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of the ‘Gnostic’ Goddess
2020 Tour - International Lecturer, Elena Dovalsantos

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

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Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society

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

From the International President The Mission of the Theosophical Society¹

Tim Boyd



At the June 2018 General Council meeting, a Mission Statement for the Theosophical Society (TS) was finalised. In the 143-year history of the TS, although many statements have been made related to the mission and purpose of the TS, there has never been a formal Mission Statement.

Much like a sutra in the scriptures of the world, the attempt has been made to make the expression of mission so brief, compact, and easy to remember that it can be quickly communicated, but so conceptually rich that dwelling on it reveals ever-deepening layers of meaning.

The Mission Statement which has been adopted for the Theosophical Society is a total of twenty-four words: ‘To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realisation of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.’ In the remainder of

this article we will try to unpack this one sentence. Much like a sutra, every one of those twenty-four words adds something meaningful.

Service

To serve is the primary function of the TS. Service is often interpreted in different ways, but for our purposes it involves a conscious participation, a conscious compassionate activity that connects us with others in ways which relieve suffering. Of course, our service is often unconscious. For example, the simple act of breathing gives plants the carbon dioxide they require to live. Plants breathe out the oxygen that humans and other life forms require. So, it could be said that just breathing is service. However, part of the role of the theosophical work is to become fully conscious, fully aware, so that our service is not just random activity, but charged with awareness and compassion.

Humanity

In what direction is that service focussed? The mission is ‘to serve humanity’. The normal conception of humanity is of the seven billion individual human beings which populate the Earth. The collectivity of all these human beings is what we tend to call ‘humanity’. From the perspective of the Ageless Wisdom, there is the idea of the divine human. What we think of as humanity is not merely an amalgamation of seven billion different people; it is a single entity in much the same way that we as individuals are composed of many tiny lives, but think of ourselves as a unit. When we think of our bodies or ‘I’, myself as a human being, if we are a little more precise about it, what we call ‘I’ is a combination of the activity of trillions of human cells, more trillions of bacteria living on and within the body, and the unseen participation of every range of consciousness from the lowest mineral to the highest spiritual beings. The cooperative activity of all of these units and streams results in what we call ‘I’.

So, there is this humanity that we serve in our limited ways. Genuine, or realised humanity, is what we strive toward. The realised human, it is said in *The Stanzas of Dzyan*, has within themselves the ‘mind to embrace the

universe’, a holistic, all-embracing mind.

Cultivating

Let us examine what might be meant by ‘cultivating’. It is a very particular term that normally relates to gardeners, or people who focus on growing or caring for plants. It is directly linked to the natural world and to the processes of life and consciousness.

Just planting a seed in the ground does not make someone a gardener. A person who takes on the role of caring for plants must engage in an intensive study of the cycles of Nature and the potentials of the seeds. They have to be aware of the needs and requirements for the growth of these living things, and be prepared to provide for these needs at the proper moments. All of this is involved in the process of cultivation.

The TS exists to bring about a flowering of a deeply hidden human potential – a Divine Seed. What is the seed that is planted within humanity that the TS exists to nurture? The next portion of the Mission Statement gives an indication.

Ever-deepening

We are here ‘to serve humanity by by cultivating an ever-deepening under-

standing and realisation'. 'Ever-deepening' speaks to not only the direction, but the nature of this process.

The fact that this cultivation we engage in is without limits means that it is continually deepening. Often in spiritual dialogues we talk about 'depths' and 'heights'. In a way, depth and height are synonymous terms for a certain expansion of consciousness. As a word, 'ever-deepening' is perhaps more appropriate, because the idea of depth tends to draw our awareness inward, whereas height seems to move awareness up and out. The intention of the language is to turn our vision inward.

Understanding

We make a mistake in our appreciation of the meaning of 'understanding' if we confuse it with 'knowledge'. The two are different in nature and quality. Knowledge can exist in the complete absence of genuine understanding. It is very common for people of profound knowledge to have no sense of its relationship with all other things, which is the basis of understanding. This condition of mind is so evident that we should not require any additional proof beyond our daily observation. All we need to do is to look at recent history, at any major scientific invention or discovery that has come into the world –

whether it is electricity, atomic energy, or biological substances. To the understanding mind each revelation of Nature's powers deepens one's recognition of relationship with the world around us, with others, and with invisible realms.

A sense of connection is a necessary component of the understanding mind. But, taking the example of electricity, driven by the mind that is focussed only on knowledge, one of its early uses was in capital punishment – electrocution of prisoners. Rather than to behead, hang, or shoot someone, the knowledge-bound human genius which made creative use of electricity possible, used it to kill other human beings. The discovery of atomic energy had the same result, but worse. Instead of killing single individuals its very first use was in war and the massive annihilation of human life. Knowledge can be used in ways that deny connection and relationship with all life. Understanding, on the other hand, is the perception of relationship; it is an expression of the intuition, of buddhi. It is a recognition of unity.

Realisation

We are here to 'serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realisation'. Realisation means a full awareness,

whether it is of an aspect of the Divine Wisdom or in the case of a realised person, the total awareness of an undivided state of being. In a sense, realisation is the necessary outcome of a deepening understanding.

The Ageless Wisdom

The Mission Statement specifies an understanding and realisation of three things. First, the Ageless Wisdom, sometimes referred to as Sanātana Dharma, the Eternal Wisdom. Within theosophical circles we sometimes find ‘Ageless Wisdom’ and ‘Ancient Wisdom’ being used synonymously. Although the two terms are closely related, they express different ideas.

Ancient Wisdom refers to a specific expression of the Ageless Wisdom tradition, something that has already come into existence, that has a history. The Greek and Egyptian Mystery Schools, with their specific deities and ritual, and Vedic practice in India, are some examples of Ancient Wisdom – specific expressions of the Ageless Wisdom, appropriate for a certain time, place, and people. ‘Ageless’, by definition, applies to the past, present, and whatever traditions develop in the future. It is the ‘rootless root’ from which all else springs. At the commencement of our current cycle of growing global interconnection, the most recent expression of the Ageless

Wisdom was introduced with the founding of the TS in 1875. At some point in a distant future, Theosophy, as we have come to know it, will also fall into the category of an Ancient Wisdom – completely true, eternal in its nature, but very specific, and time-bound in terms of its form of expression. This is the ever-renewing nature of Theosophy – the Ageless Wisdom.

Spiritual Self-Transformation

The theosophical work we do as individuals we describe as ‘spiritual self-transformation’. It is rooted in the idea that the self, the norm of separative, personality-based living, can be transformed, acted upon by the indwelling spirit in ways that make it transparent to what Annie Besant described as the ‘Hidden Light shining in every creature’.

What is involved in transformation? Probably the process is simpler than the way we generally approach it. It is not a matter of adding more ideas or knowledge. The purpose of the knowledge that we accumulate is to assist in stripping away the many obstacles that we have created within ourselves to the natural and ever-present flow of spirit.

The Unity of All Life

The final words of the Mission Statement of the TS are ‘the Unity of all Life’.

