

PHILOSOPHY · SCIENCE · RELIGION · THE ARTS

# *TheoSophia*

June 2025 | Volume 86 No. 2  
WINTER ISSN 1177-8032

***THEOSOPHY***  
***An Impulse of the Spirit***

**How Wolves Change Rivers**

***The Quest for Meaning***

**In Tune with the Universe**

# TheoSophia



## 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 in 1949.*

## THE MISSION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Our Mission is to serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realisation of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation and the Unity of all Life.

*July 2018 General Council meeting of the Theosophical Society.*

*TheoSophia* is the official magazine of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand.

### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

President ..... Richard Sell

Vice-President ..... Melanie Closs

*TheoSophia* is published quarterly and is received by members as part of their annual subscription. For further information and back issues, turn to page 31.

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Maddy-Freddie  
Pexels



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HOW WOLVES  
CHANGE RIVERS



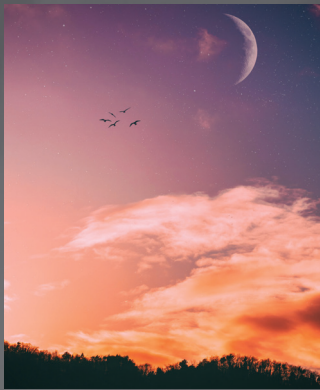
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## CALL FOR TSNZ NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT

Nominations will open 2 August 2025 for the roles of National President and National Vice-President of The Theosophical Society in NZ Inc. Information on the roles including eligibility, applications and nomination forms will be available online at that time: <https://theosophy.nz/membership/section-election>

**Nominations must reach the Returning Officer by 4.00pm Saturday 30 August 2025, 18 Belvedere Street, Auckland 1051.**

## CALL FOR TSNZ NOMINATIONS FOR TWO GOVERNANCE BOARD ROLES

Nominations will open 2 August 2025 for two Governance Board roles. Information on the roles including eligibility, applications and nomination forms will be available online at that time: <https://theosophy.nz/membership/section-election>

**Nominations must reach the Returning Officer by 4.00pm Saturday 30 August 2025, 18 Belvedere Street, Auckland 1051.**

**Who looks outside, dreams;  
Who looks inside, awakes.**

*Carl Jung*

## TAKING REFUGE

I take refuge in Wisdom.  
I take refuge in Compassion.  
I take refuge in non-clinging awareness.  
We develop personal responsibility for the six perfections  
and awaken speedily for the sake of all living beings.  
I love myself, for the sake of life.  
In the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,  
I take refuge until enlightenment is reached.  
By the merit of generosity and other good deeds,  
We realise Buddha-hood for the sake of all living beings.  
I love myself, for the sake of life.  
Hail to the triple gem – which is my own nature.  
The six perfections are: generosity, wholesome relationship,  
Patience, energy, concentration and wisdom.

*From My Personal Puja by Titus Steenhuisen*



## WWW.THEOSOPHY.WORLD

A NEW RESOURCE CENTRE FOR ALL THINGS THEOSOPHICAL

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TO SHARE?**

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# THEOSOPHY: An Impulse of the Spirit

Theosophy, is 'the body of truths which form the basis of all religions... offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guides its evolution.' (See page 32). *Spirit* is described in the *Theosophical Encyclopedia* as 'The highest principle or SELF in human beings, equivalent to ATMAN in Hindu philosophy.' Later *Spirit* is described as 'an element in human beings which is derived from or identical with a divine principle or being.' To continue the definitions, *The New Zealand Pocket Oxford Dictionary* has *impulse* as 'impelling, push, impetus, sharp force, producing change of momentum'.

In this issue of *TheoSophia*, writers have reflected theosophy as an impulse of the spirit which can possibly bring about change. Read contributions from Richard Sell (p.4), Tim Boyd (p.8), Juliana Cesano (p.11), Joy Mills (p.18) and Radha Burnier (p.26).

Canterbury's grand opening of their new hall was celebrated and is recorded on page 16 while Nancy Secrest concludes her report of the Theosophical Order of Service around the world (p.21).

As winter draws in, may you enjoy a renewed personal awareness of the impulse of the spirit that is theosophy.

Pamela Zane

Editor

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Contributions of poems or articles are welcome. Articles will be considered if up to 1,500 words, and sent as an email attachment to the editor. Note that *TheoSophia* articles will also be used in part or whole on the website: [www.theosophy.nz](http://www.theosophy.nz)

TSNZ YouTube site: <https://www.youtube.com/@theosophynz>

## Angel's Gold for a Child

Angel's gold for a child  
Given in a moment of unassuming innocence  
As she recognises the Cheshire cat  
Snuggled up in a comfy softly enveloping light blue-green chair

A moment belonging to no-one  
Yet open to everyone  
The gold dust  
Can be scattered

Like beads of raindrops  
Falling freshly  
To wash with pure intent  
In a rainbow of stillness

Angel's gold for a child  
Given in a moment of unassuming innocence  
Feeling the moss growing around the base of a seedling  
Silhouetted by a pond edging its way closer

A moment belonging to no-one  
Yet open to everyone  
The gold dust  
Can be scattered

Like beads of raindrops  
Falling freshly  
To wash with pure intent  
In a rainbow of stillness

Angel's gold for a child  
Given in a moment of unassuming innocence  
Receiving a nurturing touch from a close adult  
Telling her this moment, this person doth cherish me

A moment belonging to no-one  
Yet open to everyone  
The gold dust  
Can be scattered

Like beads of raindrops  
Falling freshly  
To wash with pure intent  
In a rainbow of stillness

You can recognise the grin of the Cheshire cat of an adult  
Because she was touched by the angel's gold as a child  
You can recognise the spirit of the adult appreciating a mighty species  
Because she was touched by the angel's gold as a child  
You can recognise the warmth and affection of a caring older person  
Because she was touched by the angel's gold as a child.

Murray Rogers

## DIARY DATES

2025

September 6-7 Immersion Weekend

Information can be found on our website under *events*:  
<https://theosophy.nz/events>

## FUTURE ISSUES

Date	Theme	Deadline
2025		
September	The Discriminating Mind/Discernment	1 July
December	Living the Spiritual Life	1 October
2026		
March	Ahimsa / kindness	1 January

Contact the editor at [editor@theosophy.org.nz](mailto:editor@theosophy.org.nz) or  
visit our website for the guidelines: [www.theosophy.nz](http://www.theosophy.nz)

National President of TSNZ, Richard Sell considers...

## UNDERSTANDING AN EXPLORER'S MIND



Our reality is based on our perceptions and through the practice of understanding and discernment we can realise a greater reality by cultivating an explorer's mind. An explorer is one who discovers new places or little-known places to see what is there and is highly focussed on the task. The explorer's mind is a mind that questions, probes, enquires and is flexible; it ever seeks to know the world we live in and our place in it. The explorer's mind seeks an ever-deepening understanding of the bigger picture and who we truly are, which ultimately leads the seeker inward only, toward Self-realisation; that which is our ultimate goal.

Understanding the real Self is to identify with that which is Divine and Eternal, rather than that which is transitory. Yet even at early stages, glimpses of the real Self can be found by those in search of the Real. Dr Annie Besant said in her book *Initiation: The Perfecting of Man*:

Just as the sun in the heaven is unchanged, but is mirrored as a thousand suns in ponds, lakes, rivers, and oceans, so do you know the Sun of the Spirit within you from the broken reflections that you find in the lower self.

The study of the lower self and our understanding of the purpose of life is a task worth pursuing and one of the surest ways to achieve this is through the development of the Mind. To aid in cultivating the Mind, we use the Mind, much in the same way as H.P. Blavatsky stated in *The Voice of Silence*, to 'Slay the Slayer', meaning, 'using the mind to the change the mind', to newer perceptions and wider viewpoints. This development of Mind is the work of our present wave of humanity, but it has largely been relegated to the realms of the concrete mind where we have witnessed great leaps forward in scientific discoveries and technological progress, but for all this, why is there not more peace and happiness in the world?

One answer might be that the Higher Mind has yet to be actively engaged by the majority of human beings, although many are realising that new paradigms and ways of being must be introduced. When speaking of the Higher Mind it is the Divine part of our nature, the spiritually thinking and conscious Soul. It is also called the Individuality and realising a closer union or blending between personality and Soul will bring about radical change in how we view our world.

A barrier to this union can be that we place too much importance on the intellect and the fruits of it. Madame Blavatsky expressed this unhealthy emphasis on intellect alone when she wrote in *The Voice of the Silence*, "But even ignorance is better than Head-learning with no Soul-wisdom to illuminate and guide it."

One of the greatest scientists of all time, Albert Einstein recognised and acknowledged this truth. He wrote "The intellect has little to do on this road to discovery. There comes a leap in consciousness, call it intuition or what you will and the solution comes to you and you don't know how or why. All great discoveries are made this way." Here Einstein is expressing that intuitive faculty, our Buddhist nature which unfolds more and more as Soul wisdom unfolds.

Striving for greater understanding and penetrating thought will aid in the synthesis of the lower self with the Higher within us. This synthesis is key to our progress as we evolve and our Buddhist

consciousness unfolds, the power of intuitive insight and comprehension grows, as does the capacity to identify with our higher principles. This change of consciousness can only occur through a change of perspective. A radical shift is required whereby new patterns of thought are created which propel one toward a spiritual life and not the material. How can the enquirer begin? Well, our worldview is a great starting place.

Our attitude and outlook on life is heavily weighted by the conditioning received during childhood, such as schooling, family and culture. This generally runs deeper than we think and introduces all sorts of biases and attitudes that we may not be aware of. H.P. Blavatsky recognised and warned of the impact of conditioning and crystallisation of thought in the *Key to Theosophy*. She wrote:

You must remember that all our members have been bred and born in some creed or religion, that all are more or less of their generation both physically and mentally, and consequently that their judgment is but too likely to be warped and unconsciously biased by some or all of these influences. If, then, they cannot be freed from such inherent bias, or at least taught to recognise it instantly and so avoid being led away by it, the result can only be that the Society will drift off on to some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die.

This is an interesting point of view. We are all creatures of our time and place, perhaps not so independent in thinking after all. She goes on to tell us in her writings that "...once a student abandons the old trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought – Godward – he/[she] is a Theosophist, an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth, with 'an inspiration of his/[her] own' to solve the universal problems." Note the term "original thinker" ... a seeker after truth.

