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Reincarnation: a Review of the Scientific Evidence
2019 Indo-Pacific Conference, Manila
Interview with Gerard Brennan

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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.

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Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society

To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realisation of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual Self-transformation, and the Unity of all Life.

From the National President

Linda Oliveira



This magazine is being finalised just after the completion of the first tour of the Australian Section by International President, Tim Boyd, accompanied by his wife, Lily. They arrived here from Adyar and the USA respectively. A few photos commemorating this historic tour appear on the opposite page.

The first article in this issue invites us to actively apply our consciousness of brotherhood to some real life situations; it also provides some thought provoking windows into human culture today. Another article considers what scientific evidence there is for reincarnation – a teaching to which many members of the TS are likely to adhere, or perhaps even take for granted. The case studies which are included are of particular interest. Is it possible to consider them with an impartial eye? An interview with the President of the Indo-Pacific Federation is also included in these pages.

We are a membership organisation; therefore, how we fare collectively has much to do with our numerous

interactions. For one thing, the importance of our many international, national and local gatherings cannot be underestimated. It is extraordinary how bonds are tangibly strengthened at our events. They may be regular lodge/branch meetings, or live-in activities. The latter help especially to provide a sense of connectedness, enhancing our solidarity as an organisation. I can highly recommend the experience of our live-in events. Future events at our Canyonleigh and Springbrook Centres will be announced later in the year. As well as next year's national Convention, two international events are also advertised in this magazine – the next International Convention, set to be held in Varanasi on the Ganges, and the next Indo-Pacific Conference which will be generously hosted by the Phillipine Section in Manila. We look forward to seeing a number of our members there.

Comments of up to 200 words on items in this magazine are welcome and may be published..

Visit by Tim and Lily Boyd to Australia



With staff and national Executive Committee members at the National Headquarters. left to right: Cassandra Au, Richard Larkin, Dara Tatray, Tim Boyd, Lily Boyd, Linda Oliveira, Dianne Kynaston and Rosanna Sheridan



At Blavatsky Lodge: Pedro Oliveira with Donald Fern, former National Secretary and National Treasurer.



Tim Boyd in conversation with Mary Masselos, Blavatsky Lodge



At Perth Branch. left to right: John Davey, Rob Russell, Lily Boyd, Tim Boyd, Franco Guazzelli, Matthew Thompson, Harry Bayens

The First Object and the Politics of Multiculturalism

Olga Gostin



When our founders spelt out the three objects of the Theosophical Society, they were no doubt also reflecting the socio-economic and political conditions of their time, as well as the state of scientific knowledge at the end of the 19th century. The First Object specifically sought to transcend the vexed questions of race and colour, religion and sectarianism, as well as sex and caste as sources of social and political division. It is a sad irony that the noble object of universal brotherhood remains elusive in the second decade of the 21st century, and that race, creed, gender, caste and colour regrettably remain negatively relevant in today's world order.

I propose to discuss my chosen topic 'The First Object and the politics of multiculturalism' in three steps. The first will be a brief engagement with the First Object, notably the notion of brotherhood; the second will unpack

the concept of multiculturalism, specifically in its Australian political context; and thirdly, I shall propose a synthesis of the two in an attempt to provide a deeper understanding of what it means to be a mindful Australian citizen.

Brotherhood

Back in 1965 – more than half a century ago – N. Sri Ram, then World President of the Theosophical Society, mentioned that brotherhood had become 'worn and cheap currency'. True brotherhood, he explained, is not just a superficial, sentimental or emotional expression of commonality. To come to grips with its true essence, one has to immerse oneself into the deep meaning of that term and address the very *texture of our thoughts and actions*.¹

This is a very profound injunction. As I grappled with it, the words of Lao-Tse, founder of Taoism, came to mind,

uttered all of twenty-five centuries ago:

Watch your thoughts – they become words

Watch your words – they become actions

Watch your actions – they become habits

Watch your habits – they become character

Watch your character – it becomes your destiny

Think of it, reflect on it – that it all starts with thought: involuntary thought, reflexive thought, groomed and/or nurtured thought: about race, creed, gender, caste or colour The locus of thought, Sri Ram elaborates, is in our minds. And our mind is *not an empty bag*; nor should we be attached to its contents. I love that analogy. Thoughts and ideas are the product of social, political, economic, religious and yes, theosophical influences. As such, we must *be open to new ideas* and be prepared to shake out the old mind bag, or even empty it altogether in the light of honest, deep engagement with our thoughts and a growing understanding of what true brotherhood means, and the changing mindset that goes with it.

Such openness, says Sri Ram, is ‘essential to our Society’ and leads to deeper understanding and a better capacity to radiate the true brotherhood that the

world needs to solve its problems and to transform itself. But openness of the mind does not equate with binding neutrality or the notion that all ideas are equally valid. However it does embrace the possibility of *perhaps seeing the same old truths in a new perspective*. Above all Sri Ram urges us to delve inwardly, to explore, and to enquire into the truth of things without fear. Only thus can we embody and radiate a deeper understanding of our world, its problems and the means of transformation that rests with each of us personally, as our necessary starting point.

Multiculturalism

I now move to the second part of my talk, that dealing with the nature and politics of multiculturalism. By way of introduction, I should like to discuss three components common to all nations: a constitution, a flag and an anthem. I shall briefly reflect on these elements as a useful segue into the broader discussion of contemporary Australian multiculturalism. I invite you to make your own leaps forward to current debates as I present a highly selective and necessarily potted view of Australian history.

When the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed in 1901 its founding document, the Constitution, had an un-

spoken agenda which was to preserve and consolidate its white (Anglo) Australian identity, and by implication, to ward off the perceived threat of the lurking Yellow Peril, then referring to the Chinese who had been lured to the goldfields in the mid to late 19th century. There was no mention at all of Aborigines other than to state that they were not to be counted in the census, and that matters pertaining to them should remain the responsibility of state legislatures. In other words, the federal government was not interested in the First Australians and deemed them irrelevant to the newly founded Commonwealth. The nascent nation was envisaged as a *monoculture* reflecting its white British heritage.

The Great War that broke out just over a decade later, and whose centenary we have so reverentially celebrated during the past year, has been widely interpreted as the event that forged Australian identity and nationhood at Gallipoli and in the killing fields along the Somme. Few other nations have fixed the cult of honouring their war dead so staunchly in their national psyche. Yet we have steadfastly failed to recognise, much less honour, those who fell on Australian soil during the early frontier wars between the invading migrant-settlers and defending Aboriginal owner-custodians: guerrilla wars

and massacres that marked the initial conquest of this continent. As they say, history is written by the victors.

The Second World War brought the wake-up call of the Japanese bombing of Darwin and Broome, plus the bloody engagements along the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea. Our vulnerability on home ground gave rise to the 'populate or perish' mantra and with it, the large-scale immigration of southern Europeans (the famous 'wogs'), the 10-pound Poms, Eastern Europeans and later the influx of Vietnamese refugees. By the 1970s the White Australia policy was officially abandoned, and multiculturalism became the new catch-cry. It is important to note that multiculturalism was thus born out of national self-interest and necessity, not a primarily humanitarian impulse or a sense of brotherhood.