‘An ever-deepening understanding and realisation of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.’ The Mission Statement ends where the work of the Theosophical Society begins. The first Object of the TS is Brotherhood, which could also be expressed as unity. There is no spirituality in the absence of the realisation of unity or oneness. Unity is the basis of all understanding, spirituality, and even physical well-being. Even at the level of our personality, there is no strength where unity is absent. When we look at a small child, in its first efforts to walk, the child fails time after time. The reason for the failure is that the newborn body has yet to become united with its various parts. The muscles of the arms and legs are not fully under the control of the person. In human relations the absence of unity expresses itself as fragmentation, weakness, and illness.

The basis of everything that we call theosophical comes back to the unity of all life. Life is omnipresent and is necessarily intelligent, intelligence expressed in movement. All is in motion – not randomly, but in a patterned manner. Life’s underlying

intelligence impresses itself on matter. Whether it is gravity, electromagnetism, or karma and reincarnation, we can speak about Laws of Nature or the Laws of the Universe because there is an intelligent patterning to life that we can perceive.

This brief article has been an attempt to highlight a few of the thoughts and insights that arise in dwelling on the Mission Statement. In order for it to come to life for us, we must each make our own exploration, in thought and in quiet reflection, allowing its depths to unfold for us. Like anything that is truly theosophical in nature, the depths that are possible for us to uncover are without limit.

So, once again, the Mission of the Theosophical Society 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.

Endnote:

1. Slightly condensed version of original article.



From the National President

Linda Oliveira



Greetings from the National Headquarters. The 2020 TS year commenced with the energy and strong sense of community provided by the annual Convention, held in Melbourne. Some photos from this gathering will be shared in the next issue.

The following pages include some observations from our International President on the Society's Mission Statement, with some important points for reflection. Also featured, among other items, are my research and observations about *Kali-yuga* and narcissism, which is remarkably common in our time; and a thoughtful and informative article about the 'Gnostic Goddess'. Aspects of the Divine Feminine – both Eastern and Western – run through each of the above two items respectively.

17 February was the date of Adyar Day. Dr Annie Besant observed in 1922 that on this date, 'the thoughts and love of all our members scattered over the wide world should turn to Adyar'. Why do this? Because our International Headquarters is the enduring spiritual heart and administrative centre of

the TS. Many members choose to visit this sacred place at least once in a lifetime. Notably also, some prominent persons associated with the history of our Society passed to peace on 17 February, such as co-Founder Colonel H. S. Olcott and philosopher, J. Krishnamurti.

Adyar Day is one of the three annual Theosophical Days of Observance on the TS calendar. The remaining two are White Lotus Day on 8 May, commemorating the passing of H.P. Blavatsky, and Foundation Day on 17 November, which celebrates the founding of the TS on this date in 1875.

These special dates are worthwhile highlighting periodically, particularly for the benefit of relatively new members to whom they might not be so familiar. They also remind us of the substantial legacy bequeathed to us through the TS, some of its historically prominent members, and the Society's very endurance for the last 145 years – which is no small feat!

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

Kali-yuga and the Phenomenon of Narcissism

Linda Oliveira

Narcissism is an acknowledged phenomenon of our time, focussed daily through the lens of various media. But why is it so prevalent? The Wisdom tradition points to narcissism as a necessary aspect of untold aeons of human unfoldment, and a feature of our particular age.

Before returning to the subject of narcissism, though, let us stretch our imagination at the outset by contemplating not just human ages, but vast world ages. The reason will become apparent further on.

The periodic appearance and disappearance of worlds reflects the core principle of cyclicity in the Theosophical tradition. Here is an extract from a powerful description of the end of a world period:

the Mother-Power ... dissolves – that is, withdraws the World into Herself. As such She is Mahakali, dark blue like a rain cloud. She is encircled



Richard B. Godfrey (1728 - N/A) Wikimedia Commons

by serpents, as is Siva. She holds in Her hands, besides the Lotus and two weapons, a skull with blood in it. She wears a garland of human heads [exoterically the heads of conquered Demons, but esoterically the letters of the alphabet as well as the Universe of which they are the seed-mantras, ... dissolved by Her.] She stands on the white, inert Siva, for it is not He but His power which withdraws the Universe into Herself. He lies on a funeral pyre, in the burning-ground, where jackals – favourite animals of Kali – and carrion birds are gnawing and pecking at human flesh and bone. The cremation ground is a symbol of cosmic dissolution. (Woodroffe, p.275)

This is a graphic, metaphorical description by Sir John Woodroffe of the nature of that feminine force known as Kali, which is commonly equated with destruction. Yet rather than focussing on associated negative connotations suggested by this image, the student of Theosophy may take a broader view that that so-called destruction heralds a change of state, or else consciousness, being an integral stage of infinite evolutionary cycles.

Kali, with her commanding and intimidating presence, represents time, change and power. Indeed, deities such as Kali are all aspects of Brahman – the impersonal Divine Reality of the Universe; the only reality in existence, which is both transcendent and immanent.

What are the *Yuga-s*?

When universal cyclicity is stepped down further to cycles *within* worlds, then the link between Kali and narcissism becomes more apparent. For Indian philosophy posits vast Ages – *yuga-s* – which cyclically flourish and then withdraw. ‘*Yuga*’ simply means ‘cycle’ or ‘age’, being derived from the verbal root *yuj*, to join. These ages have been described as joined sequentially, established in time. Within vast cycles, the lesser human cycles of birth, death, and reincarnation also occur.

Geoffrey Barborka wrote of these great Ages, noting that the four *yuga-s* collectively constitute what is called a *Maha-yuga* of 4,320,000 years. In turn, 1,000 *Maha-yuga-s* constitute one *Kalpa* or planetary period. So we are dealing here with vast time scales. The *yuga-s* are symbolised in the great Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, by the bull and its legs, and are denoted as:

1. *Satya-yuga*:

This is said to be the Age when truth reigns supreme, the Golden Age. The bull stands on all four legs, signifying that truth is prevalent at all times. This is also called *Krita-yuga* (from *kri*, to do), signifying that which is well done, and is said to last 1,728,000 years.

Humanity is governed by Gods and intrinsic goodness reigns supreme. There is said to be no disease, hatred, vanity, evil thought, sorrow or fear. By all accounts, such a period is a veritable Utopia, the Age of truth, virtue and righteousness, possessing favourable conditions for spiritual development.

2. *Tretā-yuga*:

Tretā means trey, the die with three dots; also ‘three fires’, the age of triads. This is known as the Silver Age. The bull stands on three legs, with one leg raised. Truth is therefore diminishing during this period of 1,296,000 years.

3. *Dvāpara-yuga*:

Dvāpara signifies the side of the die

which has two dots and is known as the Bronze Age. Vice has entered, so that there is only one-half of truth present. Evil practices become more manifest as the fourth age is ushered in. The bull stands on only two of its legs during this 864,000 year period.

4. *Kali-yuga*:

We now come to the age of particular significance in this article – the so-called Black Age or Iron Age, or the Age of Vice. Only one quarter of truth remains in the world, morality being considerably reduced. The bull stands on one leg only. And the length of this Age is correspondingly diminished by one quarter, lasting 432,000 years.¹

It is breathtaking to consider that one planetary period of activity or manifestation (Day of Brahma) is said to be equivalent to a thousand revolutions of the *yuga-s*. If so, then they form a continuous cycle for an almost unimaginable period of time. This *Kali-yuga* is said to be in the 28th *Maha-yuga*, or the 28th series of four *yuga-s*.