There is an old saying that after many years of admiring the teapot, one must reach out and drink the tea. Following this maxim leads the seeker to take their spiritual life firmly in hand. Let's take a look at a few examples where a maturing understanding leads us toward our goal of Self-realisation. The old Piscean Age of individualism and all that goes with it such as competition and acquisition, requires a letting go as we move beyond, into new spaces. This does not mean we stop learning and growing which is essential to our Soul's unfoldment, but how we deal with the world must first be from a view or foundation of wholeness. This approach involves letting go of many things. The famous philosopher Lao Tzu said, "To become learned, each day add something. To become enlightened, each day drop something." What

is he talking about here? It may be attachments to people, possessions or status and such like. In the Hindu philosophy it discourses about the refocus from the small self to the encompassing of the Divine. *The Bhagavad Gita* (4.10) speaks of it thus:

Being free from attachment, fear, and anger, becoming fully absorbed in Me, and taking refuge in Me, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of Me and thus attained My divine love.

We can see from this stanza, the essence we are discovering within is a pure heart, letting go of attachment, fear and anger. A movement in position is needed, away from self-centredness which creates separation. Our genuine persistent efforts lead us toward purification by centring our being in a place of wholeness, love, and compassion for all. As the light of Buddhi (intuition) grows stronger within us, we begin to view our brothers and sisters in a new light, each with their own uniqueness and personal struggles, just like us. Tolerance for our kin's weaknesses grows but perhaps at some stage, tolerance itself becomes acceptance of what is, because the word 'tolerance' still retains elements of judgment. Our words matter, they convey meaning. Words can offend, they can bridge gaps, they can cause hurt, and they can heal broken hearts and souls. In choosing our words with care, we foster a quickening of cooperation and connectedness between people. If we were to try and make a start on our mission of broadening our worldview, this might be a wonderful place to begin.

Our awareness of the world crisis that is in front of us at many levels also brings a certain sense of urgency. The recognition of regeneration of the human condition and what is critically needed from each one of us, is the illuminating subject of literature from past international president N. Sri Ram who wrote:

The Masters of Wisdom, who aid evolution, although They are interested in all changes that make for human progress, are especially concerned with the spiritual regeneration of mankind, which is of fundamental importance. Because, when that takes place, all else follows. The forces that are brought into play in the regeneration will themselves have their effect on the external conditions. But if the changes are merely external, after a time they may all be lost or undone. There have been various golden ages in the history of humankind, epochs when life was tranquil, when people were happy and kind and good; but all of them have vanished, and we have come into this strife, the present confusion and misery.

We can see by this that epochs of greatness and darkness will continue to roll on through time unending but to what avail if humanity doesn't possess the ability to move beyond these limiting factors? Perhaps it is like an incoming tide, in that, each advance takes us a little higher, a little closer to the heights of where evolution is leading us, and as we become more spiritualised, the tide recedes just a little less. In this manner we slowly evolve, yet we still have the ability to hasten this journey by our own refocused attention to human regeneration and the work this entails – by working on our own nature and worldview. Sri Ram says that if we forget ourselves, progress will become easy, it will take place swiftly and naturally because it then becomes a process of unfoldment from within, outwards, and we realise the truth uttered in *Light on the Path*: “Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously but open to all that is good and true and beautiful.” Mabel Collins also writes about the journey of the Soul and a particular stanza that stands out for me reads “Seek out the Way”. In the commentaries it explains...

[20]. Seek it not by any one road. To each temperament there is one road which seems the most desirable. But the way is not found by devotion alone, by religious contemplation alone, by ardent progress, by self-sacrificing labour, by studious observation of life. None alone can take the disciple more than one step onwards. All steps are necessary to make up the ladder ... the whole nature of man must be used wisely by the one who desires to enter the way.

The explorer sees many pathways before them and must choose wisely how to proceed. It always comes back to our choices. There is perhaps no better way to begin than with the clay of personality and what is called self-transformation.

The personality gets in the way of self-knowledge of course and must be tamed and become pliable and a willing collaborator with nature. For this to occur we align ourselves with the Higher Self through our lower nature, which we know is often self-focused with pride, anger, conceit and other so-called human failings. Therefore, this is the purpose of self-transformation, whereby the Soul gains mastery over its vehicles called physical, emotional and mental aspects. An Open Mind here is imperative. A first step which is often the most difficult, is for aspirants to face themselves. They learn to know the unvarnished persons they are; weaknesses, strengths and self-deceptions. Like our meditative practice, we can do this daily. Daily self-enquiry and daily reflection on thought, deed and motive is helpful.

From this study, we can see that working on one's character is actually a work of art – something to be chiselled, sanded and smoothed, life after life. The journey of self-transformation is a wonderment of discovery. There are joys before us, as our relationships grow and deepen through conscious effort and our fields of observation and experience widen and deepen. Having calmed the emotions, transmuted desires and ambition, we begin to function upon that plane where truth may be apprehended, the plane of intuition whereon the Soul can touch its divine Source.

Daily life starts to change in subtle ways as intuition grows. At first, we may distrust it and follow only our rational mind and senses, however over time one learns to be guided by life and that inner voice, which is the Soul responding in proportion to our efforts. The wise listen. The person becomes more centred within and truly starts to know oneself better. This can be reassuring and encouraging that progress is actually being made.

And of the errors made? The explorer tries not to be disheartened by failures; they are to be expected. The enquirer tries to make good from the troubles encountered in life. It is the difficulties in life that present us with the most opportunity for growth. We may not like the difficulties of course, yet there is always choice, in how we act or do not act in any situation. HPB provided an explanation about life's difficulties – she wrote: “the idea of growth involves also the idea of disruption, the inner being must continually burst through its confining shell or encasement, and such a disruption must also be accompanied by pain, not physical but mental and intellectual.”

This means we need to tread where we have not been before, but armed nevertheless, with a wider worldview and holding our theosophical principles at the fore. We may be faced with health problems, financial difficulties, relationship discord, work related upheavals – well, the list goes on. It is not so much what happens to us but, the way we respond to the crises before us that counts. It is the 'Storms of Life', the burning ground where we are tempered by the fire we are immersed in, and grow stronger by it. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, is the motto. When we come out the other side of such calamities, we find ourselves stronger, better able to handle a similar situation in the future because we have gained valuable insight and experience. The temptation trap is in resorting to old defensive patterns or behaviours; the challenge, is to introduce the ancient wisdom that we have read about and studied, into our lives in a practical, real way – *drinking the tea*.

Our ability to conduct right Human Relationships is a paramount need of our age. With such negative forces on display in the world today we need our thinking faculty to make heads or tails of it, and then the application of right human relationships between individuals and groups to become ever more prevalent in the decades to come. The enquiring mind understands the need for change in outlook of its human endeavours, so it asks "What do I need to change in my life to better align with the spiritual life?" We might in reply enquire of ourselves: am I conducting myself according to the highest principles of theosophy? These small moments of truth are in fact more important than winning the big battles of life, which generally are of a short-term duration.

We have seen that through penetrating perception and greater understanding, we cultivate the explorer's mind which leads to a radical shift in our worldview. This transformation remains a permanent part of who we are, which we take from life to life. The wider viewpoint calls us to new thought and action which unites us closer with all humanity. An encouraging next step may be a quiet whisper to self – "am I activating the explorer's mind within and seeking the way with a pure heart?" Through the winding hills of journey and discovery, each step we take, creates our future – 'the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit'.



 A National Section event

# Immersion Weekend

6-7 September 2025, Auckland

## The Pilgrim and the Path: Living Theosophy

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Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society,  
concludes his thoughts on...

## A LIFE WITHIN A LIFE

### PART 2

There is the well-known story from Plato about dwellers in a cave, who have been chained and all they know are shadows. Because this is the only reality to which they have been exposed they have built a very structured – and very real, to them – way of viewing shadows and interpreting them. The story is about the awakening and deepening of consciousness. One of them is gradually led out of the cave, to the upper world, where the sun, in all its brightness and all its intensity, can now be seen as the source of all light. The process of adjusting to the vision of this light is described. It is about dwellers in two worlds, the worlds of the intuitive mind, or spiritual mind and the darkened world rooted in viewing and interpreting shadows. The two are not separate. When he finally sees the sun, he is standing on the same earth that he was standing on in the cave, but from a different ‘location’ in consciousness.

There are people we know who have seen a different vision of reality, and then come back and had to deal with it. Anyone who has a son or daughter, or who themselves have been involved in war, the war ends, but that person has seen something that changes them. Their way of seeing humanity and the world, shifts to another perspective, not shared by someone who has not had that experience. There are people who become parents for the first time, and the world, pre-parenthood and post-parenthood, is very different. Different demands are placed on your way of seeing and behaving in the world. Once you see, you cannot ‘unsee’. For someone who refuses to accept and change, their sole option is trying to deny through distraction. I have known a number of people who have had near-death experiences in which, from a medical point of view, the body had died. But the consciousness has a life independent of the body, and it experiences a variety of things. Those people return changed – their priorities are reordered.

In the theosophical and other spiritual traditions as well, there is the idea of initiation – profound spiritual experiences of a deepening nature, where for a time one is exposed and lives within a different dimension of being. There is an exposure to a wisdom; there is the absorption and then there is the return. We can walk up the mountain, but we always have to come back down. There is an expression, “after the ecstasy, come the dishes”. All of our mundane affairs, the household chores, do not just go away with a change in perception.

How do we bridge these alternative realities? How do we bring them together? For people who have had these other levels of experience, there is great difficulty in trying to communicate it to others. There is the need to communicate, but there is difficulty for one who has seen to be able to speak in ways that can be received and understood by those who have not. We are all at various, different stages of our unfoldment. For those who have seen more deeply there is the possibility of a fear arising, preventing a deeper exploration. The main fear is that our changed level of experience will not be understood, or will not be acceptable to those around us. Krishnamurti made the statement that “it is no sign of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.” For our purposes we might paraphrase him as: it is no sign of health to deny or suppress the reality of our own experience. There is no-one who has not at some point, probably early in life, felt that there was some deeper dimension that needed to be explored, and asked the questions: “Who am I?” “What am I here for?”

If that fear does not prevent us from moving more deeply into it, then often people will develop some approach to remaining in connection with this Inner Life. What we describe as study is one of the means for deepening this connection. We connect ourselves to an ever-expanding ladder of thought. We utilise the mind at that level by moving it to consider things that are initially beyond its reach – abstractions. In that way, we move to the limits of our mentality, and in so doing, provide ourselves the opportunity of taking that next step into the world of intuitive insight.

As this practice develops, we connect with, and find the need to maintain that eye in the centre of our individual storm. We experiment with quiet, and with all the benefits that can come from stilling the mind and allowing its contents to settle – the possibility of going from quiet to ever-deepening states of stillness and ultimately even of silence, where all the clamouring of the various levels of mind and senses drop away. As part of this practice there is the necessity for it to flow. It is not just a stagnant pond of thought and experience that we are trying to accumulate. Everything must flow. For many people, the practice of service to others – conscious, compassionate activity – becomes an outlet, as well as a tool in deepening our connections.