Our national flag with its juxtaposition of the Union Jack and the Southern Cross reiterates our historical bond to the United Kingdom. Yet it has occasionally been a source of contention and debate as it hardly reflects the background of the nation's large non-Anglo migrant population. Unlike Canada that affirmed its iconic maple leaf flag in 1965, Australians have not moved beyond recurrent competitions on what a truly representative Austral-

ian flag might look like. The fate of the flag seems to be vexedly linked to the question of a Republic and has been quietly put aside in the too-hard basket. An important concession though, has been the recognition of both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags as valid national emblems. No other conquering nation has thus officially sanctioned and flown the flags of its First Nations alongside the national flag. This is an important recognition of the fraught history of our nation with which we have not yet fully reconciled despite the unflinching appeals of the First Australians to embrace their gift of antiquity and brotherhood.

Finally, the anthem *Advance Australia Fair* was narrowly voted in to replace *God Save the Queen* in 1984. Interestingly, it has recently become a source of controversy when Indigenous people have refused to intone it on the grounds that the nation is neither young nor free. Instead we seem to be bombarded by advertisements featuring the iconic refrain from the Seekers' *I am Australian*. I quote the refrain here for it seems to me to embody the very essence of a longing for inclusion, unity in diversity, and brotherhood.

We are one, but we are many
And from all the lands on Earth we
come.



Aaron Burden on Facebook

We'll share a dream and sing with one
voice,
I am, you are, we are Australian.

So, how does multiculturalism present in Australia, and in other parts of the world for that matter? In line with the current fad for culinary programmes, and at the risk of gross over-simplification, I propose the following analogies:

EU hors d'oeuvres: Here migrants live in separate enclaves in the various nations to which they have moved, largely maintaining their separate identities and only marginally integrating with the mainstream. This may be interpreted as *monocultures* living side by side, or separatist multiculturalism.

The American stew: In the United States the call to migrants – ‘the tired, the poor and the huddled masses of many nations’ – is to adapt to and adopt the American way and blend their var-

ious identities in a process of *enriched assimilation*.

Australian tossed salad: Here migrants form part of an inextricable mix, yet maintain their separate identities – a case of *multicultural integration*.² [Interestingly, historical policies towards Aborigines evolved along the same lines: separation, assimilation and now, integration.]

It may be worthwhile to note that at the 2016 Australian census 28% of respondents were born overseas, and another 21% (that is, nearly half the population) had either one or both parents born overseas. Despite these statistics and the repeated claim (and lived experience of most Australians) that Australia is the most successful example of a multicultural society, there are ominous rumblings, some more overt than others: fear of Africans and Asians, of China's ascendancy, of Muslims and terrorism, of boat people jumping queues, of loss of jobs taken by migrants, of overpopulation, of strained infrastructure, of emerging urban ghettos, of loss of core Aussie values ... the list goes on. I do not propose to engage with these claims, other than to note them and observe that there is a growing unease, a sense of fear, and an emerging *politicisation of multiculturalism*.

On one hand we have those who would celebrate multiculturalism as the unique distinctive achievement of our nation; who value and take pride in the cultural enrichment that has ensued; who recognise the advantage of multiculturalism in an increasingly global society; and who don't see cultural diversity as an impediment to national unity. On the other, we have those who are concerned that championing diversity may lead to the rise of identity politics and fragmentation, and thence to an undermining of our Australian brand of integrated multiculturalism. In addition, there are those who see the acceptance of cultural diversity as a potential assault on the values of western civilisation, democracy and Christianity. These are crucial issues in our times, and they speak directly to our First Object.

A Synthesis?

This brings me to the final section of this talk: a synthesis of the concept of brotherhood and multiculturalism. This is no easy task and I am reminded of Lin Yutang's statement in *The Importance of Living* (1937/1998:416):

... we have compartments of knowledge, but no knowledge itself; we have specialization but no integration; we have specialists, but few philosophies of human wisdom... .³

At a more profound level, how can we apply consciousness of brotherhood in everyday life, to include all those who dwell in the cabins of the boat that we are sailing in? Sri Ram appeals to us to engage with the deep meaning of brotherhood and to address our very own thoughts and actions.

In a room of engaged theosophists, I hope that we can put the latter comment to the test as we delve deeper into the context of brotherhood in our modern, global society.

Let us start with Kishore Mahbubani's pertinent analogy in his *The Great Convergence*.⁴ He observes that seven billion earthlings are not travelling in one hundred and ninety-three separate boats but rather in one hundred and ninety-three separate cabins on the same boat. *Think* of it. Is this metaphor cause for optimism or concern? For Mahbubani there is only one answer, one option: it is a source of celebration, the opportunity to replace negativity with optimism, where a global perspective serves as an antidote to xenophobia. We are all in the same boat and it follows that we have to embrace the theory [reality?] of one world, with the correlative

of sharing wealth, technology and communication. This is the only option if the boat is not to flounder, or its less favoured cabin holders rise up in mutiny. Already the many aspects of *globalisation* are an expression of this trend albeit mired by the network of powerful multinational interests and greed-driven monopolies.

Is such an objective, the realisation of One World, possible? Mahbubani looks to reforms within the United Nations and affiliated bodies. More modestly, I think of the environmental concept of *glocalism* – where we try to think globally (as of climate issues) but act locally. Consider the impact of Ian Kearnan who started his *Clean Up Australia* initiative round Sydney harbour in 1989. The movement spread across Australia and within five years was embraced world-wide. I am sure other examples apply.

At a more profound level, how can we apply consciousness of brotherhood in everyday life, to include all those who dwell in the cabins of the boat that we are sailing in? Sri Ram appeals to us to engage with the deep meaning of brotherhood and to address our very own *thoughts* and *actions*. If necessary, he urges us to empty some of the contents of our mental bag full of preconceived id-

neas, born of our socio-cultural conditioning. So relax, and monitor your inner thought reactions as we walk along the deck of our boat and pass the following passengers outside their cabins:

*a scantily dressed woman basking in the sun

*a bare-chested, heavily tattooed man, smoking

*a woman dressed in full chador, reading

*a same-sex couple holding hands, embracing

*a Catholic priest, absorbed in his I-pad

*Somali men loudly playing volleyball

*a bearded imam, scrolling through his cell phone

*a person lying prone on the deck, dishevelled, vomiting

* youths with earphones, banging heads to a common rhythm

The list could go on. What thoughts came to mind, or sprang involuntarily out of your personal mental bag? Acknowledge that whatever they were, they were most likely triggered by former experience and/or the product of pre-conditioning. And they almost certainly bear little or no relevance to the situation of the actual people on the deck.

What Sri Ram requires of us, in our quest to realise the First Object, is

to be open to new ideas, possibly by opening a *spiritual frontage* on a well-known or worn scenario. He urges us to open our minds, and be prepared to shake out the old mind bag as the necessary condition to *seeing old truths in a new perspective*. This is the key to getting a deeper understanding of true brotherhood. The journey we are undertaking is perhaps the hardest of all, albeit also the shortest, that *from a closed mind to an open heart*. Radha Burnier puts it in another way when addressing our spiritual journey: ‘The only way of knowing the wholeness, the fullness, the totality is to be that totality, or that wholeness. It cannot be known in any [other] way...’.⁵

In conclusion, I return to the quest for true brotherhood and offer this simple couplet:

I embrace and see the you that is in me
/ You are the me in we.

Endnotes:

1. N. Sri Ram, ‘A New Understanding’ reprinted from *Theosophy in Australia*, December 1966, in *Theosophy in Australia*, November 2017.