The *yuga-s* featured in a number of places in HPB's writings. She wrote:

The world moves in cycles, which proceed under the impetus of two mutually antagonistic and destroying Forces, the one striving to move Humanity forward, toward Spirit, the

other forcing Mankind to gravitate downward, into the very abyss of matter. (CW, XII, p.418)

It is possible to see this in the world today, for there are those forces which cause humanity to be deeply immersed in the material such as greed, along with complementary forces such as altruism which draw humanity towards the spiritual.

Blavatsky asserted that we are in the very midst of *Kali-yuga*, the 'Black Age' or 'Dark Age'.

Kali-yuga

Blavatsky asserted that we are in the very midst of *Kali-yuga*, the 'Black Age' or 'Dark Age'. So, what are its core features? Darkness is the chief characteristic of *Kali-yuga*, the current period said to have begun in 3,102BCE at the moment of Krishna's death. HPB mentioned that the first cycle in this period, 5,000 years, ended late in the 19th Century. According to its total stated length of 432,000 years, this age still has an exceedingly long time to run. *We cannot easily prove these dates; however, there may be much more than a grain of truth in the description of this great world period, if we consider its chief characteristics.*

In the *Mahabharata* *Kali-yuga* is characterised, significantly, as an age of

great material advance, with spiritual darkness. For example, HPB wrote that ‘the great thirst for riches and material betterment, while spiritual life is to a great extent ignored, is regarded by us as darkness.’ She also viewed the great conflict between the wealthy classes and the poorer classes as a sign of darkness.

Some specific predictions about *Kali-yuga* appear in the Mahabharata and the *Vishnu Purana*. Here are some forecasts from the latter:

Accumulated treasures will be expended on (ostentatious) dwellings. The minds of men will be wholly occupied in acquiring wealth; and wealth will be spent solely on selfish gratifications.

The people will be almost always in dread of dearth, and apprehensive of scarcity.

In truth there will never be abundance in the Kali age, and men will never enjoy pleasure and happiness.

Endowed with little sense, men, subject to all the infirmities of mind, speech and body, will daily commit sins; and everything that is calculated to afflict beings, vicious, impure, and wretched, will be generated in the Kali age. (quoted in Barborka, pp.529-531)

The *Vishnu Purana* arose in ancient Indian culture, but do not some of the above points generally ring true today?



Photo: Ankit Patel on Unsplash

In her article, ‘The Kali Yuga – the Present Age’, Blavatsky addressed the subject in the form of a conversation between two parties, ‘student’ and ‘sage’ (CW IX, p.99).

The student observed that many Theosophists were against modern inventions, bemoaning the disappearance of former civilisations. Other Theosophists were hailing modern methods as the best. The sage answered that the current century [the nineteenth century - Ed.] should not be mistaken for the whole cycle. Even during the period of European darkness, although this *Yuga* had already begun, there was ‘much light, learning and civilisation in India and China’. The cycle is quite evidently not a period of pure darkness, which can be observed today. For the bull is still standing symbolically on one

leg; there is still light in the midst of this darkness, which is somewhat reminiscent of the yin-yang symbol in which the seed of light is present in the half of the circle which is otherwise black, and vice versa.

These vast cycles or *yuga-s* are said to interblend. While the wheel of one period still turns, the initial point of another has already arrived. Similarly, this general process is observable in the stages of a human life, which gradually merge into each other as one life phase succeeds another.

We now come to a particularly significant statement:

It takes a very strong soul to hold back the age's heavy hand. ... All the inner as well as the outer fibre of the man is the result of the long centuries of earthly lives lived here by his ancestors. These sow seeds of thought and physical tendencies in a way that you cannot comprehend. All those tendencies affect him. Many powers once possessed are hidden so deep as to be unseen, and he struggles against obstacles constructed ages ago. (*CW IX*, p.101)

Reincarnation is therefore an essential part of the story. According to this quotation, the obstacles of *Kali-yuga* have been with us for lifetimes, with such tendencies being repeatedly reinforced.

However, there is hope. The sage observes:

There is one thing peculiar to the present *Kali-Yuga* that may be used by the Student. All causes now bring about their effects much more rapidly than in any other or better age. A sincere lover of the race can accomplish more in three incarnations under *Kali-Yuga's* reign than he could in a much greater number in any other age.

A sincere lover of the race can accomplish more in three incarnations under *Kali-Yuga's* reign than he could in a much greater number in any other age.

In other words, for the individual with sincere spiritual inclinations, the opportunity to unfold spiritually and be a force for good in the world is said to be greater in this cycle than any other.

Narcissism in *Kali-yuga*

Tellingly, in *The Secret Doctrine*, while explaining the esotericism of the Rig-Veda, HPB mentioned:

[divine] aspirations are no more general but have become abnormal through a general spread of *Ahamkāra* (the feeling of Egotism, Self, or I-AM-NESS) and ignorance. (Vol. II, p. 614)

The general features of *Kali-yuga*, and the above passage, point to *selfishness* as a core feature of this particular Age. This is highly significant, particularly

because in its more extreme form, selfishness morphs into narcissism. The Ancient Greek myth of Narcissus has been retold for centuries. In essence, Narcissus fell in love with his own image in the water. He eventually died from hunger and thirst, unable to leave the beauty of his reflection. Similarly, we die to the spirit within when we are too preoccupied with ourselves, to the detriment of others.

In his book, *The Narcissist Test*, Australian author Dr Craig Malkin draws attention to the common understanding of narcissism as an excessive sense of self – self-admiration, self-centredness, selfishness, and self-importance. This resonates with these previously quoted words from the *Vishnu Purana*:

Accumulated treasures will be expended on (ostentatious) dwellings. The minds of men will be wholly occupied in acquiring wealth; and wealth will be spent solely on selfish gratifications.

Sobering, indeed.

Excessive selfishness is highly destructive. This kind of view is supported by Buddhism, for example, which asserts that this illusory self should not be our primary focus. In Christianity, pride is regarded as a sin, often seen as synonymous with hubris, the Greek sin of excessive pride.

Malkin surveyed views on narcissism by a number of modern psychoanalysts which are shared briefly here:

Sigmund Freud described narcissism as a necessary developmental stage of childhood. But in his view, if this was not let go of, it could lead to vanity and serious mental illness.

However, an alternative view asserts that narcissism can actually be healthy and helpful, and that it waxes and wanes during our lives. The psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut maintained that we are driven by our need to develop a solid sense of self. For that, he asserts that we do not just need other people; we need narcissism! So, rather than a mark of immaturity, Kohut saw narcissism as vital to one's well-being throughout life. His views were widely accepted by the 1970s.

Otto Kernberg agreed with Kohut's views about healthy narcissism as providing us with 'self-esteem, pride, ambition, creativity, and resilience'. However, he viewed grandiose narcissism as inherently dangerous and harmful. He also believed that narcissists were capable of reform, when confronted with the truth of the danger they pose. So there is hope!

1979 saw the development of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), a basic tool of psychology researchers.