We all have dull spots in our makeup. But we try to behave in ways that will magnify the qualities that are beneficial, and limit the ones that are not. We take on the qualities of not just the physical foods, but of everything we consume at every level of our being. What is it that we look upon? Is our world, and our place, disordered? Is it something that does not speak to beauty? These are things that we feed ourselves, such as ideas and emotions. That is why we turn on the TV. We may tell ourselves we are turning it on just because we have a moment and we just want to relax, but all the while, we are being fed images and thoughts that are created and marketed for us. Consciously or not, these are choices we make. We choose to expose ourselves ever more deeply to our Inner Worlds, knowing that our embrace of the Inner Life is, as yet, not perfect. I have frequently given the example of “How is it that you make a friend?” We all have friends. None of us were born with them. Along the way we developed friendships. We met someone; there were things that we saw in them that we admired or liked, and we repeatedly put ourselves in their presence. Through that process of continually putting

ourselves in the presence of that which we admire, that which feeds us at our deepest levels, we become linked. With this Inner Life we can associate ourselves with it in such a way that we can become transparent to it, we can become linked to it. For those who have had some experience of a deep quiet, of a profound peace or happiness, of an altered reality from the norm of our day-to-day living, what do you do? How is it possible to make this altered reality something that becomes an actual presence in your life and the way you work and live in the world?

For most of us, there is a sense that there is something we have which we need to give. I came of age in the United States at a time of great social upheaval. There were powerful movements of thought and activity going on at the time, for civil rights, for greater extension of human rights, for an end to war – what was called a peace movement, but which often degenerated simply into an anti-war movement – the same violent mind where there was a battle being fought with an enemy. For the “peace” movement it was a different enemy, not the Viet Cong, but the enemy became the ones who were waging war, even if it was friends and colleagues who had been sent off into these battles. It was also a time of an influx of Eastern spirituality. Teachers from India and elsewhere were suddenly arriving on the shores of the United States with a message about a different possibility for living. It was a moment in which it was strongly felt by many young people that we were on the cusp of a major change, that some deeper realisations of peace, love, brotherhood were on the horizon.

An aspect of the process of living is that everything seems to be immediately possible when we are fresh to this world. Wordsworth’s poem says, “By trailing clouds of glory do we come” into this world from a very different home. We come into this world with a different vision of what is real, then we learn, are trained in how this place functions. The movement toward deeper states of unity often comes too slowly. This can be frustrating. It can cause difficulties. From the perspective of the Ageless Wisdom, this is just one of many lives. This does not mute the fact that we are here to bring a more wholesome reality into being. This is another, our most recent, opportunity to do that. Many people who were involved in the various movements at that time of my youth became disillusioned and angry. Some felt that because change was not coming quickly enough, they

needed to resort to the means of this world. So, they chose violence in its various forms, to try to move toward their ideals.

For others, there was a dawning understanding that because these things do not appear immediately does not make them less real. Their energies were channelled toward a deepened commitment to compassionate service, to finding those areas of life, and of livelihood where service can be done to express this unity that has yet to be realised. Part of the difficulty of seeing something profound is that you cannot unsee it. It does not go away. So it is not just a matter of seeking the truth or finding the truth, but having learned a truth, we have to suffer that same truth, hopefully with some patience.

Everyone is here for something, regardless of education, finance, or any of the countless ways we have devised to separate ourselves from each other. The nature of that 'something' may be unclear to many. But even if a person's vision is as simple as, "I am here to be happy", the universal wish of every living being, it is a start. In our often misguided search for happiness we find countless ways to create unhappiness for ourselves and others. It is our deepest experiences of happiness that shape our lives, because along with these moments there is a sense of peace, a sense of not being divided from others. There is a sense that, this self that we cultivate, and which absorbs our constant attention, is actually an obstacle to our deepest desire.

Whether our activity takes place within a Theosophical Society, where there is the view of a possibility to form a nucleus of a universal kinship of the human family, or whether it is in other fields – religion, science, philosophy, art, healing – all of these are avenues to magnify our understanding of a shared world. Will this happen today? The possibility is there. As enough minds come together, as there is enough clarity of vision, and shared understanding of the unity of all life, then at this very moment, things can change.



Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society was born in New York City and studied at Brown University then at the University of Chicago. In Chicago Tim joined the TSA in 1974 and co-founded a Theosophical spiritual community in Chicago's inner city. They held classes on the Ageless Wisdom, meditation and healing and formed a business which helped stabilise neighbourhoods through the training and employment of local youth and creation of affordable homes. Tim has been involved in Theosophical work at many levels: from lodge member, to TSA president and president of the Theosophical Order of Service USA. He has spoken across the USA and every continent except Africa. Tim's articles appear in journals around the world.

**To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.**

*William Shakespeare, Hamlet*

# How Wolves Change Rivers

Juliana Cesano challenges us to consider  
how we can contribute to positive change in the world.

**I**n recent years, the excessive use of the Internet, and especially of social media, has become one of the greatest causes of inaction. In this era of scrolling down, which has given the index finger a power it never dreamed of, the amount of time we spend watching videos on food recipes, political statements, fitness routines, outdoor wonders, and so on has replaced much of the time we actually dedicate to these activities.

It is true, however, that the average person now has access to information that in the past would have required years of study and research. Unless we had a degree or a job in a particular field, coming across specific and in-depth information on a given subject was not the norm. Although, of course, this process requires a fair amount of discernment and fact-checking skill, we can safely say that the Internet has become an unparalleled source of knowledge and inspiration for most of humanity, and, at times, enhances the unbroken connection between us that remains beyond all superficial differences. Often, we can find great beauty, wake-up calls and profound values portrayed in these posts. And because we attract a certain type of thought that corresponds to our own state of being, the more we choose to read or watch illuminating, uplifting, or encouraging messages, the more they flood our way.

Among these inspiring messages, I recently came across an article and video about the fine complexity of our ecosystem. It showed how each species has an indispensable role in maintaining the balance and perfection of our planet. Although it is not news that nature's intelligence surpasses human understanding, nevertheless the headline of the video struck me: "The Amazing Ways Wolves Change Rivers." At first sight it seemed unreal. How could wolves change rivers? But it has happened.



Do we truly  
understand  
the kind of  
society we are  
creating?

In 1995, after about a 70-year absence, grey wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park. Originally, when the park was established, wolves were rapidly killed off, because people feared their presence. Then, since there were no creatures left to hunt them, the number of elk increased disproportionately, considerably reducing the vegetation that was available to other life forms. As soon as the wolves reappeared, they began to have the most remarkable effect. They not only killed the elk, but radically changed their behaviour. The elk started avoiding certain parts of the park, and immediately those places started to regenerate. As a first and most visible consequence, the size of the trees quintupled in six years. Because of this, and because of new flora growing around the tree, the birds started moving in, the number of beavers increased, and the dams they built in the rivers provided habitat for species like otters and muskrats. The wolves killed coyotes, and as a result the number of rabbits and mice began to rise, which brought more hawks and more weasels, foxes, badgers, ravens and bald eagles. The bear population began to rise as well, and cougars came back to the area. As a less obvious consequence, soil erosion was reduced. The river channels became narrower, more pools formed, and the banks stabilised. This rebalanced biodiversity transformed the ecosystem all the way down to the river beds. In short, the wolves changed the behaviour of the rivers.

The sociopolitical state of the world resembles an ecosystem that has never found balance. In each era, and for apparently different reasons, certain groups have discriminated against others, oppressed and abused the most vulnerable, and/or killed the ones that threatened the strongest belief system of the time. Up to this point our differences have not been our strength, and in fact have posed the greatest challenge we have faced. In 2017, as this article is being written, the number of refugees in the world has reached the highest level ever recorded. According to figures published by the United Nations, 65 million people worldwide have been forced to flee their homes – individuals whose lives will never be the

same, even if they manage to adjust and survive.

Here at home, we have our own scary numbers. Today in the U.S., for example, there are over 450,000 children in the foster care system. These are children who are, in many cases, being neglected or abused and who may not be fortunate enough to know what trust, safety, encouragement, or love mean.

In this scenario, a few of the most immediate questions for all of us may be: Do we truly understand the kind of society we are creating? How much longer will it take until we see that the extremely harmful causes we are sowing will be inevitably reaped as more suffering? And – probably the most important one – what is our role in this mess?

There comes a time in a person's life when the suffering of others cannot be ignored any longer. For a while we somehow manage to look the other way, living almost oblivious to this thought, pretending that every other person's life circumstances are as favourable as ours. Yet we hear a dim voice in the back of the mind at the oddest moments, whispering that there is something seriously wrong happening around us. We knew it was there all this time, but we told ourselves there was nothing we could do to help, perhaps feeling powerless because of the magnitude of the task. But one day the voice becomes the only sound we can hear. There is an inner wakeup call that cannot and should not be silenced.

In her book *Dharma*, Annie Besant describes a living law that interlaces an individual's level of development with the necessary conditions for the next step. This is *dharma*: "the inner nature of a thing at any given stage of its evolution, and the law of the next stage of its unfolding." She explains that it is our own inner nature that moulds the conditions of the outer life. The situation in which we are born and the experiences of that particular lifetime are in accordance, not only with our level of awakening, but also with the potential growth that we are capable of at that time. Of course, this process sounds much more glamorous in theory than it appears in our own

lives, with our blind stumbling into obstacles until we finally gain a few glimpses of who we are and what we are doing here. It is not an easy task to know ourselves, let alone to know what we are meant to do. Nevertheless, the existence of this dynamic law assures us that no matter the circumstances, there is always potential for more.

Besant's definition of *dharma* raises a few issues that are worth looking at. In the first place, duty (as *dharma* is sometimes translated) is nothing but the use and exploration of something that is already ours. No matter how clueless we may feel about our role in the great scheme of things, it is quite possible that we are already fulfilling it. This does not mean that the search ends here. Rather it means that we can trust the process and that the more we wake up, the more our duty evolves. So, our responsibility lies in finding greater clarity, in removing the veils that prevent us from seeing things as they truly are. Then nature follows.

In the second place, it is absurd to try to live someone else's *dharma*. It is true that some roles within society appear more important than others. Some tasks within any given organisation may be more visible or respected than others. But as we learnt from the story of the wolves, each part is needed for the other ones to exist.

Moreover, it seems to be detrimental to our own development to try to perform a task that is unsuited for our particular nature. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna emphasises that it is better to live our own destiny imperfectly than to live an imitation of somebody else's life with perfection. There are often signs along the road that hint to us which direction to go in. We may not be expert at reading those signs, and often people around us can see them before we do, but sooner or later, we get the message. Of course, the signs that point out which way *not* to turn tend to speak a bit louder, and the clearest ones are those that feel like having a door slammed in our face.

A third fact, perhaps the one that stands out the most, is the beauty and the order underneath the apparent chaos; the perfection

of life's intelligence, providing the necessary opportunities for this moment's unfoldment – whatever that means for each of us; and the reassurance that we all possess the power to take the next step.