2. Paul Kelly ‘Society ignores the success of integration at its peril’, *The Weekend Australian*, 11-12 August 2018.

3. Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Living*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1937/1998.

4. Kishore Mahbubani, *The Great Convergence – Asia, the West, and the Logic of One World*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2013.

5. Radha Burnier, ‘Yoga: Discovery of Wholeness’, *Theosophy in Australia*, March 2019, reprinted from *The American Theosophist*, Spring Special issue 1975.

This talk was given at the TS National Convention in Sydney, January 2019.



In the traditional Islamic world, the hierarchy of the arts was not based on whether they were ‘fine’ or ‘industrial’ or ‘minor’. It was based upon the effect of art on the soul of the human being.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr,
*A Young Muslim’s Guide
to the Modern World*

Of mixed Belgian-Russian parentage, Olga Gostin did her undergraduate studies in social anthropology in South Africa before obtaining a scholarship to the ANU. Between 1963-5 she did research into resettlement and cash cropping among the Kuni of Papua, obtaining her PhD in 1968. A post-doctoral exchange at Moscow State University honed her interest in syncretism and cultural change. She was part of the foundation of Australia’s first specifically designated tertiary programme for Indigenous Australians in 1973 and remained associated with it for the next 40 years. In 1992 she obtained her Master’s degree in Environmental Studies from Adelaide University. She remains passionately interested in social justice and environmental issues.



Reincarnation: a Review of the Scientific Evidence

Brian Harding



Reincarnation is a topic of perennial interest to Theosophists and many others. I will try to take an objective look at what scientific evidence there is for reincarnation. It's taught in many traditions. Many New Agers believe in it. Some say it was taught even in early Christianity, and the belief is found in many smaller groups such as the Druze in Lebanon, and various indigenous peoples in Alaska such as the Tlingits.

Geoffrey Hodson in his book, *Reincarnation – Fact or fallacy?* (1967), offers four factors that he suggests are puzzling to many people. These include a) the existence of much apparent injustice in the world; b) the need for fulfilment of our destiny and the difficulty of achieving this in one lifetime; c) some people have strange memories they can't explain; and d) the reality of child prodigies. Hodson points out that reincarnation goes a long way towards explaining these things.

In what follows, I'll first look at alternative explanations of the results of various studies. I will then give examples of reincarnation research and its results and will briefly mention some of the difficulties arising from a belief in reincarnation.

Are There Other Explanations?

Cryptomnesia is probably the most common alternative to reincarnation and appears to explain a number of cases. The term refers to the mental mechanism of recovering a past memory without recognising it as such. The mind can reproduce events and knowledge that have been so completely forgotten that the resurfacing memory seems to come out of nowhere. Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick (*Past Lives*, 1999, p73ff) note how greatly we underestimate the capacity of the brain to absorb information without any conscious effort.

Again, past life memories usually emerge as snippets of information, but sometimes an apparent previous personality can emerge so strongly that it completely takes over, giving rise to multiple personality disorder. This happens most easily under hypnosis, a well-known example being the case of Chris Sizemore, whose life formed the basis of the 1957 film *The Three Faces of Eve*.

Other possibilities include hysterical dissociation (suppression), a defence mechanism the mind uses to deal with painful memories; and self-delusion, which can occur even when more than one person is involved, a kind of unconscious mutual reinforcement, perhaps also involving wish-fulfilment. The Fenwicks (op cit, 1999, p148ff) see Arthur Guirdham's Cathar reincarnations (1978) this way. Even deliberate fraud, either on the part of the subject or of the therapist, cannot be left out of consideration.

Finally, it's possible to invoke paranormal explanations, such as telepathy. For example, maybe Arthur Guirdham transmitted his knowledge of the Cathars to his clients telepathically. Another 'psi' possibility is that there is a cosmic memory bank, akin to Jung's Collective Unconscious or to the Eastern notion of the Akashic Record, into which our individual consciousness can tap.

So reincarnation is only one of several possible interpretations of so-called past life memories.

So What Evidence Do We Have?

Individuals claim to have knowledge of previous lives through experiences such as dreams, memories, flashbacks, déjà-vu, gifts and phobias, and the possession of birthmarks that seem to correspond to death or injury in previous lives.

Professional reincarnation research falls into two major areas. The first is the investigation of spontaneous cases where people develop memories of having lived before. Investigators here are usually academics working in some branch of psychology or parapsychology. The prime example was Professor Ian Stevenson, for many years Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia. Many of Stevenson's studies involved investigating the memories of young children, which he regarded as most strongly suggestive of reincarnation.

The second area is the domain of psychotherapists who have developed hypnotic regression techniques. Many of these use regression as a means of healing psychological problems. As a result, they often don't attempt to obtain historical or geographical data that might be verifiable.

Hypnotic Regression

This is perhaps the phenomenon most prone to sensationalist stories. I have chosen two well-known examples, one of which is impressive in its detail, the other a flawed case from the Bloxham Tapes (*More Lives Than One?*, BBC documentary 1976; and Iverson, 1976).

'Laurel Dilmen'/Antonia de Prado:

Laurel Dilmen (LD) is a pseudonym for a Chicago housewife who recalled her life as Antonia Michaela Maria Ruiz de Prado in the sixteenth century, lived mostly in southern Spain. The therapist was Linda Tarazi, a respected worker in the field. The case was published in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* in 1990. What hypnosis revealed, said Tarazi, was 'an exciting, romantic life filled with erotic adventures as thrilling as any historical romance ...'. Indeed, she later published the work as a novel entitled *Under the Inquisition* (1997). Tarazi adds 'At first ... her [LD's] tale led me to believe that it was a fictitious creation of an active imagination.'

It took Tarazi three years to research the evidence produced under hypnosis. Well aware of the possibility of cryptomnesia, Tarazi asked LD under hypnosis, but not in the 'Antonia' life, to recall the names of all history books she had read. The researcher checked all these confirming that none pro-

vided the pertinent, obscure facts that had emerged in the recall of Antonia's life. Tarazi visited many libraries and universities, travelling to Spain, North Africa and the Caribbean. She wrote to historians and archivists to verify information; she also checked movies and TV programmes to see if any of these could have been the source of the details provided by 'Antonia'. In all this she drew a blank.

Antonia spoke Spanish, Latin and German, but LD was unable to converse in those languages, even under hypnosis, other than in the Antonia character. But as Antonia also,

she ... recited the prayers required by the Inquisition, referred to special methods of making the sign of the cross ... unknown to most Spanish-speaking priests today, and composed words and music to a song in Latin and music for the Latin Pater Noster, both of which she is recorded singing.

Yet LD had no Spanish ancestry, had never been to Spain and had no familiarity with the language.

Tarazi was able to confirm the existence of every person named by Dilmen including her sixteenth century lover, Dr Francisco de Arganda. Just one oddity, however – so far there is no proof that Antonia herself ever existed!!

Jane Evans:

Tape recordings of around four hun-

dred past-life regressions were gathered by Arnall Bloxham, a hypnotherapist in Cardiff, South Wales, whose findings were made famous as 'The Bloxham Tapes' by a BBC TV programme. Bloxham's work was closely investigated by, among others, Jeffrey Iverson in his book *More Lives Than One* (1976) and by Melvin Harris (1986, 2003). Many of Bloxham's cases appear to be flawed and can be explained without postulating reincarnation. The one I have chosen here is the case of Jane Evans, who was really the star of the TV documentary. I take the following information from Roy Stemman's book (op cit, p177ff).