Craig Malkin views narcissism as a spectrum of self-importance, observing that everyone falls somewhere on the scale between utter selflessness and total arrogance. In other words, people generally possess narcissism to some degree. One of the parting remarks in his book is that healthy narcissism ‘gives us the energy to build a life full of adventure and self-discovery’, asserting that this is ‘where passion and compassion merge, offering a truly exhilarating life’.

However, narcissism can become a serious problem. The Mayo Clinic provides information about Narcissistic personality disorder, with the following list of symptoms:

- Having an exaggerated sense of self-importance
- Expecting to be recognised as superior even without achievements that warrant it
- Exaggerating your achievements and talents
- Being preoccupied with fantasies about success, power, brilliance, beauty or the perfect mate
- Believing that you are superior and can only be understood by or associate with equally special people
- Requiring constant admiration
- Having a sense of entitlement
- Expecting special favours and unquestioning compliance with your expectations

- Taking advantage of others to get what you want
- Having an inability or unwillingness to recognise the needs and feelings of others
- Being envious of others and believing others envy you
- Behaving in an arrogant or haughty manner

This disorder crosses well over the border of healthy confidence. While social media are powerful platforms for important causes, and widely accepted methods of communication, they also play a very real role in supporting and sustaining narcissism – indeed, they help it to flourish. Such media can be used positively or negatively.

Today and Tomorrow

If the general description of *Kali-yuga* is correct then, ignoring the time spans which we cannot easily prove or disprove, it is difficult to deny that we do live during a period of great material advance accompanied by much spiritual darkness. Furthermore, if the teaching of the four *yuga-s* is also correct, then towards the end of this long period of *Kali-yuga* a Golden Age, *Satya-yuga*, will emerge once more. Furthermore, the *yuga-s* are said to include minor cycles, each possessing characteristics of one of the other three *yuga-s*. For example, it is said that within this current 432,000

year period of *Kali-yuga* lies a period of 10,000 years that will be a golden age. Logically, extreme selfishness will recede at that time. Narcissism may rise, but will also recede in another cycle, as surely as the tide alternately rolls onto the shore of a beach and then recedes

Recall Kali at the end of a World period wearing a garland of human heads, which are exoterically the heads of conquered Demons. She stands on the white, inert Siva, whose power withdraws the Universe into Herself. He lies on a funeral pyre, in the burning-ground. Apart from the symbolic depiction of the end of a World period, this may also symbolise our negative qualities such as extreme selfishness – narcissism – which we need to face and transcend, or ‘conquer’, at some point.

A Significant Opportunity

As individuals, we can consciously choose not to engage fully in the mainstream of *Kali-yuga*. Many may become blinded by the sheer force of materialism, treating other life forms as mere commodities. But there is also hope, for we may use the opportunity of this period to consciously unfold spiritual qualities and be a general force for good, treating all life with dignity and respect. Recall that during *Kali-yuga* the bull is symbolically standing on one leg. We can consciously choose

to *strengthen* that leg, which denotes the presence of Truth and Goodness in an attenuated form, even during the age of spiritual darkness.

Endnote:

1. There is disagreement in various quarters about the length of *yuga-s* and the point at which humanity is situated now. Time periods provided by H.P. Blavatsky are used in this article.

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The Thunder, Perfect Mind - the Paradoxical Wisdom of the 'Gnostic' Goddess

Richard Larkin



Statue of Sophia at Ephesus, Turkey
photo by Ihsan Gercelman, Shutterstock

I was sent forth from the Power,
and I have come to those who
reflect upon me,
and I have been found among those
who seek after me.
Look upon me, you who reflect upon
me,
and you hearers, hear me.
Do not be ignorant of me.
For I am the first and the last.
I am the honoured one and the
scorned one.
I am the whore and the holy one.
I am the wife and the virgin.
I am the mother and the daughter.
I am the silence that is
incomprehensible
and the idea whose remembrance
is frequent.
I am the voice whose sound is
manifold
and the word whose appearance is
multiple.
I am the utterance of my name.

(Excerpts from *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* translated by George W. McRae)

So, who is this divine being who speaks with such power and authority, yet who is so mysterious and paradoxical? She appears to encompass opposites, but at the same time unites them within herself.

For that matter, why do we even think this poem could be in any way Gnostic? Here the answer is misleadingly simple – this poem was found with fifty-two other texts near the Egyptian village of Nag Hammadi in 1945, scholars realising that most of them were amongst the lost gospels written by the Gnostics in the first couple of centuries after the death of Christ. So it was labelled as ‘Gnostic’, but is it really?

The poem itself lacks the dualistic cosmology that sharply distinguishes between the worlds of spirit and matter, and which is so outstanding a feature of Gnostic thinking. Indeed the poem is very pantheistic in the way it seeks

to unify opposites. There are also no colourful expositions on spirit and matter, nor any complex mythologies about the creation of the universe.

Well, I won't keep you in suspense – the divine being portrayed in this poem is indeed the Goddess of Wisdom, otherwise named Sophia or Barbelo in the major Gnostic scriptures. Gnostic or not, she has a fascinating place in ancient spirituality, which we shall now investigate.

Biblical Wisdom

Yes, we can actually find 'Divine Wisdom' in the Old Testament – and it's a 'she' too! Called simply 'Wisdom' (Chokmah in Hebrew), She is found in Psalms, Proverbs, in Job and in the Song of Songs, as well as in Jewish apocryphal texts such as 'The Wisdom of Solomon'. Here are a couple of samples from those texts:

She is more beautiful than the Sun,
and the constellations pale beside her.
Compared to light, yet She excels it,
for light yields to dark, while she
yields to nothing.

She stretches mightily throughout the
Cosmos,
and guides the whole Universe for Its
benefit.

Wisdom of Solomon 7: 29-31

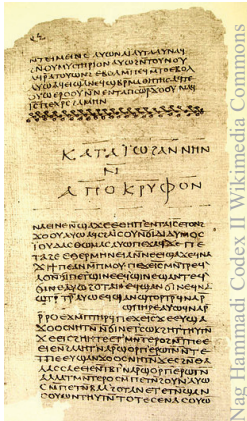
The Lord created me at the beginning
of His work,
the first of His ancient acts.

I was established ages ago,
at the beginning, before the earth ...
When He established the heavens,
I was already there.
When He drew a circle on the face of
the deep,
When He made firm the skies above,
When He established the fountains
feeding the seas below...
I was beside Him, the master builder
I was His daily delight, rejoicing
before Him always.
Rejoicing in His inhabited world, and
Delighting in the human race.
Proverbs 8:22-31

What we find in the Old Testament is Wisdom, the first of God's creations and the means through which He created the world, making her both a created and also a creative principle. In much of the Jewish Wisdom literature, there is an emphasis both on Wisdom as understanding and perception, and also Wisdom as divine love and harmony. To know Wisdom is to know God. The Gnostics would later draw upon these traditions and invert them, pitting Wisdom against the Creator of the World.

Greek Wisdom

In Greek mythology, the Goddess Athena is the embodiment of divine or transcendental Wisdom or 'Sophia'. She is also the Goddess of War – as in military strategy as opposed to mindless violence, which was looked



Nag Hammadi Codex II Wikimedia Commons

after by the god Ares. Wisdom and War – an interesting combination!