From a certain perspective, it may seem that this scenario is a bit too rigid, that there is little flexibility in the possibilities that lie before us. But Besant makes sure we understand that the sky is the limit, as long as we uphold certain important virtues and keep a perspective that includes more than just this lifetime. She says,

I do not wish to lower by one tiniest fraction your own ideal; you cannot aim too high. The fact that you can conceive it makes it yours... Aim at the loftiest you are able to think and to love. But in aiming, consider the means as well as the end, your powers as well as your aspirations. Make your aspirations high. They are the germs of powers in your next life. Through ever keeping the ideal high, you will grow towards it, and what you long for today you shall be in the days to come. But have the tolerance of knowledge and the patience which is divine.

With an ever-expanding aspiration to serve, we carve out our own future opportunities for doing so. We plant the seeds of altruistic effort, sometimes in the physical plane, sometimes in the mental, but none of them are ever wasted or lost.

There is no way of measuring how far we could progress in each lifetime, but we all know that we still have to confront our own unfavourable tendencies. If nothing else, we can at least try to eradicate them, to the best of our understanding, so that one by one, the obstacles that stand in the way of clear seeing can begin to vanish. Within this context we can ask, what if I could become the best version of myself at this very moment? Can I renounce, right here, right now, the limitations I already recognise, the tendencies that work to the detriment of being who I really am, at this point in time? What would that take? In other words, how can this personality provide the best conditions in the present for the inner flower to bloom? From a certain point of view,

There are often signs along the road that hint to us which direction to go in.

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we already are the best versions of ourselves that we can be, but this version has the potential to move forward every moment. It is a dynamic condition that provides new opportunities as we move along the way, when and if we do.

The answers to these questions are personal in nature. I believe that a combination of will, mindfulness, and the constant remembrance of God, of Brahman, within the heart can begin to dissolve the personal walls that prevent us from experiencing Oneness: Will, as a propelling inner fire for following a daily practice and a faithful companion as we make that practice a priority; mindfulness, as the linking thread that connects us more deeply with each moment as it is, without additional commentary; the possibility of listening to unspoken words and developing the capacity to see the impermanent as nothing but a passing cloud in the inner sky; and finally, a constant remembrance of the eternal flame, one and indivisible, untouched by any experience, as the sustaining power and guiding force of all action. We have the opportunity each day to become lighter, more spacious and more curious.

Among the many profound truths that Buddhism has brought to the world is its compassionate view of suffering as the experience of humanity as a whole. There is no such thing as your suffering separated from mine. The moment I lift a tiny bit of your burden, I am lifting mine, and the world's. As one of Thich Nhat Hanh's poems beautifully expresses it, "You cultivate the flower in yourself so that I will be beautiful." Paradoxically, our daily practice becomes lighter and more joyous when it is driven by the desire to alleviate every creature's suffering.

With all this in mind, let us return now to the problem of the world ecosystem, particularly the oppressive current circumstances that are calling us to action. As has been suggested above, action will be necessarily different for each of us, because of our uniqueness. As Besant pointed out, what we do is in accordance with "the loftiest we are able to think and to love."

Certainly, what we choose to do as individuals does not need general consensus. But what about our collective efforts, when there are so many fronts that need urgent attention?

Looking into the Three Objects of the Theosophical Society, and also into old letters, articles and speeches of the early Theosophists, we members of the organisation strive to understand the Society's role. A great loyalty to the original spirit of the Society has taken us to endless revision of its purpose – the blessing and the curse that has accompanied us from its foundation. All that has been written only offers guidelines subject to interpretation, and each of them can be put into practice in various different ways. Because of this, the Society varies greatly from lodge to lodge, and from country to country. It seems as if the collective *dharma* of each place has been the guiding force in responding to the inner nature of that place. In a less favourable light, we can also say that the Society in each place is made up of accumulated layers of conditioning. It is quite easy to fall into patterns and perpetuate the ways things have been done for decades.

If we examine the lives of the pioneers of the Theosophical movement, one thing stands out without exception: their courageous commitment to bring light and change to the social injustices of their time, with only a blurry line dividing their personal actions from the Society's efforts.

So, as an organisation, how can we further aid this suffering world? Our purpose remains relevant and necessary, but aren't we falling short? There is so much work that is still undone simply in accomplishing our First Object, "to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity." We may continue to be a quieter influence in the inner planes, hopefully brightening and uplifting the collective mind, but I could see the Society being so much more visibly involved in promoting awareness and long-lasting change.

I do not claim to know the answers, but I trust that if we make the sincere effort, to the best of our ability, without conditions or expectations, to lessen the suffering of our neighbour, the powers of

good awaiting to find vehicles of expression will not wait a second. Every next step is ready when we are ready. As H.P. Blavatsky writes in *The Secret Doctrine*: “The Universe is worked and guided from within outwards. As above so it is below, as in heaven so on earth; and man – the microcosm and miniature copy of the macrocosm – is the living witness to this Universal Law and to the mode of its action.”

We can never know how far right intention and action can take us. During World War II, there was an Englishman whose unusual mind played a pivotal role in cracking intercepted coded messages sent by Hitler to the German forces. His name was Alan Turing, and it has been said that his cryptographic discoveries shortened the war by two to four years and saved an estimated 14–21 million lives. Among his quotes, there is one that brings hope even to the smallest of us: “Sometimes it is the people no one imagines anything of who do the things that no one can imagine.” Sometimes, like the wolf, they can even change rivers.

First published in *Quest* magazine 105:3 Summer 2017

...I could see the Society being so much more visibly involved in promoting awareness and long-lasting change.



Juliana Cesano is a second-generation Theosophist and has been actively involved with the Society's work for over 20 years. She is a certified yoga teacher as well as the manager of the Quest Book Shop in Wheaton, U.S.A. Juliana was Director of Studies at the TSNZ School of Theosophy held in Auckland in May.



The Christchurch Hall opening on 29th March was a joyful day as TSNZ members report.

## CANTERBURY CELEBRATES



National President Richard Sell and Vice-President Melanie Closs with the Canterbury Branch committee, past officers of TSNZ, John Vorstermans, Renée Sell and members of the Governance Board of The Theosophical Society in New Zealand.



National President, Richard Sell, welcoming all to the opening of the new Canterbury Branch building.



Richard Sell and Susanna Roskilly with the framed picture of Annie Besant.

Following the devastating earthquake in Christchurch 14 years ago, the theosophical building at Cambridge Terrace had to be demolished due to the considerable damage it sustained.

As time flowed on, we dealt with insurance claims and supporting the fledgling Canterbury Branch of the Theosophical Society, formed in 2013. During the ensuing years the National Office and Canterbury Branch explored their vision for a future theosophical home on the same site. What emerged was a vision for a place of beauty, one with space, openness, letting in nature and being surrounded by it. An architect was found with connections to theosophy and exciting plans drawn up. The Governance Board approved the considerable financial investment for the new TSNZ premises, as well as a cottage to be rented out to help cover the overall costs. The National Section was very excited to be able to open this space in Christchurch to further spread the message of Theosophy.

The building project was lovingly overseen by Canterbury Lodge President Susanna Roskilly and her husband Phil to get it to where it is now, a magnificent spiritual centre for Christchurch and surrounding areas.

It has been said 'No tree can grow without soil, and THEOSOPHY can only flourish and develop its fair flowers and refreshing fruits, where many pure hearts seeking the truth are gathered together'.

This is our place where theosophy can flourish. It will be a place for theosophical studies, meditations, healing and peace. It will be a place where a sacred feeling of community is built, connections made and friendships blossom – a place for seekers and explorers of the mystery of life, a place of discovery! From this centre, a light will grow, be strengthened and shine for the community in Christchurch, bringing its own richness and blessings to the local area.

I would like to offer my deepest thanks to all the many people involved with the vision, ideas, work and support of this endeavour over the years, so that we as a Society are in this fortunate position right now. I send the members of Canterbury Branch my best wishes and all the help, love and support from my team and me at the National Office at Vasanta House. I know you will cherish this new theosophical home and may it be a cherished centre of light in your heart and in the hearts of others. - Richard Sell

*The opening day was a most joyful celebration, the culmination of an immense amount of mindful planning, hard work and dedication to ensure that Theosophy once again thrives in Canterbury. An awareness too, of honouring all those who have gone before us, at 267 Cambridge Terrace. An honourable mission completed! Thanks and very best wishes go to all involved. - Robin de Mandeville*



The new  
Canterbury Branch building



Canterbury's  
peacefull haven



Branch President Susanna Roskilley  
with branch member Edward Staats  
and Renée Sell from Auckland.

We know that we do not actually do anything all by ourselves, and so it was truly wonderful to see all of the dedicated people who had contributed to the reconceiving, rebuilding and renewing of the Christchurch Theosophical Society space and spirit, acknowledged and receive their fair share of praise and heartfelt thanks from all who attended. I am sure the Masters are with Susanna, her committee and the loyal members of the Lodge as they embark, once again, on the intrepid journey to learn, share and support Theosophy with their neighbours. - Toni Weir



National President Richard Sell presenting the  
Canterbury Branch President Susanna Roskilley  
with a special gift from the National Section.



Prayers of the Religions  
being read at the Opening event.



Celebrating after the opening  
of the new building.

*The new Christchurch premises are an asset to all Theosophical Members, no matter where they come from, and also an asset to the general public. Christchurch now has an asset that we can all be proud of. Let's now go back to the old days and create a community around this wonderful site. - David Willocks*



Attendees of the new hall opening  
in Christchurch.



The new Theosophical Library  
at the Canterbury Branch.



Canterbury members  
relaxing outdoors at the new premises.

# The Quest for Meaning

Famed international theosophist **Joy Mills** wrote about life's most intriguing questions.

## Part One

The journey of life is essentially the quest for meaning and the experience of meaning seems granted to us only in becoming conscious of new knowledge.

No cry is more plaintive or more persistent, no cry more heart-rending or difficult to answer than the simple plea, 'Why?' Even as children beginning the exploration of the world about us, we seek to know why things are as they are: why is water wet? Why does fire burn? Why do trees grow upwards and not down? An endless series of questions each one beginning with "Why?" marks our entry into awareness of ourselves and our world, of people, events and things.

Growth from childhood into maturity only changes the object of our inquiry; the question remains essentially the same. We demand meaning, not simply a knowledge of how things operate or what things are and this imperative demand for meaning pushes us relentlessly forward to explore the unknown territory of life itself. For all the 'whys' we have asked – why did this happen to me? Why did my friend have to die? Why is there so much injustice in the world? – all the 'whys' we can ever ask, are finally resolved into one imperious question: "What is the meaning of life?"

