Mondays
President: Helen Steven
Secretary: position vacant
Email: helen_steven@live.com

Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:

54 Elizabeth Street, Launceston TAS 7250
Postal address: as above
email: launcestontheosophicalociety@gmail.com
www.austheos.org.au/launceston
Meet: 1.00pm Wednesdays except first Wednesday of
the month and National Speaker meetings, when we
meet at 7.30pm
President: Jenny Haslem
Acting Secretary: David Bevan
Tel: 0411 862 748 (David Bevan)

Victoria*Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:*

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624
email: meltheos@bigpond.com.au
Meet: usually 4th Saturday each month
President: Ken Edwards
Secretary: Edward Sinclair

Mornington Peninsula Group:

Meet: Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House,
Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday
of the month
(12.00pm meditation - 12.30pm lunch - 1.30pm
Theosophy)
Coordinator: Alice Oppen
Tel: 03 5976 3815
www.austheos.org.au/centres/mpg

Wodonga-Albury Group:

Meet: Shop 6, Tower Place, High Street,
Wodonga VIC 3690
1st Tuesday each month
Library hours Mon-Fri 10.00am-2.00pm
Coordinator/Secretary: Denis Kovacs
Tel: 02 6024 2905

Western Australia*Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:*

21 Glendower Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel/Fax: 08 9328 8104
Email: tsperth@iinet.net.au
<http://www.tsperth.com.au>
Meet: 7.30pm Tuesdays
President: Harry Bayens
Secretary: Carole Ann Webster

Mount Helena Retreat Centre:

1540 Bunning Road, Mt Helena WA 6082
All enquiries to Perth Branch
Tel: 08 9328 8104

**Theosophical Education
and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Qld**

2184 Springbrook Road,
Springbrook QLD 4213
Tel: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211
email: info@tsretreat.com.au
Caretaker: Kay Schiefelbein