Jane was an office worker who was regressed to no fewer than six former lives. These were: in the 3rd century as a tutor's wife in the Roman city that is now York; as a 12th century Jew, also in York; as a servant to the French merchant prince Jacques Coeur in the 15th century; as a Spanish handmaiden to Catherine of Aragon in the 16th century; as a sewing girl in the time of Queen Anne in the 17th century; and as an American nun at the turn of the 20th century. Her recall contained a wealth of potentially verifiable data, especially of the life of the Jewess Rebecca in York. That life apparently came to an end when soldiers found her and her daughter hiding in the crypt of a church.

However, Iverson says his searches for the truth about the Bloxham Tapes had left him with no certainties, only mysteries. Melvin Harris conducted a more thorough re-investigation of the Bloxham material, focussing on the Jane Evans case. He found that:

1. Her life as a maidservant to Catherine of Aragon could easily have been based, sequence for sequence, on Jean Plaidy's historical novel *Katherine, the Virgin Widow*.
2. Among other things, a 1948 novel on Coeur's life, *The Moneyman* by T B. Costain, could have been the source that made Jane's life as a servant in the 15th century with Jacques Coeur sound so authentic.
3. Harris found various errors in the Rebecca life in York, including the fact that no surviving medieval church in York had a crypt.
4. Most damning of all, from the reincarnation point of view, was Jane's account of being Livonia, the tutor's wife in Roman York. Harris showed without doubt that this is based on a 1947 novel, *The Living Wood* (published also in 1960 as a paperback entitled *The Empress Helena*) by Louis de Wohl.

It seems likely, then, that in Jane Evans's case, the memories came not from past lives but the pages of histor-



ical novels, a good example of cryptomnesia.

Spontaneous Recall

Examples of spontaneous recall, in the view of many, are far more suggestive of reincarnation than hypnotic regression. Flashes of memory of apparent past lives seem to occur most often in young children between the ages of two and five. The best known researcher in this area was Professor Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia (1918-2007). Stevenson, a Canadian biochemist and psychiatrist, studied an amazing 3000 or so cases of child memory. His first book, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1974), is not an easy read, but one can get a feel for Stevenson's work from *Old Souls* (1999) by journalist Tom Shroder who travelled with Stevenson on his last journeys to the Middle East and India.

The concentration of his cases among certain groups and in certain locations

brings up a criticism of Stevenson's work. They occur in cultures where reincarnation is an accepted part of the life of the people.

Another factor in many cases investigated by Stevenson and others is the occurrence of birthmarks and birth defects. The parents or relatives of an infant born with a birthmark or birth defect may attribute this to an injury or some other event that took place in the child's previous life. Usually the mark is said to be in a similar place or have the same appearance as the remembered injury. Stevenson claims he has found such birthmarks in around a third of his cases. The first case I discuss here includes both memory and birthmark, and is included in Stevenson's *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1974, p259ff).

Victor Vincent/Corliss Chotkin Jr

Victor Vincent, a full-blood Tlingit from South Eastern Alaska who had a very strong belief in reincarnation, died in the spring of 1946. In the last few years of his life he had felt especially close to his niece, Mrs Corliss Chotkin Sr, the daughter of his sister. On one of his visits to see her, he had said to her; 'I'm coming back as your next son. I hope I don't stutter then as much as I do now. Your son will have these scars.' He pulled up his shirt and showed her a scar on his back, the result of an opera-

tion he had had some years previously. He also pointed out a scar on the right side of his nose. He added: 'I know I will have a good home. You won't be going off and getting drunk', a remark alluding to a number of alcoholics in his family.

Another reason for Victor's prediction was his belief that his deceased sister Gertrude, mother of Mrs Chotkin Sr, had been reborn as Mrs Chotkin's daughter, also called Gertrude. He wanted to grow up again with his sister.

Eighteen months after Victor's death, in December 1947, Mrs Corliss Chotkin Sr gave birth to a boy, Corliss Chotkin Jr, named after his father. At birth, the boy had two marks on his body of exactly the same shape and location as the scars previously pointed out by the dead Victor. The mark on the boy's back even had on its margins small round marks just like stitch wounds from a surgical operation.

As soon as the boy could say his name, he declared: 'Don't you know me? I'm Kahkody'. The name was Victor's tribal name, and the boy spoke it in an excellent Tlingit accent. These events tied in with a dream that Mrs Chotkin's aunt had had before the birth of the young Corliss and Mrs Chotkin was certain she hadn't told her aunt of Victor's predictions. Corliss Jr also had a severe stutter when young. As

time went by, numerous other events seemed to reinforce the fact of Victor's reincarnation as Corliss Jr. Stevenson followed the life of Corliss Jr for some years. Stevenson concluded this case strongly indicated the reality of reincarnation.

Some Further Thoughts

The cases we have looked at, and innumerable others, raise many questions. Many researchers ask how reincarnation can be postulated when we don't really know what reincarnates. To simply answer 'the soul' begs the question. The Theosophical view is that the soul is made up of the higher mind (*manas*) and the intuitive level of consciousness (*buddhi*). If this is so, we need to explain how it is that the brain, which is a physical level organ, can remember past lives.

Another problem is population. This is just a matter of arithmetic. The Fenwicks (op cit, p288) point out that 'The numbers simply do not add up if reincarnation involves a one-to-one transmission of a human soul that has already lived.' In 2000 years, the population of the world has increased from 200 million to around 7 billion. So how can each of us have lived before? If we include reincarnation into other life-forms, we could maybe get around this problem.

Any proposed reincarnation mechanism has to take account of these factors. From my, admittedly limited reading, practically nothing seems to be known about the actual process of rebirth. I did find a couple of references in Theosophical literature, the first a section entitled ‘The Process of Reimbodiment’ in a publication called *Fountain-Source of Occultism* by Gottfried de Purucker (Theosophical University Press, 1974); second, Geoffrey Hodson’s *The Miracle of Birth* (TPH, 1929). But these still seem to leave the question as to how physical birthmarks and memories can be transferred from a previous physical life.

But maybe there is a wrong assumption here? Can we be sure that memory resides in the physical brain? Certainly medical evidence – e.g. damaged brains, Alzheimer’s disease – shows that our ability to store and retrieve information is highly dependent on the condition and age of our brain. But might not our brain, as Stemman (op cit, p183) suggests, ‘be just a clever piece of hardware that enables the spiritual software of our soul to operate in a physical environment’? Dr Jim Tucker, Stevenson’s successor at the University of Virginia, makes a similar point.

These new ideas could, says Roy Stemman:

... offer us an answer to the perennial question about the Earth’s rapidly expanding population. Where do all these souls come from? An ocean of consciousness, if it exists, would have no difficulty satisfying the demand.

But how do individuals emerge from this ocean with specific past life memories? Maybe the fact that very few have such memories is just a measure of its improbability. Also, there is still the question of birthmarks.