That question, forged in the fires of our suffering and our heart-ache, of our pains and struggles, shaped by our expectations, aspirations and dreams, leads us forth on a most singular adventure after understanding – an adventure towards wisdom and enlightenment, towards the kind of experience that is genuinely numinous in its transformative character because it enables us at the end of our quest to say, "I know."

The journey of life is essentially the quest for meaning and the experience of meaning seems granted to us only in becoming conscious of new knowledge. So it is that the metaphysical task of man lies in a continual expansion of consciousness, and our destiny, as individuals, is to push outwards the boundaries of self-awareness even when the process involves pain and suffering or demands a ruthless and honest confrontation with ourselves. According to Carl Jung, "Because of the self's drive toward realisation, life appears as a task of the highest order and therein lies the possibility of interpreting its meaning, which does not exclude the possibility of defeat." For even when we momentarily fail in the quest – and failure is only temporary so long as we do not cease the quest – our very defeat marks a further advance on the road to full self-awareness and self-realisation.

For Jung, the meaning of life lay in the realisation of the self, by which he meant the realisation of the divine in man. Perhaps that, after all, may be the best, or at least the easiest, way in which to express the end of the quest for it sums up all the religious traditions, while at the same time it points to the fact that the journey and the goal lie in the here and now of everyday existence.

## THE HEROIC JOURNEY

In the words of *The Secret Doctrine*, the quest for meaning is 'the martyrdom of self-conscious existence', in which we must, by our own efforts, win through to our immortality, achieving the goal of Self-realisation while in incarnation. This is no easy task and consequently it has always been depicted in myth and legend, in scripture and in sacred literature, as a heroic journey in which every man is the hero of his own story, however unheroic he may appear to himself or to others.

The re-tellings of the ancient tale of man's quest for meaning are so numerous that one can turn to any culture or any tradition and find some version of the epic. Yet we continue to search, and today the search has seemed to take on a certain desperation for we feel that the world, as we have known it, is rapidly crumbling while the threat of a nuclear holocaust is ever more imminent. As a consequence of our desperation, we feel there must be short cuts to our goal, that almost anyone who promises to endow existence with meaning must be on the right track and that all we need to do is to follow blindly. Unfortunately, the psychic and spiritual wrecks which strew the paths that are thus taken do not always seem sufficient warning to the newer questioner. Perhaps it would be well to heed the words of the well-known mountain climber, Edward Whymper:

Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are naught without prudence and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste: look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end.

Every chronicle depicting the age-old search gives the same advice, and nowhere in the western tradition has the lesson been presented with greater urgency or more convincing example than in the numerous re-tellings of the quest for the Holy Grail. The power and beauty of the Grail legends, intertwined as many of them are with the Arthurian stories, still stir the heart and mind of many whose normal, mundane lives appear dreary and fruitless.

## QUEST FOR THE GRAIL

Somewhere, we feel, Camelot and Avalon must exist; some day, we hope, all humanity will sit together at the Table Round, in peace and harmony of purpose. These very words, conjuring up dreams of a time and a place when a Golden Age will dawn again, break through the hard empirical crust of our vaunted rational minds to awaken within us the possibility of another kind of existence, a life lived more fully, more meaningfully, more richly, and we are drawn outwards, as was Parsifal, from the forest of

our knowing to seek the 'King who can make knights', and to find the Castle of the Grail.

For the Grail itself symbolises meaning, that vessel which is the container of wisdom, for which men seek throughout the world and the quest for meaning, then, is the search for the Grail. The 'King who can make knights', whom Parsifal first set out to find, is that Immortal Atman – the One Self – as well as the Great Initiator who, once seen, forever after claims our allegiance. So, every man begins the journey as did Parsifal the simple fool, naive, unknowing, pure. Along the way he meets with every temptation, disguised as dragon, giant, demon and witch, or as fire, water, earth and air; he is befriended by lovely maiden or wise old man; he experiences the terrors of the night of despair and at dawn he glimpses anew the vision of his own certain triumph. At the end of the journey he enters the heavenly city, the Castle of the Grail. There he perceives the unveiled light, the holy wisdom, and thus becomes an enlightened one, a saviour of the world.

In the Galahad version of the Grail legend, one hundred and fifty knights undertook the quest but only three were blessed with Galahad's continued presence, and Galahad alone – the perfect knight, the truly initiated one – is judged worthy to see the mysteries within the holy vessel and to look on the ineffable. Students of theosophical literature will recognise here a multiplicity of symbols: Galahad and the three who accompany him to the journey's end are perhaps the four Kumaras, bringing light, intelligence and wisdom to a new cycle in the evolutionary process; Galahad, the avatar promised in so many traditions as coming when there is 'decay of righteousness' and when the world faces a new crisis of the spirit; Galahad and his companions overcoming every trial and difficulty to join the ranks of those 'just men made perfect' who are the Brotherhood of Adepts, the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion.

## ARTHURIAN SYMBOLS

For basic to the story of the Grail quest is the magnificent concept that there exists a mystery-race of King Adepts who take incarnation periodically in order to aid mankind in its long journey toward the sacred place where meaning is discovered. So, it is said that, just as every Mason learns to direct his steps from West to East, the Adept-Kings of the mysterious Grail race journeyed eastward with the Grail. But, from time to time, one or another of that mystery-race may journey Westward with the Grail of Wisdom to awaken in men and women a knowledge of their forgotten birthright. Such, indeed, was the case when the Theosophical Society was founded, and through it is given the

...within us, too,  
is Galahad, chaste  
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the Grail...

ageless wisdom which alone imparts meaning to existence. It testifies to the fact that there is a Path to the Castle of the Grail and that the stages on the way are as clearly marked today as they ever were; and it sounds the warning that the travelling demands nothing less than all we have and are. The brave in heart, willing to walk that way, must say as did Parsifal, "Go I will, cost what it may."

Let us, then, examine this eternal quest, using some features of the Grail legends to serve as guides along the way. Every archetypal symbol of these legends lies within humankind: the Waste Land is the field of personal incarnation when the 'King' or Atman is 'wounded' because of our non-recognition of his existence; the Sword is a symbol of Manas; the Lance, a symbol of the intuitive, direct perception – these are all elements of our own nature, symbolic of faculties to be awakened or aspects of ourselves to be experienced and made conscious. Each participant in the drama of the Grail quest, whether called Parsifal or Merlin, Guinevere or Gawain, is within us now, for, as the American poet Walt Whitman once wrote, we 'contain multitudes'. As we read the legend we may see ourselves as Bors the plodder, subject to the temptations of the intellect, faced with a moral dilemma, the choice between conflicting duties, and yet able to make a reasoned decision to continue on the quest. Or we may find in ourselves the figure of Lancelot, needing continuous help, stumbling again and again on the way through the valley of humiliation, the dead weight of our past dragging us down, and yet ever full of good intentions to reform.

Or we may be Gawain, brave, magnanimous, staunchest of friends, the first to leap to his feet when the quest is announced, but somehow failing to understand its nature, taking counsel of wise men and, at the same time, excusing his inability to follow the advice he is given. And within us, too, is Galahad, chaste and pure in aspiration, following the single path to the vision of the Grail, ever tender in his relations with others, perfect in virtue, patient with the failings of his companions, and with an aura that draws all to him, inspiring each to be his best as he moves toward his goal.

Magazine article: *The Theosophist*, March 1981



Joy Mills (1920-2015), was an International Vice-President of The Theosophical Society and a National President of its American and Australian Sections. For over 60 years she was an international lecturer for the TS and spoke in many countries. She was also a Director of the Krotone School of Theosophy, in Ojai, California. Joy was the author of numerous articles and books. In 2011 she was awarded the Subba Row Medal for contributions to Theosophical literature.

**Our love of truth is evidenced by our ability to discover and  
appropriate what is good wherever we come upon it.**

*J. W. von Goethe*

Nancy Secrest concludes her reflections on some of the work of this vital, international, theosophical organisation.

# IN THE SERVICE OF ALL

## THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

### PART 2

#### DISASTER RELIEF

Like war, natural disasters can displace many people. Unlike other TOS projects, which may be limited in scope to the group's local area, disaster relief is a concern to which the TOS responds on an international level. In recent years, the TOS worldwide has responded by raising funds to help with clean-up efforts, rebuilding and supplying food and water to those displaced by natural disasters, such as the earthquake in Nepal several years ago, and the earthquakes in Italy in August and October 2016.

In past years, TOS members have also offered assistance after hurricanes, cyclones and tornadoes in the Philippines, India and the United States, and floods in India and the United States. More recently, TOS Spain is working with other NGOs in Latin America after earthquakes in Haiti and hurricanes in Honduras and Nicaragua. This year record-breaking floods occurred in India, and cyclones again hit the Philippines. TOS members were there to give help to those who needed it. Teddy bears knitted by English, Italian and French TOS members made their way to many children affected by some of these disasters. Belgium has now joined this project as well. Psychologists have shown that having a soft and cuddly friend to hang on to during stressful times is beneficial to small children. The TOS in England leads the way with this project. As of the last report, the TOS England had shipped over 30,000 teddies overseas, thanks to the generosity of two charities – International Aid Trust (IAT) and Furniture for Education Worldwide (FEW) – who convey the teddies free of charge.



Teddies donated by TOS in France



Annie Besant, founder of the TOS.

#### PANDEMIC AID

For the last few years, we have been experiencing a different kind of natural disaster: a pandemic of global proportions. We have all had to deal with the effects of the Covid-19 virus in one way or another. TOS members in many countries have given aid in various ways, such as medical assistance to those suffering from the disease, help to caregivers, and food and financial aid to those who have lost their livelihoods.

A scenario exemplified by the Hungarian TOS was repeated in many TOS countries around the world in an attempt to ease the suffering caused by the pandemic. This included assistance to the elderly and disadvantaged and help to students, who could only attend classes online or not at all. The Hungarian TOS works closely with the Roma (Gypsy) community there, providing clothing and household items. This year, the number of emergency support donation requests soared. Elderly couples, families with many small children, and others taking care of older relatives received sums of money to ease the crisis. Food and household articles were also given.

Of special interest is a large donation received from the TOS in England for Covid-19 relief in India. The British responded to reports of suddenly increased rates of infection in India in summer 2022. The funds were used to purchase food and household articles in several cities in India, which were then distributed by TOS members in the local areas. Food was provided in villages and to old-age homes. Face masks and hand sanitisers were purchased in Chennai, a month's supply of food was given to a girls' home in Odisha (which is supported by TOS members there), and oxygen tanks were provided for a temporary Covid hospital. Some Adyar employees who needed help with medical costs due to Covid-19, or replacement of loss of spousal income due to the lockdowns, were also assisted. Some help is still being given, although we hope we have seen the last of this virus.

#### EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS

Many TOS groups focus on providing or supporting schools, particularly those that teach Theosophical concepts and virtues. Helping children is close to the hearts of many Theosophists. The

...disaster relief is a concern to which the TOS responds on an international level.

largest and most successful of these efforts is the Golden Link College in the Philippines. The school has been providing transformational education for less privileged children since 2002. Eighty-five percent of the student body is on scholarship. The school is regarded throughout the Theosophical world as a model of Theosophy in action.

Besides teaching core academics, the school teaches meditation and focuses on developing character, integrity and self-confidence. At the college level, courses in Theosophy are part of the core curriculum. It is felt that these qualities of character will be communicated to others throughout the students' lives, promoting peace and harmony.

The Adyar Theosophical Academy has followed suit. The school is located on the Society's campus in Chennai. ATA is beginning its fifth year of operations and added a fifth standard (grade) this year. Temporary classrooms have been built to add a sixth standard next school year. The TS would greatly appreciate donations to fund the construction of these classrooms.

The TOS in Pakistan provides 15 home schools for 300 children, focusing on girls who would otherwise be unable to get an education. The TOS in Australia, New Zealand and Italy all support individual home schools there. It costs \$1,100 per year to support a home school.

These schools of literacy, founded by the TOS in Pakistan, take their distinctive name from *qandeel*, which means *lantern* and symbolises the light of knowledge. It employs teachers who reside in poor areas of the country and who reserve a room during the day (of the two that usually make up their homes) to use as a classroom. The TOS provides whiteboards, mats for children to sit on, stationery, and other essential tools. The children learn the basic educational tools of reading, writing, arithmetic, and social skills. The TOS in Pakistan also provides nursing scholarships to young women. This program was initially run jointly with the UN Women's Group. It now relies on donations from the TOS and others. (Donations to both of these efforts can be made through the TOS in the United States.)

TOS Pakistan also works with Montessori teacher training. Members there are strong in their resolve to continue with their various programs unimpeded.

This is no small matter, as Theosophists in Pakistan were targeted in the past and killed simply for being Theosophists. The TS was shut down, but the TOS was allowed to continue and just last year again began presenting public programs, with emphasis on charitable works.

The TOS in Finland, along with other TOS groups, supports the work of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHSS) and the Social Welfare Centre at Adyar. The OMHSS, founded in 1894 by Henry Steel Olcott, provides a solid education for underprivileged boys and girls. The Social Welfare Centre cares for small children from the local area, allowing their mothers to attend the Vocational Training Centre, where they learn fabric arts, such as sewing, tailoring, embroidery and weaving.

Many other TOS groups, particularly in India, run schools or educational programs for children, and TOS members around the world sponsor the education of many hundreds of others. These include a school in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sponsored jointly by the French TOS and the Liberal Catholic Church.

The TOS in Italy helps to support the Little Flower Convent School for the deaf, located in Chennai. Founded in 1926 by the Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Little Flower Convent was recognised by the government of Tamil Nadu in 1931. It became a secondary school in 1968. It welcomes 800 deaf children and young people, giving them the opportunity to obtain a recognised diploma. The convent also welcomes and gives the opportunity to work for blind people, who are otherwise condemned to survive in poverty on the margins of society.

In Sweden, the TOS helps orphans and street children. Many TOS groups, like those in Bangladesh, offer school supplies to children. The TOS in Spain has continued with its support to the NGOs COMPARTE and PERSONAS, both working in Central America, mainly involved in providing education to the most disadvantaged children in different parts of Latin America.

Another bright star in the TOS world is our youth group in Tanzania. Getting youth involved in the TS and in TOS work is something we all struggle with, but in Tanzania they have done it. (Brazil too does outstanding work with youth.) The young people

work with children from the Chanika Orphanage, which the TOS there helps to sponsor. This year the TOS in Odisha, India, also began a TOS youth group. We are hoping that this concept will spread throughout India.

### HEALING EFFORTS

The TOS Healing Network operates around the world. In many places healing groups get together, usually weekly, to perform a ritual and a healing meditation that calls the devas to assist in healing or in a peaceful transition from this life. Names of those in need of healing are submitted by family or friends and are now shared internationally.

During the lockdowns, when groups could not meet physically, many began meeting electronically on Zoom or like media. The healing group in Costa Rica invited those from other countries, especially those that do not have a healing group, to participate. Members from Paraguay, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico joined the meetings.

Other medically related TOS projects include the issuing of mobility aids, which is a principal project of the TOS in India. The TOS in Puerto Rico collects, cleans, repairs and sells used goods of all types in a sort of flea market. The proceeds of their sales are used to buy prostheses or implants for children in Haiti. There are many such children who were injured by falling buildings during earthquakes there, and the prostheses need to be replaced as the children grow.

Animals deserve healing too, or so thought Rozi Ulics of the TOS-USA, who began an animal healing network there a number of years ago. The TOS in Hungary has followed suit. The TOS in Argentina started its own animal shelter six years ago. At present there are 21 dogs and seven cats enjoying life there.

In the spirit of *ahimsa* (respect for all life and avoidance of harm to others), several TOS Sections – Portugal, Uruguay, and Hungary – teach vegetarian or vegan cooking classes or have produced DVDs or vegetarian cookbooks.

In Chennai, although it is not a TOS program, the Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary has long been a favorite among TOS groups and individuals when deciding where to donate funds. BMAD has

grown exponentially in the last five years. Not only does it serve dogs and cats on both an inpatient and outpatient basis, it is now home to horses, cows, donkeys, injured monkeys and pigs. BMAD helps with a turtle hatching and release program in Chennai each year. The surgeons there have performed over 1,000 spaying and neutering operations to help hold down the population of street (we call them community) dogs and cats as well as complicated surgeries on major injuries. Recently, the government of India asked BMAD to assist in a program for wild animals.

### WOMEN'S ISSUES

Several years ago, the international TOS declared a worldwide focus on women's issues, which we have extended ever since then. We asked TOS Sections to sign on to this commitment. Several Sections have done so and are actively supporting women's safety, both outside and inside the home, education for women, equal economic opportunities and basic human rights.



Self Defence training

The especially fine work in gender issues of Dr Deepa Padhi (International Vice-president of the TS) and TOS Bhubaneswar in Odisha Region attracted significant support from TOS groups in other countries.

Dr Padhi says the initiative began when her group went to the then governor of the region and solicited his support to put up billboards to educate people about violence toward women. Since then, they have conducted seminars at workplaces, put on street plays, and published a journal with many articles about women's issues and a book containing a compilation of these and

The TOS  
Healing Network  
operates around  
the world.

The TOS is active in 36 countries doing humanitarian service work based on spiritual concepts.

other articles. Proceeds from the sale of the book *Yes, She Can* go toward supporting projects for destitute women. Karate classes are even being conducted for young women.

In the last year, sewing machines were purchased with a donation from TOS New Zealand for use with a vocational training program in the region's slums, and scholarships have been given to 25 young women. These have been matched by donations from TOS Italy doubling their impact.

In Kenya, women are being taught various skills, such as hairdressing and manicure, in order for them to help support themselves and their families. The Olcott Education Society's Women's Vocational Centre, while not a TOS program, is a shining example of providing poor women with skills that will help them to be more independent and to help provide for themselves and their families. The centre teaches tailoring and weaving. Also, TOS groups in the U.S. and France help to support shelters for abused women.

Recently, the TOS Odisha opened a clothing store, where people can donate clothing and small household appliances. Those in need can then visit the store, selecting needed articles at no cost. The TOS Odisha also gives an Empowered Woman of Odisha award each year to a woman who has exemplified the role of women as empowered individuals. In Kenya, the men are not forgotten. The TOS there recently invited applicants for training in tailoring, carpentry and landscaping. Three candidates were selected. The training lasts for six months with fees paid by the TOS.



Free clothing shop

The TOS is active in 36 countries doing humanitarian service work based on spiritual concepts. I want you to know that the international TOS and the TOS in the U.S. are there to help and support you in your own service endeavours, whether in your private lives or within the TOS or the TS. The TOS has resources available on its website and people willing to listen to you and share ideas. The TOS's whole reason for existing is to support the Theosophical Society's work in making Theosophy of transformative value in the world and in the life of the individual spiritual seeker. We all need to work together "in the service of all that suffers."

As the poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote, "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."



Nancy Secrest, International Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) encountered Theosophy in her early twenties and joined the Theosophical Society in 1980. Nancy has lived and worked at the Krotona Theosophical Institute in the USA and was National Secretary of the Theosophical Society in America. Nancy is International Treasurer of the Theosophical Society. As International Secretary of the TOS, Nancy has travelled in the USA, Europe and Asia giving presentations, talks and workshops.

# Recommended Reading

Three of the featured books here are by Rohit Mehta, a well-known Indian Theosophist, educator, lecturer and writer. He was also known as a social activist who worked with Mahatma Gandhi. Rohit Mehta served both as International Secretary of the Theosophical Society, and as General Secretary of the Indian Section. The books look quite unassuming and if you are new to Theosophy, they may not 'jump off the shelf' at first glance. They are, however, very well written and well worth taking the time to study.

A full index of chapters for each book can be viewed on Koha, the Library's digital cataloguing system, accessed via the library page on the TSNZ website ([www.theosophy.nz](http://www.theosophy.nz)). Please remember to click on 'All libraries' next to the search box and select 'National Section Theosophical Society' from the drop-down selection.

## THE SEARCH FOR FREEDOM by Rohit Mehta

This book of short essays deals with common problems we encounter in daily life, our spiritual life, as well as within organisations, society and politics and gives 'inner' solutions which are accessible to us all. Chapters include "The Doctrine of the Heart" on the limitations of the mind to perceive the unpredictable and unmanifest and speaks of the importance of heart centred intuition which will guide the mind to reason from a much wider and holistic worldview, accessed through silence and meditation. Another chapter, "The Attitude of a Seeker", emphasises the importance of aspiration to discover Truth and the attitude of seeking, both of which are complementary and essential, for our personal journey as well as for the harmony of The Theosophical Society.