In the Greek philosophical tradition, we find in Plato's *Timaeus* another manifestation of a female Wisdom as the 'World Soul', which later philosophers elaborated on. The World Soul is the first creation of Plato's creator god, the Demiurge, who (as with the Hebrew God) uses her as a matrix for his divine energy in creating the universe. She is seen as a perfect creation, an image of wholeness and integral harmony, as opposed to the rest of the world of matter which is seen as inferior and restrictive upon the human spirit. Plato saw the human soul as a microcosm of the World Soul, with all the complexity and multiplicity we find in creation coming from her to us. But this also included suffering, impermanence and evil.

Yet for all this, the World Soul comes across in the Greek writings as a passive being. For the Greek philosophers she represented the world of matter, no matter how perfect by comparison to the rest of creation. This made the world she represented a lesser world than the perfect and spiritual World of Ideas, which Plato saw as the true heaven.

The Poem

So that is the Biblical and philosophical background to the Goddess of Wisdom, who plays such a crucial role in Gnostic cosmology and who is represented in *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*.

Again I come back to the question: Is this poem Gnostic in any meaningful sense? By only reading it, you do not get that impression. To me it seems like a mystic poem with maybe some Gnostic overtones. If it hadn't been found amongst the Nag Hammadi library, I don't think it would ever have been considered 'Gnostic'.

And yet? Another text found at Nag Hammadi and which *is* most definitely Gnostic is the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (Greek for 'Three Formed First Thought'). This text is also about the Wisdom Goddess and has remarkable similarities to our poem, both in style and content. So what relationship, if any, did these two works of literature

have? Did Gnostic groups use mystic texts in their study and rituals as well as purely Gnostic material? Given their eclectic nature, I believe this to be the case. Unfortunately, we don't know who wrote the poem, though there is some evidence that it was composed in the city of Alexandria in or around the mid second century CE. Alexandria was then a centre of both Gnostic and mystic forms of the new Christian faith. We can only hope that fresh evidence will emerge from the sands of Egypt that will enable us to answer some of these questions.

I mentioned above that the poem lacks the type of dualism between spirit and matter found in most Gnostic writings, yet there is more to this. While Gnostics certainly held this view of the world, there is strong evidence in their writings that they also believed in spiritual polarities, where male and female divine energies were held in balance in the heavenly realm away from the world of matter. It is this cosmic harmony that helps make the heaven world whole and heavenly. There is evidence that Gnostic practitioners attempted to combine these energies within themselves in their rituals and meditations. It is just such a belief that the poem addresses, where seeming contradictions are brought together in unity within the Goddess of Wisdom. It is just this type

of spiritual wholeness that the Goddess promises to those who listen to her, so regardless of how 'Gnostic' or otherwise the poem is, it does actually seek to address an important concern that Gnostic practitioners held about human existence.

Scholars have detected a range of influences that may have inspired the poem. Not only Jewish and Platonic mysticism, but also the chants from the mystic Egyptian cult of the goddess Isis appear to have been influential in the creation of *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*. Another connection to Egypt!

But apart from the scholarly speculations, we can simply enjoy the poem for its power as a work of art and for its spiritual insights. It is very likely that the poem was chanted or sung as part of a ritual, perhaps aimed at creating a higher state of consciousness for the participants through the use of sound, as in a mantra, or possibly as a type of koan for the practitioners to contemplate as in Zen monasteries today.

There are four key elements that make up *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*:

1. The 'I am' sayings, which form the core of the poem and may have been inspired by the chants of Isis. These include riddles for the listener to untangle.

2. Various exhortations to the listeners to be of open mind to the message in the poem.
3. Various prose statements concerning the attitudes of the listener, and
4. Cautions for the listener not to make hasty or unfair judgements.

Intuitive understanding was at the core of Gnostic beliefs, as was an 'awakening' to the Gnosis or spiritual knowledge about the universe and our place in it. In the last section of the poem, the Goddess promises that those who listen to her will gain spiritual immortality, which was the ultimate goal of the Gnostic practitioner.

Those 'I am' lines are the crucial ones. In both the Hebrew and Greek languages, the phrase 'I am' was only ever used when invoking or praying to a deity. Throughout the poem, the 'I am' chants act both as riddles to be puzzled over, and also as descriptions of the power of Wisdom as she enfolds the whole of creation into herself. In essence, by the use of these chants, the Goddess of Wisdom is cosmically balancing all the opposites in creation within herself, creating a mystic harmony and bringing the polarities together. Here is another example of

this cosmic balancing found in the poem:

I am the one whom they call life,
and you have called death.

I am the one whom they call Law,
and you have called lawlessness.

I am the one whom you have pursued,
and I am the one whom you have seized.

I am the one whom you have scattered,
and you have gathered me together.

This use of paradox and antithesis are very unusual in the ancient world, but are of course much more common in Eastern religions. I wonder if at a deeper level, these paradoxical lines act in a way analogous to Zen koans – using non-logical statements to tease the mind and overcome rational thought for intuitive insights to awaken the spiritually sleeping, so they could break through to the divine truths. Did some Gnostic or mystic groups use this method of gaining spiritual insights? Intuitive understanding was at the core of Gnostic beliefs, as was an 'awakening' to the Gnosis or spiritual knowledge about the universe and our place in it. In the last section of the poem, the Goddess promises that those who listen to her will gain spiritual immortality, which was the ultimate goal of the Gnostic practitioner.

There is a certain irony in having a Gnostic audience devoting their attention to the Wisdom Goddess, as in

their various mythological systems it was her 'fault' that the material world was created in the first place, when she gave birth to the damaged creator god in a fit of passion, who in turn then went on to create the world of matter. Yet she was also seen as an enlightened helper of humanity who attempts to atone for her error by assisting humanity in revealing the sacred truths of Gnosis to those who would heed her.

The Audience

Who could have been the audience for *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*? Perhaps a Gnostic or gnostically inclined group who had the goddess of Wisdom as the centrepiece of their worship. As mentioned above, it seems likely that this group lived in Egypt where the confluence of the various influences found in the poem were so strong.

As mentioned above, perhaps the poem was used for its mantric power, as a chant during sacred dances and other rituals performed by the group of devotees. The lead chanter or singer may have been a woman. We can tell by the quality of many of the Gnostic writings like *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* that many well-educated people were attracted to Gnosticism. We know from the ancient sources that many Gnostic groups had female founders and leaders, and even prophets (as did

other non-Gnostic Christian groups such as the Montanists). This more female friendly attitude was quite remarkable in the ancient world and may well have attracted talented and mystically inclined women to their ranks. We know that the more orthodox early Christian groups also attracted women from all classes of society, but the Gnostics appear to have gone a step further. The author of *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* itself may well have been a woman. This is pure speculation on my part, but plausible given the available evidence we have of the Gnostics. We do know that there were various rituals concerned with balancing or combining male and female energies within individuals in the Gnostic groups that we know about, as recorded in the writings of admittedly hostile ancient authors.

Some Concluding Thoughts

Most ancient peoples understood in one form or another that the existence of the world depended on a balancing or blending of cosmic creative energies, both male and female. Apart from ancient Israel they all worshiped pantheons of divinities of both genders, with the masculine and feminine deities complementing each other in their powers and functions. Though they came from Jewish and early Christian backgrounds, the Gnostics

appear to have picked up some of this understanding, even though the main focus of their belief systems was to get out of the material world altogether.