Summing Up

It seems to me that there is no scientific proof of the truth of reincarnation, only some cases that are strongly ‘suggestive’ – to use Stevenson’s word. But perhaps we need to redefine what we mean by science. Maybe I can leave the last word to Roy Stemman when he says (op cit, p199):

... no reincarnation researcher has yet discovered a case that provides 100 percent proof that a subject has been reborn. Perhaps they never will. But some researchers ... appear to get very close

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Brian Harding, MA, PhD, has been a member of the Theosophical Society since 1978. He is a former National Lecturer for the Australian Section, and former President of Canberra Branch and Brisbane Lodge. He began meetings of the TS Science Group in Brisbane in 2007 having university qualifications in physics, along with journalism and religion. Brian has worked as a university lecturer and researcher in Australia and the UK. He has been retired for a number of years and lives with his wife, Janet, in Brisbane.

An Interview with Gerard Brennan



The following interview with Gerard Brennan was conducted by Linda Oliveira during the 2019 National Convention.

LO: You come from an Irish family. Can you tell us a bit about that?

GB: My father was born in Thurles, Tipperary, in Ireland. After the War he came to Australia in 1949 looking for a better life, along with his brother and sister. My mother also had an Irish background; her grandparents had arrived in Australia for the same reason. As well as travelling back to Ireland on a number of occasions, I became an Irish citizen some years ago and am also now an Associate Member of Belfast Lodge of the TS in Ireland. My life during childhood centred around school, the church and my friends.

LO: As a child did you have any particular religious affiliation?

GB: Yes. My family followed the Roman Catholic tradition and we went to Catholic schools. My uncle was a

priest and an Irish relative was a nun. This background had a significant impact on me as a child. It introduced me to ideas of meditation, contemplation, renunciation and service. I was never really attracted to the dogma although the sense of mystery in worship and sacred music certainly drew my attention. Inspired by the idealism of religious life, I began to read Thomas Merton, even spending a short time in a Cistercian Monastery, part of a contemplative order that focussed on prayer and meditation. But as I began to spiritually awaken as a teenager, I turned towards Eastern philosophy after reading the *Bhagavad Gitā*.

LO: What led you to become a teacher?

GB: I wanted to communicate my passion for English and History to students. As a teacher you can change

peoples' lives for the better. You could simply impart information. However, the true art of teaching lies in creating an environment in the classroom where students can truly learn and engage in self-discovery. It was a fundamental intention to help transform lives that led me to become a teacher.

LO: Who and what do you teach?

GB: I teach students from years seven to twelve the noble subject of English – mainly literature.

LO: And do you find this rewarding?

GB: Yes, immensely rewarding as the subject of English is both specific, but also so broad. It can embrace many aspects of human experience and knowledge. English can be linked to so many aspects of students' lives. For example, we are now studying George Orwell's *1984* in year 12, which links so powerfully to many things happening in certain parts of the world today such as the rise of totalitarianism, fake news and the abuse of power.

LO: Do young people who you interact with in the schooling system today have spiritual interests and, if so, how do they manifest?

GB: Many of my students come from diverse ethnic backgrounds and adopt the practices of their religion, e.g. Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Baha'i, Parsi and other backgrounds.

This year I would like to arrange an interfaith meeting at our school. Occasionally students also show interest in allied spiritual topics. One student became a vegan a few years ago and promoted animal rights. Quite a few students who have gone through the school have been vegetarians. Students may also express spiritual ideas through poetry and literature. For example we have an active social justice group concerned with unselfish action.

LO: You have given volunteer service at the Golden Link College in the Philippines. How is this school different from more mainstream schools today?

GB: Yes, I have volunteered there on a number of occasions. Golden Link College (GLC) is a school run by the TS in the Philippines, catering largely to a more underprivileged section of society. It aims to provide transformative education to students from kindergarten up to college level. Its College offers degrees in teaching and some of its graduates have returned to GLC to teach. Its medium is English, so communication of literature, mainly to high school students, has been easy. Overall the children seem far happier than many other children to me, despite the fact that they have so much less – kinder, gentler, and more willing to respond to questions. In GLC there is less emphasis on competition, but

also a focus on academic excellence. No academic honours are received and the students are not ranked. Co-operative learning is the general spirit.

LO: What led you to the TS?

GB: It was my interest in Eastern philosophy – firstly Buddhism, then Hinduism (particularly Advaita Vedanta) and even J. Krishnamurti. I became very attracted to Indian culture and spirituality. The TS was known to me and I made many visits to the Adyar bookshop [which was owned by Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney – Ed.]. By the age of twenty-one I was on a plane to India. For a few years I also lived in an ashram in England but the open, tolerant and universal spirit of Theosophy drew me to the TS.

LO: Has your contact with Theosophy changed your life in some way?

GB: Very definitely. Theosophy has only deepened my understanding of the Unity of all life and, therefore, the brotherhood of all living things, through the three aspects of meditation, study and service. It has also deepened my appreciation of the non-sectarian nature of the Ancient Wisdom. We have to combine in our lives the best of East and West. I have become a less angry and more compassionate person, and more aware of the sacred nature of all life. But most importantly, Theo-

sophy has reinforced the need to live simply and with some detachment.

LO: What are some of the most memorable events that you can remember during your years of TS membership?

GB: There are many: when I first joined the Society, when I first visited Adyar, spending the end of the millennium in Adyar, meeting certain people there, attending the first International Convention there, the first Indo-Pacific Conference, visiting the GLC in the Philippines and being farewelled by students and staff, sitting on the Adyar beach as the sun is about to set, and experiencing the variety of wildlife in Adyar, especially around dusk.

LO: You have given active service to Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney over the years. What forms has this taken?

GB: This service has included various positions on the Executive Committee including the Secretary, organising members' meetings, volunteering in the Adyar Lending Library, presentation of talks, helping on Lodge open days, and assisting at the Blavatsky Lodge stand at Mind Body Spirit Festivals in Sydney. I have also participated, and given talks at, TOS meetings.

LO: Since 2016 you have been President of the Indo-Pacific Federation of the TS. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with this body, it

would be of interest if you could share a bit about the Federation.



Gerard Brennan

GB: I was elected as the eighth President of the Indo-Pacific Federation in 2016, during the last IPF Conference in Auckland. The Federation stretches from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan to Sri Lanka including such countries as Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and the Philippines, all the way down to Australia and New Zealand. There are regular triennial conferences where members meet to share ideas and set goals for the following three years. Countries within the region take turns in hosting the conference. Also, the Federation has three Objects:

1. To promote the Three Objects of the TS
2. To extend the work of the TS in the Indo-Pacific area
3. To strengthen the bonds and stimulate cooperation among member societies in the region

Interestingly, the Indo-Pacific Feder-

ation had its beginnings in the Australian Section with the first Indo-Pacific Conference in 1960 under the leadership of its then General Secretary, Helen Zahara. The IPF did not formally come into existence until 1978.

LO: What is your main emphasis as President of the Indo-Pacific Federation?

GB: My main emphasis is promoting greater contact and bonds of brotherhood between lodges/sections around the region, especially in those countries where the contact has not been so obvious recently. I have also focussed on travelling to countries where the TS work has been in decline and needs to be supported. Therefore, I have travelled to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and to Malaysia. I have also travelled to India and Singapore. There are plans to travel to Bangladesh and Japan this year, as well as Myanmar and Pakistan eventually. It is important that our links in this region be supported, particularly by well-developed Sections with the resources to provide such support.

The President of the Federation makes decisions in consultation with the Federation's Executive Committee. The Federation is not a decision making body within the TS world, but one whose main task is to spread Theosophy and inspire members to engage more deeply with theosophical ideals.