## SEEK OUT THE WAY by Rohit Mehta

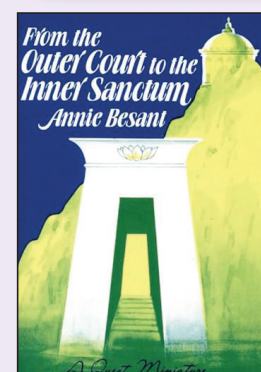
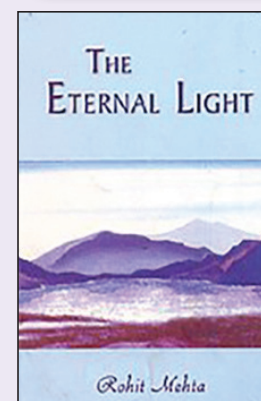
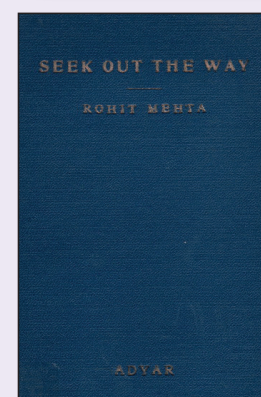
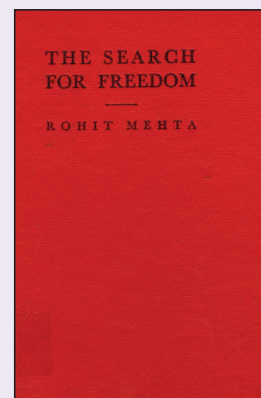
This book grew out of a series of talks given to a group of students at The Theosophical Society in Benares, India. The talks were centred on the book *Light on the Path* which has been a source of inspiration to many. The aphorisms at the heart of *Light on the Path* contain spiritual instructions of great significance and like many spiritual treatises, contain several layers of meaning. "Seek out the way" is one of the aphorisms in *Light on the Path* and Rohit Mehta endeavours to illuminate the Way, patiently explaining that in order to find our way on the Path we must understand storms, aloneness, surrender, silence and enquiry, among other things.

## THE ETERNAL LIGHT by Rohit Mehta

In our modern age of science and technology, the role and meaning of our individual lives can appear to be insignificant. As life becomes increasingly mechanical, some are asking: "What is the place of the individual in the vast scheme of evolution? Do we each have a creative role to play, or are we destined to remain at the whim of the larger evolutionary forces?" Evolution is the main theme of this book, as it is regarded by both science and modern Theosophy. Rohit Mehta examines the concept of continuity which is discernible at all levels of evolution as well as the intervals of dis-continuity which give meaning and significance to the whole evolutionary process, as well as to the significance of each individual life.

## FROM THE OUTER COURT TO THE INNER SANCTUM by Annie Besant

This book by the famed British theosophist, offers insights into the inner workings of the soul and explores the journey from the "outer court" of the physical world to the "inner sanctum" of spiritual understanding and realisation. The journey of the aspirant involves purification of self, controlling thoughts and building up character. Annie Besant talks about the self, the importance of inner qualities such as compassion and wisdom as well as giving an outline of the concept of karma. This gem of a book presents a practical guide for deepening understanding of ourselves, the world around us and the path of spiritual growth. It is clear and concise, good for beginners as well as experienced theosophists.



# IN TUNE WITH THE UNIVERSE

Past Theosophical Society International President Radha Burnier  
wrote with clarity and vision...

The subject of attunement is of vital importance to humanity. Being out of tune with other people, with the environment, and with ourselves, we have done enormous damage to mutual relationships and to our own progress. The damage we do to ourselves can at no time be separated from the damage we do to others. We are responsible for the whole. Those who are inwardly well tuned and integrated, radiate harmony and happiness wherever they go and whatever they do. On the other hand, when there is discord inside, it breeds discord outside. Further, as *The Voice of the Silence* says: "Before the soul can see, the harmony within must be attained." All discord blinds the vision and human progress is retarded.

The universe is not a chaos but a cosmos, so perfectly tuned that those who realise it through study and contemplation are left speechless in utter amazement. In his book, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces that Shape the Universe*, the author Sir Martin Rees writes about six numbers, some of them very small and some very large, which constitute the "recipe" for the universe. If any one of them were to be increased or decreased even minutely, there would be no stars and no life. For example, if the existing ratio between gravity and expansion energy had been even slightly different, the universe would have collapsed long ago, or no galaxies or stars would have been formed. He asks the question: "Is this tuning just a brute fact, a coincidence?"

According to ancient Indians the cosmic order was called *rita*. The unimaginably high level of tuning which maintains the cosmic order relates not only to the perceivable

measurable facts of which scientists take cognizance; it exists in subtle dimensions with which science does not concern itself. *Rita*, for the ancients, was all-comprehensive harmony, the ground of all phenomena in the visible and the deep invisible fields and dimensions of existence. David Bohm might have had an insight into this aspect when he wrote, in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, about undivided wholeness in flowing movement and an implicate order which "constitutes a fundamental aspect of reality."

The cosmic order or *rita*, on a vast, almost inscrutable scale, may be similar. There is an intelligence and creative power (the master musician) that restores the harmony of the universe, if it is disturbed in even the slightest degree. This is the working of Karma or Karma-Nemesis as Madame Blavatsky calls it in *The Secret Doctrine*. She says that "the only decree of Karma – an eternal and immutable decree – is absolute Harmony in the world of Matter as it is in the world of Spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we who reward or punish ourselves, according as we work with, through and along with Nature, abiding by the laws on which that harmony depends, or – breaking them" (11.368). HPB also says in this context that so long as the effect of having thrown into perturbation "even the smallest atom in the Infinite World of Harmony" has not been readjusted, the "evil-doer" suffers what he thinks is retribution. He experiences what we call pain and strives to escape it, and, being ignorant of what is happening, he acts in such a way as to create further perturbation.

Human consciousness has the power to observe, think over, and understand enough about the universe in which it finds itself to realise the responsibility of the individual in preserving the harmony. By our own effort to see and understand life, we must realise that the chaotic conditions in human society result from the contradictions within ourselves. Therefore, the remedy is in our hands. If we give attention to understanding, our consciousness may make the transition into a new level of knowledge of the universal order, its meaning and beauty.

Evolution is not merely a development from lesser to greater degrees of complexity of form, but also a blossoming of consciousness into higher levels of awareness. This awareness includes an appreciation of the fundamental energies in the cosmos; it does not necessarily refer to knowledge of details. It is a vision of the principles which manifest themselves in every detail as well as in the general flow. The Buddha's omniscience, tradition says, consists of the power to know everything rather than knowledge of such details as how many hairs there are on a person's head!

The flow of manifestation reveals these principles in varying degrees through various phenomena and functions. In the flow of a waterfall, we see a steady movement although there is constant change. The sparkling changes against the background of a steady state cause us to experience a refreshing delight and a sense of newness at every instant. The shadow or phenomenal world is endless movement and never-ending change, but underlying the movement is immovable

and everlasting Being – a paradox which is repeated in other ways. The order of the universe embraces an immense diversity of forms and patterns. The creative energy which upholds it constantly gives birth to new things; but nothing is repeated, not even one leaf of a tree being the same as another. Nature seems to abhor cloning and conformity. Yet amidst the astounding diversities of life, a mysterious bond exists uniting all things into a whole. The human being is like a drop in the vastness and depth of the ocean of existence, seemingly separate, but inseparable from it. Each particular element derives its value from enriching the whole, but it is the whole which is the “music of the spheres.” It is wonderful to be human, because we can rejoice in the beauty and the newness of all the different elements and also realise that they are not other than the wholeness. They are, in fact, the Whole displaying a part of its self-nature, just as Light displays the colours of the rainbow. Every unity has the potential for diversity, and all diversities merge with unity.

The human problem is that our internal contradictions have their base in the great paradox of manifestation, when the Supreme appears other than Itself. Pierre Lecomte de Nouy, in his book *Human Destiny*, as well as others have speculated on the aims underlying evolution and have suggested that they include harmony, freedom and individuality. In the average human, the assertion of individuality destroys harmony and appears to establish freedom. The diversification of forms and species is a means to evolve more and more individual characteristics. There is a vast difference, for instance, between a mosquito and an elephant, not just because of size, but because in the former there is hardly any individuality, while the latter is markedly individual in looks, behaviour and intelligence. The human being has advanced even further in this direction. But through millennia, evolution of consciousness has also been developing freedom and a sense of harmony. Organically, there have been such developments: the animal is physically freer than the plant, and humankind is even freer. Inwardly also, progress is being made towards freedom. There is, however, the seeming contradiction between the need for harmony on the one hand,

and individuality on the other in the lives of most human beings. This is resolved in the earlier pre-human stages by Nature's own adjustments. But in the self-conscious human being there is conflict and struggle. He wants relationships, and yet his egoism spoils the chances of experiencing them joyfully. Assertion of individuality, (which is egoism) is the prime cause of our disharmony. Similarly, we want freedom, but we also need order – this is not only an individuality, but also a social and national dilemma. Hence our major problem is: Can we be free without creating chaotic and painful situations? Can we nourish the latent uniqueness within us, without being at war? Much depends on how we understand ourselves and those values which are of the basic substance of the universe. The universal and timeless values of the cosmos are unconnected with and independent of external things. As the poet Richard Lovelace said in his poem *To Althea From Prison*: ‘Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage.’

Someone in prison is no less free than another so-called free man who is a slave to the passion of greed, anger, or envy. Similarly, true individuality is not a matter of asserting one's importance or exhibiting knowledge. What we call fundamental values – freedom, uniqueness, harmony, happiness, peace – are soul characteristics. They are not dependent on anything outside for their existence. Belief that we must find them outside by manipulating relationships, acquiring possessions, or changing circumstances is the cause of discord and suffering. These values are facets of our true nature and of universal consciousness. When we realize our true nature, we are absolutely in tune with the universe.

Taken from July-August 2006 issue of *Quest* magazine.



Radha Burnier (1923 – 2013) became the seventh International President of the Theosophical Society in 1980, following the lead of her father, N. Sri Ram, who was a close associate of Annie Besant. Mrs Burnier was previously Director of research and publications of the Adyar Library and Research Centre. She held a Master's degree in Sanskrit from the Benares Hindu University and an honorary Doctor of Literature degree from Nagarjuna University. Radha Burnier lectured all over the world, her talks and writings known for clarity of thought and depth of vision.

There is an  
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*'A Union of those who Love, in the service of all that suffers'*



Carol Collier, TOS New Zealand's National Director has invited Renée Sell to contribute to this issue...

## THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE – *BUILDING CONNECTIONS*



The TOS panel of Jean Carrol, Dorothy Bell and Tim Boyd with Renée Sell.

In 1908, 117 years ago, the Theosophical Order of Service was started to put into practice the very lofty ideas and universal values that we study within the Theosophical Society. It is very much a way to put our first object into action, a way to demonstrate and practise the Oneness of all life. We give our time, talents, energy, money and moral support to those in need. This service is in recognition of the Oneness of all life.

The beautiful motto of the TOS: 'A Union of those who Love, in the service of all that suffers', showing our commitment and respect to the Oneness of all life. Very humbling indeed. Within New Zealand, one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, there are over 230 different ethnicities. We know in our hearts that each human being has a story, a journey of life that has brought them to where they are in any given moment. It brings up a deep respect for all beings on this journey, this is what matters. The TOS motto ties in beautifully with service to all that lives, service to humanity. Perhaps we start out with 'we want to help', my responsibility, my dharma, but eventually there is no other path to follow.