With *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* the unknown author has created a work of spiritual literature that in its unique way brings an ancient form of Western spirituality back to us living in the modern world. I would like to end this article by quoting some only surviving fragments from another related scripture – the lost ‘Gospel of Eve’, which sums up what the poem is imparting to us:

It is I who am you; and it is you who are me.

And wherever you are, I am there.

For I am sown in all; and you collect me from wherever you wish.

And when you collect me, it is your own self that you collect.

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In addition to the above, various translations of *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* and related Gnostic texts can be found on the Internet. Just get onto Google, type in the name of the text and follow the leads.



Richard Larkin has been a TS member since 1992 and is a member of Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney. He has a lifelong interest in spiritual matters, as well as history and the arts, particularly the study of comparative religion and the historical development of the world's religions. He works at the National Headquarters as the Section's Membership Secretary, is a past National Lecturer for the TS in Australia and has held the position of President of the Theosophical Order of Service in Sydney.

2020 National Tour - International Lecturer Elena Dovalsantos



The Australian Section is very pleased to welcome a new International Speaker this year for her first tour of the Australian Section. Elena Dovalsantos, Ph.D. taught at the university level and spent her career in scientific research in the field of organic chemistry. A third Generation theosophist, she has been a member of the Theosophical Society since 1971. She has served as President of the Beacon Theosophical group in San Diego and the TS in the Ojai Valley in California, USA. Elena leads classes on *The Secret Doctrine* internationally, serves as regular lecturer at the Krotona Institute's School of Theosophy, and co-facilitates online webinars sponsored by the TS in America. Her tour schedule appears below:

Times and topics can be confirmed as required online; or contact TS centres directly - see Section Directory on p.35.

Wed 22 Apr	Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney 3.00pm 'Experiencing Oneness' - public talk 6.00pm 'The Ending of Suffering' - public talk
Fri 24 - Thurs 30 April	SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY (see p. 26)
Fri 1 May	Adelaide Lodge 10.30am 'The Kabbalistic Tree' - members' talk 7.00pm 'The Ending of Suffering' - public talk
Tues 5 May	Perth Branch, 7.30pm - title TBA
Wed 6 May	Perth Branch, 7.30pm - title TBA
Sat 9 May	Melbourne Lodge - time and title TBA
Mon 11 May	Hobart Branch 7.45pm 'Experiencing Oneness' - public talk
Wed 13 May	Brisbane Lodge 7.30pm 'Experiencing Oneness' - public talk

14th Triennial Conference of the Indo-Pacific Federation Manila, the Philippines 9-12 November 2019

The Indo-Pacific Conference, held in Manila, was a very successful event, bringing together TS members from around our region and further afield. 39 overseas delegates were in attendance, with a total number of 129 participants including 90 members of the Philippine Section. The programme was organised by Gerard Brennan, Federation President, and members from the Philippines made all attendees feel warmly welcome. One of the conference highlights was the visit to the Golden Link College. Below are some images from the Conference.



A group of members from Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Brazil, the International Headquarters and France. 3rd from right - Gerard Brennan, President, Indo-Pacific Federation. 5th and 6th from right - International Secretary Marja Artamaa, and TS International Treasurer and TOS International Secretary, Nancy Secret.



left to right: Tess Hao Chin, Jr., Preciosa S. Soliven, International President Tim Boyd, Lily Boyd and Vic Hao Chin Jr.



Left to right: Dianne Kynaston,
Phillipa Rooke, Patricia Ossenber
- Australia



Members from Australia and New Zealand



National Calendar of Events



SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY, Springbrook Centre, Qld

Dates: Fri 24 April - Thurs 30 April 2020
(arrivals 24 April / departures 30 April)

For TS Members

Theme: **Key Concepts in *The Secret Doctrine* and Their Relevance Today**

International Guest Presenter: **Elena Dovalsantos, Ph.D, USA**

About: *The Secret Doctrine* presents a vast panorama of existence based on the secret aphorisms of the ancient Stanzas of Dzyan. Topics will include: The Accumulated Wisdom of the Ages, The One Fundamental Law of Existence, Cosmic Symbolism in the Proem, The One Reality, Maya, Macrocosm and Microcosm, The Turning of the Wheel, and A Purpose and a Plan.

Cost: \$380 - includes accommodation, meals and tuition

Priority will be given to TS members who have not attended previous Schools.



Springbrook Centre, Qld

Dates: Fri 24 July - Sun 26 July 2020
(arrivals 23 July / departures 26 July)

For TS Members and Non-Members

Theme: **'The *Bhagavad Gītā*: a Yoga for the Mind & the Heart'**

Presenter: **Pedro Oliveira**

About: The immortal dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna enshrines a teaching about the meaning of life and its struggles, and a way of life that establishes harmony, peace and inspiration in our hearts and minds.

Cost: \$180 members / \$220 non-members (includes sessions, accommodation and catering)

Enquiries to: Pedro Oliveira, education@theosophicalsociety.org.au
tel. 02 9264 7056 (Mon-Thurs)



Next event, Canyonleigh Centre, New South Wales: TBA

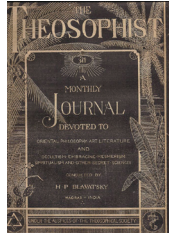
Registration forms and further information for all events:

<https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/events#list>

Education

Pedro Oliveira, Education Coordinator

What was H.P. Blavatsky's view about spiritual progress?



One of the subtlest forms of this evil [over-anxiety, trying to do too much] is the hope and desire of reward.

The goal of the aspirant for spiritual wisdom is entrance upon a higher plane of existence; he is to become a new man, more perfect in every way than he is at present, and if he succeeds, his capabilities and faculties will receive a corresponding increase of range and power, just as in the visible world we find that each stage in the evolutionary scale is marked by increase of capacity. This is how it is that the Adept becomes endowed with marvellous powers that have been so often described, but the main point to be remembered is, that these powers are the natural accompaniments of existence on a higher plane of evolution, just as the ordinary human faculties are the natural accompaniments of existence on the ordinary human plane.



In this connection we would warn all our members, and others who are seeking spiritual knowledge, to beware of persons offering to teach them easy methods of acquiring psychic gifts; such gifts (*laukika*) are indeed comparatively easy of acquirement by artificial means, but fade out as soon as the nerve-stimulus exhausts itself. The real seership and adeptship which is accompanied by true psychic development (*lokothra*), once reached, is never lost.

It appears that various societies have sprung into existence since the foundation of the Theosophical Society, profiting by the interest the latter has awakened in matters of psychic research, and endeavouring to gain members by promising them easy acquirement of psychic powers. We only hope that none of our members, dazzled by brilliant promises, will allow themselves to be taken in by self-deluded dreamers, or, it may be, wilful deceivers.

Excerpts from article by HPB in *The Theosophist*, May, 1885, pp. 187-88

Viewpoint

Gratitude to Those who have Impacted Our Lives

In our busy lives we are often too preoccupied to stop and take stock of those people who have meaningfully impacted us on our journey. Sometimes they taught us directly, but more often than not, we derived richness by simply having them in our lives. I think of them as the lamplighters, silently illuminating the darkness.