LO: What in theosophical literature inspires you the most? Any particular writers or teachings?

GB: Many works in the TS canon of literature inspire me. One of the most seminal works would have to be *At the Feet of the Master*. Its emphasis on Discrimination, Desirelessness, on six points of Good Conduct, and Love really sum up the four qualifications necessary on the spiritual Path. The book demonstrates that theosophical teachings are to be lived. I am drawn particularly to the writings of Annie Besant and her ideas. Her life, teachings, and the work she did for India really inspires me. Her incredible life showed her tremendous courage and conviction. At the same time her deep spirituality shines through her writings, especially in *The Ancient Wisdom. The Doctrine of the Heart* is also a beautiful book, and her *An Introduction to Yoga* is most informative. If anything, her writings really brought me to Theosophy. Theosophical teachings on brotherhood and our First Object have really inspired me. This Object is tremendously idealistic, setting out a pathway to future world peace.

LO: Have any Theosophists particularly inspired you? If so, why?

GB: A few have really impressed me, some of whom have passed away. But rather than mention any particular

names, I would prefer to focus on their personalities and aspects of their character. They have impressed me through the sheer simplicity of their lives, their quiet and unassuming manner, while their total commitment to the work was most obvious. Some of them chose not to marry and led a quiet, dedicated life. Tremendous sacrifice was also evident – many had given up a lot personally to further the work of Theosophy and never gave up despite personal difficulties. It was in the lives of these ‘old time’ theosophists that the ideals of Theosophy were so clearly presented. Some had lived in Adyar. Many seemingly ordinary theosophists are an inspiration, through their tremendous commitment to the work. They inspire me each day to get up and try to live Theosophy. A monument in Adyar to ‘The Unknown Members of the Theosophical Society Throughout the World’ should perhaps be the greatest source of our inspiration; those who quietly labour in the field, only seeking further opportunities to be of service.

LO: You seem very drawn to India. What about this country appeals to you?

GB: Yes – it draws me, especially philosophically, culturally and spiritually. I was drawn to India as a teenager and subsequently visited Benares (now Varanasi). The smell of incense also

drew me, along with the images in traditional Indian painting. These things led to a deeper interest in Hindu philosophy, the study of yoga, a vegetarian lifestyle, no smoking and no alcohol from the age of eighteen. So my parents were definitely wrong in considering these interests a passing phase! The congested living conditions in India today are challenging; my love for this country really harks back to the glory of its past – the Vedic era or the glorious age of Emperor Ashoka, the ‘real India’ which still lives in the quiet spiritual spots in more secluded parts of the country.

LO: If you could imagine an ideal world today, what would it be like?

GB: If I could create an ideal world, it would be one based on lovingkindness and compassion, mutual tolerance and respect. War would be absent and problems could be resolved without armed conflict and threats of violence. Peace would prevail. These principles could also be applied to the TS. Universal Brotherhood should be the basis on which a decent society is founded and it is through the practical application of our Three Objects that Theosophy has the greatest potential to transform society. The TS is, and can be, an even greater force for good in the world if we are prepared to live up to its ideals.



And now for another consideration. However little we might care for personal subserviency to us, the accepted leaders of the Founders of the Parent Theosophical Society, we can never approve or tolerate disloyalty in any member of whatsoever Branch to the fundamental principles represented by the Parent Organization. The rules of the mother-body must be lived up to by those composing its Branches; provided of course, that they do not transcend the three declared objects of the organization. The experience of the Parent Society proves that the usefulness of a Branch very largely, if not entirely, depends upon the loyalty, discretion and zeal of its President and Secretary; however much their colleagues may do to assist them, the efficient activity of their group develops proportionately with that of those officers.

The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett, Letter no. 122, 1884, chronological edition

2019 Happenings



Janury Convention, Sancta Sophia College, Sydney



University of Sydney prizes ceremony. left to right: Linda Oliveira, prize winner Alana Bowden, Associate Professor Jay Johnston



Theosophy Science Group members, 2019 National Convention. left to right: Drs Grahame Crookham, Victor Gostin, David Allan and Brian Harding.



2019 School of Theosophy: students, staff and guest presenter Perry Coles (4th from left, front row)

National Calendar of Events



2020 NATIONAL CONVENTION THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA

for TS members

Dates: Sat 18 – Sat 25 January 2020

Venue: St. Mary's College, University of Melbourne

**Theme: 'A Dialogue with the Universe: Science,
Wisdom and Creativity'**



Featured Speaker: Professor Emeritus Richard Silberstein

Public Talk: 'Creativity, a Neuroscience and a Transpersonal Perspective'

A very popular and engaging speaker, Richard Silberstein is a long-time member of the Theosophical Society. The title and role of Emeritus Professor at Swinburne University, Melbourne, was conferred upon him in 2014. His long and distinguished career there spans forty years of service, which has included roles in teaching, research, management and services to the scientific and broader community. He developed Steady State Topography (SST), a new and unique method for imaging brain function. Richard will be featured twice on the Convention programme.

Accommodation, cost recovery rates: \$700 for 7 nights, single rooms with shared bathrooms. If preferred, payment may be made in 4 x \$175 instalments or 2 x \$350 instalments. Please contact the National Secretary, Dara Tatray:

natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au tel. 02 9264 6404

Earlybird Registration fee: \$20 if received by Friday 30 August.

All registrations received after Friday 30 August: \$40

Registration form: theosophicalsociety.org.au

Registration deadline: for guaranteed rooms, live-in registrants, **Fri 30 November**

Enquiries: Jennifer Hissey, Convention Secretary
catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au

Early registrations are encouraged. We look forward to seeing you in Melbourne.

Education



Morphogenetic Fields and Akasha

A conversation between Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, Dora Kunz,
Dr. Renee Weber, and Will Ross

Dora Kunz: The question under discussion is whether there is any relationship between the concept of morphogenetic fields and Akasha. According to my understanding of M-fields, memory plays an important part in the concept, and I wonder if that might be a possible link with the concept of Akasha. Perhaps we could begin by defining the M-fields, and then discuss the role of memory.

Rupert Sheldrake: M-fields are form-shaping fields: morpho – form, genesis – coming into being. They are fields concerned with the coming into being of form, and they are responsible for shaping and ordering systems of all levels of complexity – atoms, molecules, crystals, cells, organs, and organisms. The structure of morphogenetic fields is given by the actual forms of previous systems, by means of morphic resonance, the process by which like acts upon like. Morphic resonance means the M-fields contain, as it were, a crude or collective memory – the species – which is inherent to the field.

The idea of a memory that accumulates through time is essential to this concept. As I understand the idea of Akasha it includes a kind of memory of everything that happens, but it is not clear to me whether the Akashic record is thought of as a kind of gigantic memory bank. If it is thought of in that way, there is the question of how any given organism, a rabbit for instance, can retrieve information from the memory bank of the Akashic record. Normally, in order to retrieve memory from a library or an information bank, it is necessary to know how to obtain access to a particular memory. I think that it happens through morphic resonance, the tuning of like to like. If the Akashic record is a sort of generalised, nonspecific memory bank, the question is, how can you get anything out of it? If it comes out on the basis of similarity to what went in, however, then the idea of the Akashic record is similar to morphic resonance. What this means is that there is a direct link from a thing in the past to a similar thing here in the

present, the difference being that the Akashic record is the storage device.