Speaking of the path of service and respect for all, brings us to the first object of the Theosophical Society. I find all roads lead to our first object in forming that nucleus of universal kinship, without distinction, as exemplified in our first object: of race, ethnicity, creed, gender, sexual orientation, caste or colour. These are barriers that human beings put up. It is our job to remove these barriers in our own minds. Everything we do is in relationship, no matter what we do. We work with people, in our homes, in employment, our work, committees and other groups. Certainly not easy, but always in relationship with others, with everyone.

Putting our first object into action is the foundation of the Theosophical Society and the rock the Society stands on. We hope to put this into practice, not in the past, not in the future, but today in the present. This is at the heart of service. Our ability as individuals to work in a group and meaningfully communicate and connect with each other, creates the nucleus of the First Object.

The TS and the TOS are instruments we work through for the betterment of humanity and toward unity for all, as we break the shackles of disrespect and selfishness, while removing barriers in our own minds. It is only when we work on removing these barriers that we can come to any form of equality. There is an ancient axiom which expresses the basic unity of life with clarity and goes on to emphasise the essential unity of ALL. Meditation upon this is meant to open our eyes to many truths:

As it is in the Great, so it is in the small; as it is above so it is below;  
As is the within so is the without; there is but one Life and one Law.  
There is neither great nor small, there is neither above nor below,  
There is neither within nor without in the divine Economy.

TOS is seen as Action, theosophical action. This reminds me why I joined the Theosophical Society, that initial impulse I had in joining. I encourage you to ponder this question and to think about if you have been side-tracked along the way? These questions are worthwhile reflecting upon from time to time, as the initial impulse is often from the soul. We human beings get distracted and go off track at times. As you reflect, ask yourself, what is important on your journey? Remembering that, 'the Soul' is the pilgrim on the journey of life. This is a wonderful practice, to reflect and check the course of our life and what is important to us and the direction or tack that our life path is taking.

In becoming aware of the journey, observation is very helpful and a needed stage in the beginning. What are we doing? How are we reacting with our minds and our emotions? All of these are pertinent questions as we learn to understand the many aspects of ourselves and not neglect our own inner calling when looking at our life and service. Our inner life and growing awareness of the part we play in purifying our minds and emotions are what leads us to what is unique about the Theosophical Order of Service. We have outer and inner action, a dual aspect in play here. It is up to us with our choices, to observe, see, act, both inwardly and outwardly.

Carving out the time required is important so that we do not neglect the whole being that we are, the inner and outer aspects of ourselves. For example, we can go out to where we can assist and help to make a difference while at the same time going inward, to the centre of our being through meditation, finding a balance and equilibrium. This brings us stability of nature within our own being. True service comes from the heart of our being, our centre and discovering a fully rounded human being, once we understand the workings of our whole nature. Annie Besant said that the supreme duty... the universal law of life; for only by service is fullness of life made possible, to the service of humanity the whole of the universe today is yoked. For under the name of human beings, human beings past, present and future, the human being evolving up to the divine human being, eternal, immortal, indestructible, that is the service to which every individual should be pledged, that the object of life, that the fashion of evolution. *(paraphrased)*

To conclude, I would love to share some beautiful pearls of wisdom from a TOS panel that comprised the International President Tim Boyd, International speaker Dorothy Bell and then Australian TOS Coordinator, Jean Carrol. My question was: what is the uniqueness of the Theosophical Order of Service?

**Dorothy Bell:** In the Theosophical Order of Service, there is a focus and awareness of the set of principles of theosophy that we need to look at - and the contribution of those principles. Annie Besant mentioned on the path of service, moving from, generalising as from egotism to altruism. She did identify in some of her work, those steps and she acknowledged that we have a mixture of motives, to save the world for the welfare of humanity, genuine and sincere. And yet that there is another part of us that has our own needs and that the journey from Egoism to Altruism fits in here... This uniqueness is working on being aware of that inner action as we

work with people and whatever we are doing that is in front of us, to help that.

**Tim Boyd:** In Buddhism, there is this idea that Motive is Everything. There is a certain motivation, that is said to be the major motivating factor 'May all beings be free from suffering'. In the case of the work that we do in the Theosophical Order of Service, the work is the same... sometimes what can be forgotten, is that we too are beings. In the sense that 'all beings be free from suffering', is a cooperative process that does not leave us out. There is something about this service process, from a theosophical perspective, where not only is it something that benefits others, but similarly we're benefitted by the experience of going beyond... For the person who is engaged in the practice it's something very different. We start to see the world in a very different way, when we are looking at it as a connection with fellow beings who suffer as we do. So again, the motive involved is what is all important. Motive is all important. Motive is everything!

**Jean Carrol:** I actually see service through the theosophical worldview as being a quickening of evolution of consciousness. I think Annie Besant summed it up and in her early years she joined the socialist party in the UK. We all remember what tremendous work she did to aid suffering in Victorian London. She said as we first get this impulse for service, we don't really know why, but it's actually our Soul's yearning. Annie said, she realised after working so very hard in London, that until she walked into the doors of the Theosophical Society, it was her Soul that was not being satisfied when she was just working for service. But when she could see the unity of all and she got into theosophical studies, she saw how it actually does work twofold. We receive as much as the person that we are giving to, if we are not working with our ego.

...for only by service is fullness of life made possible, to the service of humanity the whole of the universe today is yoked.

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## Vegetarians Today

From the New Zealand Vegetarian Society, Margaret Johns shares her very good reasons for adopting a plant-based diet.



Vegetarianism and veganism can be interesting concepts for discussion. For many people they are natural ways of life, for others they can be forced upon them by circumstances. There are a variety of reasons for following a veg~n diet/lifestyle – ethical, humane, economic, environmental, where people are born, what religion or lifestyle their parents follow, or even their own health.

When I was young, people used to say “but you don’t look like a vegetarian.” Those people obviously had strange concepts of what a vegetarian looked like! Today, mentioning you are veg~n barely raises an eyebrow – it has become an accepted way of life. I follow a veg~n way of life, always have, firstly for humane reasons but mainly because I firmly believe that the one life/energy force flows through everything and everyone and that life force is continually evolving and growing, from the mineral right through to humankind and beyond. Even, as we heard

from Dr Jude Currivan’s talk at the January Theosophical Society Convention, the universe itself is continually evolving. Besides, I have found that it is certainly not necessary to eat dead animals, fish or birds in order to live a healthy life and various articles in the *Vegetarian Lifestyle NZ* quarterly magazine support this – see <https://www.vegetarian.org.nz/veg-living/magazine>.

The NZ Vegetarian Society was formed to encourage and support people who wish to follow a veg~n lifestyle for whatever reason, and their 21-Day Plant-Based Challenge is a great way to start on that journey:

[<https://www.vegetarian.org.nz/veg-living/21-day-plant-based-challenge>]

If you’re already on the journey, check the wonderful selection of recipes in the Society’s website Recipe section. Try this delicious one:

### TOFU CURRY

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1x block firm Tofu</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp oil</li> <li>• 2 Tbsp plum sauce</li> <li>• 1 tsp mild curry paste</li> <li>• 1 small onion, quartered</li> <li>• 2 tsp fresh ginger, grated</li> <li>• 2 medium bananas, sliced</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Tbsp soy sauce</li> <li>• 2 tsp oil, extra</li> <li>• 2 tsp brown sugar</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp cornflour</li> <li>• ¼ tsp salt</li> <li>• 425g can apricot halves, drain and reserve juice</li> </ul> |
|---|---|
- Marinate the tofu in soy sauce for several hours, or overnight.
  - Heat oil in wok or frying pan; brown the tofu on all sides, remove and drain.
  - Heat the extra oil and sauté the onion until tender. Remove from heat and add ginger, curry paste and cornflour, then cook for 1 minute.
  - Add the apricot juice, plum sauce, sugar and salt, stirring until it boils and thickens.
  - Fold in apricots, banana and tofu. Heat through and serve with cooked brown rice.
  - Garnish with flaked coconut if desired.



More recipes, information and the NZVS revised and updated *Home Tried Favourites* recipe book, are now available from [www.vegetarian.org.nz](http://www.vegetarian.org.nz)



## Vasanta House Library



Books can be ordered from the lending library at TSNZ national office by contacting the librarian by email: [library@theosophy.nz](mailto:library@theosophy.nz) or telephone (09) 523 1797. The library is open on Wednesdays or by appointment on a Thursday.

Cost to members is the return postage of books. Non-members may join the library for a joining fee of \$50.

## Vasanta House Accommodation

Short stay accommodation is available at TSNZ National Section, Vasanta House in Epsom, Auckland. Rates vary for members and non-members. The house requirements are vegetarian, smoke-free and alcohol-free. At certain times of the year Vasanta House is closed for events, Board and Management meetings etc. For bookings and more information please email the office at: [office@theosophy.org.nz](mailto:office@theosophy.org.nz)

*Before the soul can see, the Harmony within must be attained  
and fleshly eyes be rendered blind to all illusion.*

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*.

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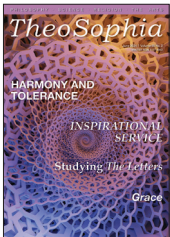
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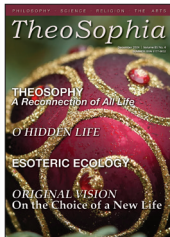
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# Theosophy

Theosophy is the body of truths which form the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guides its evolution.

Theosophy puts death in its rightful place as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the science of the spirit, teaching one to know the spirit as oneself and the mind and the body as one's servants.

*Theosophy* literally means divine wisdom: *theosophia*. Theosophy illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions, by unveiling their hidden meanings; thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone who is willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high and to work perseveringly, is welcome as a member and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

From *Exploring the Mysteries of Existence* published by The Theosophical Society - <http://theosophy.nz>

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Editor ..... Pamela Zane  
Email: editor@theosophy.nz ....

Proofreader ..... Vicki Jerome

Graphic Design ..... Kelly Bassett  
Chocolate Fish Design

Printed by H&A Design & Print, Whanganui  
Telephone 64 6 345 3145

## ALL THE HEMISPHERES

Leave the familiar for a while.  
Let your senses and bodies stretch out  
Like a welcomed season  
Onto the meadows and shores and hills.  
Open up to the Roof.  
Make a new water-mark on your excitement  
And love.  
Like a blooming night flower,  
Bestow your vital fragrance of happiness  
And giving  
Upon our intimate assembly.  
Change rooms in your mind for a day.  
All the hemispheres in existence  
Lie beside an equator  
In your heart.  
Greet Yourself  
In your thousand other forms  
As you mount the hidden tide and travel  
Back home.  
All the hemispheres in the heaven  
Are sitting around a fire  
Chatting  
While stitching themselves together  
Into the Great Circle inside of  
You.

From: *The Subject Tonight is Love: 60 Wild and Sweet Poems of Hafiz*

Translated by Daniel Ladinsky



As far as we can discern,  
the sole purpose of human existence  
is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

*Carl Jung*



June 2025