Such a person was Joy Mills. I met Joy when she became President of the Theosophical Society in Australia. She was a lady with vast experience, having served in many executive positions within the Theosophical Society. She was International Vice-President in Adyar, India and President of the American Section as well as Director of the Krotona Institute School of Theosophy in Ojai, California. Her books included *100 Years of Theosophy*, *The One True Adventure* and her final publication, *Reflections on an Ageless Wisdom*.

There are many people who remember Joy in her various roles, but my memory of her is of a treasured friend. On the face of it, she belonged to Theo-



sophy and I belonged to Jiddu Krishnamurti. But our bond was much stronger and deeper and not to be set asunder by the ripples on the surface of the pond. We both shared a passionate quest to explore and understand our destiny, not merely to follow some authority in an unquestioning and imitative way.

Through many robust dialogues, Joy showed me, rather than taught me, how to enquire without being harsh in tone and manner. She was always an accurate listener, not a passive one, but an enquiring one. So having a conversation with Joy was always stimulating. She had the capacity to listen, the generosity to understand, the empathy to encourage anyone who truly desired to enquire into the mysteries of life as a whole.

Joy showed me kindness, understanding and never at any time was there a subject or a person, such as Krishnamurti, that we could not discuss.

I would like to express my profound gratitude for the devotion and care by members, such as Joy, for those things that make life worthwhile.

Trisha English, Perth Branch

Call for Nominations National President



The present term of the National President ends at the Australian Convention Business Meeting to be held in Perth in January 2021. Therefore, in accordance with Rule 22(1) and Rule 23 of the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia, I am calling for nominations for the office of National President for a three year term commencing January 2021. The position is a full-time one, based in Sydney, although, in accordance with a recent change to Rule 23(3), the National President need not reside within commuting distance of Sydney, provided that he or she is able to travel to attend meetings of the national Executive and National Council, spend additional time at the National Headquarters, and work from home on remote access. Linda Oliveira is in her final term as National President and is thus ineligible to be nominated for re-election.

The candidate shall be a member of the Theosophical Society who has been in Good Standing for the last five years at least. Nominations must be effected on Form 7 of the Rules and must be accompanied by a photograph of the candidate, curriculum vitae, relevant biographical data, a personal statement by the candidate, and the agreement of the candidate to stand. There shall be three nominators who must be members of the Society in Good Standing for the last three years. Section Rules 22 and 23 explain the procedure of the election and the duties of the National President.

Nominations for the office of National President must be received by the National Secretary on or before Friday 17 July 2020. *All of the above conditions of the Rules must be met for the nomination to be valid.*

Please contact me with any questions.

Dara Tatray, National Secretary
natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au

NATIONAL PRESIDENT - Section Rule 23

Honorarium/Salary

(1) The National President may be an honorary position or a salaried position with the honorarium or salary determined by the National Council. In making this determination, the National Council shall take into account the qualifications and the personal circumstances of the National President.

Term of Office

(2) The term of office of the National President shall normally commence at a Convention Business Meeting and terminate at another Convention Business Meeting. The National President shall be elected and serve for a term of three (3) years or until a successor is appointed. The National President shall be eligible for nomination and election for a further term, provided that a National President who has served for three (3) successive terms or part terms shall not be eligible for a fourth successive term.

Residence

(3) The National President need not reside within commuting distance of the National Headquarters provided that he or she is at least able to travel to attend meetings of the national Executive and the National Council, unless prevented from doing so by illness, and provided that she or he is able to work on remote access to the Section's computer system (server) from their place of residence. In the case of a National President not residing within commuting distance of Sydney, he or she would have to spend additional time at the national headquarters before or after committee meetings, as and when required.

Duties

(4) The duties of the National President are:

- (a) To be responsible for continually monitoring
 - (i) the needs and functions of the Lodges (Branches) in relation to the purposes for which they were chartered,
 - (ii) the needs of Groups and National Members, and
 - (iii) the adequacy of services provided by National Headquarters, and, where necessary, to take appropriate action.
- (b) To be the driving force within the National Society for the promulgation of Theosophy and to act as the main face of Theosophy to the public and other organizations.
- (c) To receive and deal with representations from individual Members.
- (d) To make regular visits to the Lodges (Branches) and generally see to their welfare.
- (e) To organise and arrange the programme for the Convention.
- (f) As part of the main thrust of Theosophy in Australia, to supervise the maintenance of a National Lectureship Programme including the co-ordination of visits by both

overseas and local lecturers and speakers to the various Lodges (Branches) and, where possible, Groups, and to ensure that all Lodges (Branches) are adequately served in this respect over a suitable time scale.

(g) To Chair the Education and Training Committee and to hold overall responsibility for the organisation of national educational events.

(h) To Chair the Electronic Media Committee which shall hold overall responsibility for the national website and the use of other electronic media subject to the direction of the National Council.

(i) To comply with the Rules and Regulations of The Theosophical Society and the Rules of the National Society for the time being in force.

(j) To take direction from, and to carry out the relevant directions of the Convention, the National Council and the Executive Committee.

(k) To submit an Annual Report of the National Society to the President and to the National Convention, after approval of the Report by the Executive Committee and to publish a summary of this report in the National Magazine. The Annual Report shall be sent to the President not later than the first day of November each year and shall include statistics of Lodges (Branches) and membership and a copy of the audited financial statement of accounts.

(l) As a member of the General Council of the Society, to participate in General Council meetings as often as possible and to carry out duties pertaining to the work of the General Council as required.

Note: In addition to the above duties, the National President also chairs meetings of the national Executive Committee (Rule 20(8)) and the Annual Convention Business Meeting (Rule 14(2)).

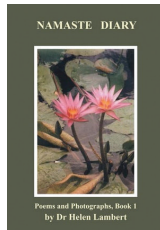
A Note on Elections from the National Council

While the freedom of thought and expression of TS members within the limits of courtesy and consideration is respected, active lobbying by individuals, groups of members, Lodges, Branches or theosophical groups in elections for International President, National President and State Representatives, is expressly discouraged by the National Council. Lobbying is divisive in nature, working against our first and primary Object of brotherhood; and in fairness, all candidates should have an equal opportunity during an electoral process. With this in mind, it is recommended that qualifying members who agree to be nominated for election be aware of the importance of providing a comprehensive and honest set of supporting documents, as required under the relevant Rules. This will also enable the members of the TS in Australia to make an informed choice based on evidence, rather than on lobbying, which is often biased.

Review

Namaste Diary, Poems and Photographs Book 1

Dr Helen Lambert
The Svengali Press,
Bondi Beach, 2019
162pp, pb,
\$30 plus postage



Helen Lambert is a long-time member of the Theosophical Society who has shared many photographs of her travels at our National Conventions. Since childhood, she has had a natural inclination to write. This publication brings together both her poetry and photographs, pursuits which have engaged her for some sixty years.

The poetry in this volume reflects a core theosophical tenet – the Oneness of all life. As the author writes in the introduction:

These poems are both personal and universal. One simply needs to sit still and be present in the moment. It is an acknowledgement, a listening to the Divine essence which is within each individual and life. These poems, and photographs, have been created to



share aspects of the Whole, for both light and dark simply form part of the in-breath and out-breath ... of this and other worlds. There is no actual separation ... it all simply Is.