Dora Kunz: Perhaps we should consider what the word Akasha means in Indian philosophy, because there is a difference.

Renee Weber: It is associated in Indian philosophy with space – that which radiates in all directions. The idea of Akasha is, first of all, associated with sound as a primary Element. This fundamental relationship of Akasha with sound not only establishes resonance as a primary factor in the development of the senses, but also in the development of form. This is implied in the Biblical statement, ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was from God.’ Sound connects with vibration and what is interesting is that the theory of morphic res-

onance requires a kind of attunement of vibratory similarity. So in that sense there would be another link between morphic resonance and Akasha.

Rupert Sheldrake: Presumably Akasha means space, and if so, something in space, a rabbit for instance, is vibrating: it is breathing, its heart is beating, it is twitching its ears, and so on. It is moving in many different ways; it is not a static form. Since this whole pattern of activity of the rabbit is occurring in space, which is also on Akasha, perhaps the Akasha is being imprinted with that form and that pattern of vibrations in the place where the rabbit is. *The Theosophical Research Journal*, vol. II, No. 1, March 1985.

To read the full article, go to:
theosophicalsociety.org.au/articles/morphogenetic-fields-and-akasha

2019 INTERNATIONAL TS CONVENTION, VARANASI, INDIA

Theme: Nurturing the Divine Seed

The next International TS Convention will be held at Varanasi, India, from **31 December 2019 to 5 January 2020**.

Registration information and costs have yet to be announced. Members are invited to watch the International TS website for further information as it becomes available:

<https://www.ts-adyar.org/>



Call for Nominations - State Representatives



In accordance with Rules 19(1)(c) and 21, the current terms of office of the State Representatives for Tasmania (Helen Steven), Queensland (Phillipa Rooke) and South Australia/NT (Gaynor Fraser) will expire at the appointment of new State Representatives towards the end of 2019. Accordingly, nominations are invited for the election of one State Representative for each of the named states. Of these, the State Representative for Queensland is not eligible for re-election.

Nominations may be made by a Lodge (Branch) in the relevant Electoral State, or by any two Members resident in the relevant Electoral State who have been Members in Good Standing for the two years immediately prior to the nomination. To be eligible for election as State Representative, the candidate must be resident in the relevant Electoral State, must have been a Member in Good Standing for the last three years, and have served for at least one year on the Executive Committee of a Lodge (Branch) by the time of the election.

The State Representative elected in each State will represent the Lodges (Branches), Groups and Members in that State in all meetings and affairs of the National Council. They shall also liaise with all Lodges (Branches), Groups and National Members in their Electoral State and shall represent their views to the National Council and to the National Society Officers, as appropriate. As well, they shall receive and deal with representations from individual Members within their Electoral State, and shall refer the representations where requested or deemed necessary.

A photograph of the candidate, curriculum vitae, relevant biographical data, and a personal statement by the candidate, which may, for purposes of distribution, be edited in consultation with the candidate, must accompany all nominations. All nominations should be on Form 8, endorsed with the consent of the Nominee, and reach the National Secretary at the above address no later than close of business Friday 16 August. If there is only one candidate in any Electoral State there will be a for or against vote: hence the August rather than September deadline.

Copies of Form 8 may be obtained from the National Secretary:
natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au

Theosophical Order of Service - Australia

George Wester



a union of those who love in the service of all that suffers

TOS AGM

Each year a number of National projects are approved for the coming year. This year's Australian National Projects are:

- Qandeel Home Schools (4 of) in Pakistan,
- The Golden Link College in the Philippines,

- The Syrian Refugee Project sponsored by the Italian TOS, and
 - The HPB Hostel at Adyar
- Local offerings can be directed to any of these projects by forwarding the donations to the National Treasurer with a note identifying which project(s) the funds are to be allocated to.



Peace Work

'First keep peace with yourself, then you can also bring peace to others' - Thomas a Kempis.

With this thought in mind here are some ideas for the future:

- International Day of Peace – 21st of September – is on a Saturday this year and is an event well worth participating in, in some way, as part of our TOS peace work.

A common activity on this day is a one minute silence at 12 noon, designed to create a 'Peace Wave' that moves

around the globe.

- Self-Transformation workshop facilitation is available for any groups wishing to undertake the course. Contact me and we can see what can be organised.

I know many TOS activities are happening around Australia. Send me a brief description (and a picture) of what is happening locally and we can share them as inspiration for all.

Cheers

George Wester, National Coordinator
email: tos.australia@gmail.com

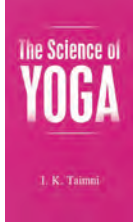
Review

The Science of Yoga,

I. K. Taimni,
TPH, Adyar, Chennai,
India, 2015 (reprint),
pb, pp. xiii + 448, \$20
plus postage.

Purchase at:
theosophicalsociety.org.au/books

education@theosophicalsociety.org.au



The essential teachings of Yoga were codified many centuries ago by Patañjali in his *Yoga-sūtras*. According to such teachings, Yoga is both a science and a way of life that can lead the practitioner to a direct knowledge of his or her own essential nature.

The Sanskrit word *sūtra* comes from the verbal root *siv*, ‘to sew’. It means a thread, yarn, string, line, cord, but also a short sentence or aphoristic rule. Therefore, in a short sentence the *sūtra-s* can communicate great depth of meaning

The *Yoga-sūtras* are divided into four parts: *Samādhi Pāda*, *Sādhana Pāda*,



Vibhūti Pāda and *Kaivalya Pāda*. The first concerns the essential technique of Yoga which is *Samadhi* – a realisation of the deeper states of consciousness. The second part deals with the physical, emotional, mental and moral preparation that leads to the goal of Yoga. The third part involves teachings and practices in what is called ‘internal’ Yoga leading to the unfoldment of the latent faculties in our consciousness. The fourth and last part delves into the ‘essential and philosophical problems which are involved in the study and practice of Yoga’.

The teachings and practices of Yoga can help the earnest student to transform his or her mind, normally restless and self-centred, into an instrument of a much vaster consciousness..

Dr Taimni’s translation is eminently clear, while also philosophical and accessible for those not acquainted with the Sanskrit language.

Pedro Oliveira

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.

News and Notes



The 14th Triennial Conference of the Indo-Pacific Federation, Manila **Theme: 'Let Your Light Shine'**



Dates: 9-12 November, 2019
Arrivals 8 Nov - Departures 13 Nov
(checkout time 12.00 noon)

Venue: Microtel Wyndham Hotel, UP Ayala Technohub, Diliman, Quezon City, Metropolitan Manila, Philippines

Accommodation Costs: Five nights at the Microtel Wyndham Hotel
US\$600 single occupancy (1 per room)
or

US\$400 double occupancy (2 per room)

The above costs include: daily breakfast, morning and evening snacks,

lunch, dinner, convention kit, city tour, visit to the Golden Link School and access to all conference activities.

Airport Transfers: by individual request for a minimum fee.

Payment: Payment should be remitted on or before September 15, 2019

Once you have made payment please inform Dr Rosel - email address below.

For further information, including registration and payment, go to:

<http://ipf-ts.org/>

Contact Information: Mr Roselmo Z. Doval Santos MD, Trustee and immediate Past President of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines.
Mobile: + 63 (917) 5362690
Email: roseldovalsantos@gmail.com

Members of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines, our host, will be very eager to help and provide assistance during this conference.

Gerard Brennan, President, IPF
gmj.brennan@gmail.com

First Australian Tour by International President

The recent national tour by Tim and Lily Boyd has been extremely successful, based on feedback received from around the Section. Members from six states welcomed the opportunity to get to know Tim and Lily during this period, mainly at local lodges/branches. Tim's presentations were very well received, with sizeable audiences in a number of places. Also, during some free time Tim and Lily were able to meet some of our Australian fauna such as koalas and wallabies – an essential experience for first time visitors to this country. Some images from the tour appear on page 39.

United Nations Report – Extinction of One Million Species

The interconnectedness of all life, and human responsibility to help preserve our planet, does not get much

starker than the sobering findings of a recent report from the United Nations, mentioned on the BBC website, 6 May:

One million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction.

Nature everywhere is declining at a speed never previously seen and our need for ever more food and energy are the main drivers.

These trends can be halted, the study says, but it will take 'transformative change' in every aspect of how humans interact with nature.

Apart from many people around the globe trying to effect positive change in this regard, this news may also be regarded as a personal call to action by many students of Theosophy, for whom the unity and preciousness of life are givens. Many websites provide relevant information about what we can each do individually to diminish our footprint on planet Earth.

The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches

The freedom of Lodges and Branches is defined by the scope of the Society's Objects as well as its essential mandate to make Theosophy known as a practical living Wisdom, which can uplift human consciousness to a realisation of the Oneness of life. Therefore, although the Society has no official creed of its own and upholds freedom of thought, and while it is acceptable to invite some outside speakers who can contribute to the exploration of the Ageless Wisdom, it is not appropriate for our platform to be used by such speakers to actively promote other organisations or belief systems. Each Lodge and Branch was chartered by the International President to be a representative of the Society in its area. Its work and programme should reflect the character, altruistic ethos and spirit of the Theosophical Society.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (2019)

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

<https://theosophicalsociety.org.au>

Campbell Theosophical Research Library:

catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Branch, Chartered 17/7/1971:

Postal Address: c/- P.O. Box 760, Rozelle NSW 2039

Meet: 3rd Saturday of month, 2.00-3.30pm

Emeritus Faculty, Australian National University

President: Marie McArdle

Secretary: Barbara Harrod

Tel: 0402 530 859

email: canberratheosophicalsociety@gmail.com

<https://canberra.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

New South Wales

Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:

Postal Address: PO Box 319, St Leonards NSW 1590

Meet: Suite 8, 599 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards

NSW 2065 (entrance in Albany Street)

Telephone: 02 9267 6955 Fax: 02 9283 3772

Email: contact@tssydney.org.au

<https://sydney.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

Meet: 1.00pm Wednesdays

President: Sally Gray

Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:

Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,

Mayfield NSW 2304

7.30pm 2nd Friday each month

President: Tony Buzek

Secretary: Dianne Kynaston

Tel: 0452 633 132

Email: diannedeva@gmail.com

<https://newcastle.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

Blue Mountains Group, Certified 13/5/1997:

Meet: Members' Lounge, Blue Mountains

Cultural Centre, 30 Parke Street (above Coles),

Katoomba NSW 2780

Meet: every Monday, 2.00 - 4.00pm

Coordinator: Jessica Gemmell

Tel: 02 4782 4269

email: Pattie.Thompson,p.thompson12@bigpond.com

Gosford Group, Certified 11/11/1997

Meet: The Narara Community Centre,

Pandala 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, Certified 2/4/1996:

Postal address and meeting address:

c/- 31 Riviera Street

Avalon NSW 2107

2.00 pm 3rd Friday each month

Coordinator: Nila Chambers

email: nilachambers@bigpond.com

Queensland

Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:

Postal Address: 14 Herberton Rd,

Atherton QLD 4883

Meet: Meeting Room,

Community Services Tablelands,

rear of 38 Mabel Street, Atherton

2.00pm 2nd Saturday of month except Jan.

President: Max Brandenberger

Secretary: Chris Pang Way

Tel: 07 4091 5156

<https://atherton.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:

355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000

Tel: 07 3839 1453

email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au

<https://brisbane.theosophicalsociety.org.au>

Meet: 7.30pm Wednesdays, library open 6.30-7.30pm

President: Phillipa Rooke

Secretary: Dianne Manning

Logan Group, Certified 9/4/2019:

Meet: Meeting Room 2, Logan Hyperdome Library,

Mandew Street, Loganholme, Qld.

1st Friday each month, 9.00am - midday

Coordinator: Christine Gwin

email: logantheosophy@gmail.com

Tel. 0418 755 496

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004:

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,
 Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556
 Tel: 0417 873 481
 7.00pm Thursdays
 Email: theosophy.sunshinecoast@gmail.com
<https://sunshinecoast.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
 President: Joyce Thompson
 Secretary: Jean Carroll

Toowoomba Group, Certified 10/7/2007:

Meet: Hospice Board Room, 57b O'Quinn Street,
 Toowoomba QLD 4350.
 Meetings on a Thursday evening once a fortnight at
 6.30pm.
 Annual Springbrook retreat each Winter
 Coordinator: Gayle Thomas
 Secretary: Barry Bowden
 Tel: 0438 331 885
 email: gaylethomas8@gmail.com

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

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000
 Tel: 08 8223 1129
 Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au
www.theosophical.org.au
 Meet: Members Meeting 10.00am 4th Friday of
 every month. Please contact Lodge for additional
 meeting dates.
 Acting President: Kevin Davey
 Acting Secretary: Ann Pritchard

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

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000
 Tel. 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)
<https://hobart.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
 Meet: 7.30pm Mondays
 President: Helen Steven
 Secretary: Berry Dunston
 Email: helen_steven@live.com

Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:

Meet: Scouts Hall, 1 St. Georges Square, East
 Launceston,
 1st and 2nd Wednesday of the month at 1.00pm
 Postal address: 28 Teggs Road, Gravelly Beach, TAS
 7276
 email: launcestontheosophicalsociety@gmail.com
<https://launceston.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

President/Secretary: Franka Hughes

Tel: 0400 140 624

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

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
 Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624
 email: info@melbournetheosophy.org
<https://melbourne.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
 Meet: usually 4th Saturday each month
 President: Edward Sinclair
 Secretary: Maria Jevic

Mornington Peninsula Group, Certified 8/2/2000:

Meet: Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House,
 Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday
 of the month
 (12.00pm meditation - 12.30pm lunch + library -
 1.30pm presenter + questions and comments)
 Coordinator: Alice Oppen
 Tel: 0439 563 313

Wodonga-Albury Group, Certified 9/7/1996:

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: Franco Guazzelli
 Secretary: Matthew Thompson

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**

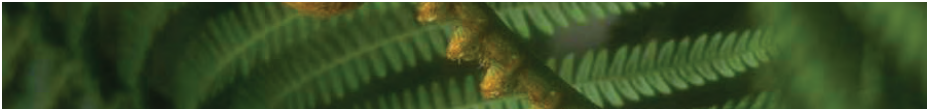
2184 Springbrook Road,
 Springbrook QLD 4213
 Tel: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211
 email: info@tsretreat.com.au
 Caretaker: Kay Schiefelbein

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)*



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.**