The photographs within these pages capture visual moments of Australia, as well as some other countries.

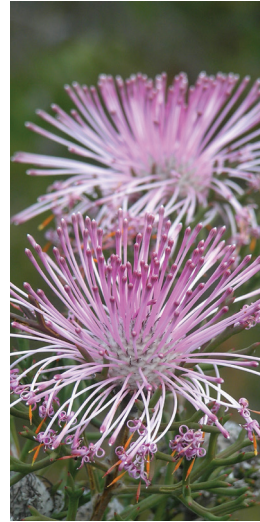
The poems have clearly been inspired by relationship, by Nature and by the Sacred, containing much depth of feeling. It is helpful to pause in order to absorb each one. The Namaste series of poems, some of which are included in this volume, are written in acrostic form, the first letter of each line spelling out a word. Some interesting reflections on transience complete the book.

One of the poems from the publication appears on the opposite page. This would be a welcome library addition for the individual who appreciates photography, and poetry through the lens of a Theosophist. Linda Oliveira

To purchase a copy –
 email: helen.lambert.1@bigpond.com
 or telephone: 0488 996 947

Namaste (7)

Seek not upon the way to
Carry an extra load but
Offer your self to be whittled
Through each moment so
That the task be well done.
Perceive within every action the
Essence of each movement for
Then you may cherish life, and know
Even death in each breath of woe.
Resolve and remove the residues.
Search with significant serenity and
Enter without effort the emptying of mind, then
Nothing will be less than real.



Helen Lambert

News and Notes

2020 Appointments by the National Council and National Executive Committee

National Vice-President: Sue Lee
National Treasurer: Beatrice Malka
National Lecturers, updated list:
Dianne Kynaston, Barry Bowden,
Simon O'Rourke, Dara Tatray, Helen
Steven and Perry Coles

Transitions

We remember with affection a number
of members of this Section who passed
to peace late last year:

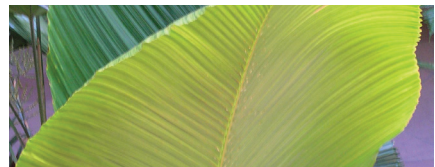
Poppy Turner, who assisted with
programming at Adelaide Lodge:
27 September

Celia Novy, Blavatsky Lodge:
9 November (see next page)

Marianne Fraser, Coordinator, Gos-
ford Group: 19 November

Cecily Dynes, National Member
who previously worked in Blavatsky
Lodge's Adyar Lending Library for
many years: 25 November

Viv Ward, committee member of
Perth Branch: 5 December



Barry Hora, National Member and former Caretaker of the Springbrook Centre: 31 December

Celia Novy and Marianne Fraser were particularly well-known through their attendance at National Conventions. Sydney member Lucille Crocker was moved to send the following tribute to Celia Novy and writes:

I used to call her SANTA CECILIA in Spanish, mainly for her love of music and also because that was her name!... Cecilia.

And how appropriate to have her celebration on St. Cecilia's day!

I had the joy and privilege of working alongside Celia for almost ten years at Blavatsky lodge and also about twelve years in the committee of the McIntyre Centre for Senior Citizens

in Lane Cove, where I still live nowadays thanks to her and others.

We were not just work mates (although we made a good team) but close friends too.

Celia has been the most luminous being I have met; an amazing person and a permanent fountain of love and giving to everyone around her.

She never forgot anybody's birthday or sending presents at Christmas, even to my own grandchildren!

I close my eyes and see her radiant smile....

See you next time around, dear Celia!
With love, Lucille



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

The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches

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

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

Section Directory

Australian Section National Headquarters

Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street,
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Ph: 02 9264 7056 / 9264 6404
Fax: 02 9264 5857
<https://theosophicalsociety.org.au>
Campbell Theosophical Research Library:
catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au

New South Wales

Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:
Postal Address: PO Box 319, St Leonards NSW 1590
Meet: Suite 8, 599 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards
NSW 2065 (entrance in Albany Street)
Telephone: 02 9267 6955 Fax: 02 9283 3772
Email: contact@tssydney.org.au
<https://sydney.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
Meet: 1.00pm Wednesdays
President: Stephen McDonald
Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:
Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,
Mayfield NSW 2304
7.30pm 2nd Friday each month
President: Tony Buzek
Secretary: Dianne Kynaston
Tel: 0452 633 132
Email: diannedeva@gmail.com
<https://newcastle.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

Blue Mountains Group, Certified 13/5/1997:
Meet: Members' Lounge, Blue Mountains
Cultural Centre, 30 Parke Street (above Coles),
Katoomba NSW 2780
Meet: every Monday, 2.00 - 4.00pm
Coordinator: position vacant
Tel: 02 4782 4269
email: PattieThompson,p.thompson12@bigpond.com

Gosford Group, Certified 11/11/1997
Meet: The Narara Community Centre,
Pandala Road, Narara NSW 2250
8.00pm 2nd Tuesday each month
Coordinator: Vivien Wareing
Tel: 0487 196 654
email: vivienwareing@hotmail.com

Secretary: Roni Ostergaard
Telephone: 02 4358 1413

Northern Beaches Group, Certified 2/4/1996:

Postal address and meeting address:
c/- 31 Riviera Street
Avalon NSW 2107
2.00 pm normally 3rd Saturday each month
Please email to confirm meetings.
Coordinator: Nila Chambers
email: nilachambers@bigpond.com

Queensland

Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:
Postal Address: c/- National Headquarters,
Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010
Meet: Meeting Room,
Community Services Tablelands,
rear of 38 Mabel Street, Atherton
2.00pm 2nd Saturday of month except Jan.
Please email National Headquarters
to confirm meetings: tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au
President: Max Brandenberger
Secretary: position vacant
<https://atherton.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:
355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000
Tel: 07 3839 1453
email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au
<https://brisbane.theosophicalsociety.org.au>
Meet: 7.30pm Wednesdays, bookshop
and library open 6.00-7.25pm
President: Phillipa Rooke
Secretary: Dianne Manning

Logan Group, Certified 9/4/2019:
Meet: Meeting Room 2, Logan Hyperdome Library,
Mandew Street, Loganholme, Qld.
1st Friday each month, 9.00am - midday
Coordinator: Christine Gwin
email: logantheosophy@gmail.com
Tel. 0418 755 496

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004:
Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,
Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556
Tel: 0417 873 481
7.00pm Thursdays
Email: theosophy.sunshinecoast@gmail.com
<https://sunshinecoast.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
President: Joyce Thompson
Secretary: Jean Carroll

Toowoomba Group, Certified 10/7/2007:

Meet: Hospice Board Room, 57b O'Quinn Street,
Toowoomba QLD 4350.

Meetings on a Thursday evening once a fortnight at
6.30pm.

Annual Springbrook retreat each Winter

Coordinator: Gayle Thomas

Secretary: Barry Bowden

Tel: 0438 331 885

email: gaylethomas8@gmail.com

South Australia

Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000

Tel: 08 8223 1129

Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au

www.theosophical.org.au

Meet: Members Meeting 10.00am 4th Friday of
every month. Please contact Lodge for additional
meeting dates.

President: Gaynor Fraser

Secretary: Ann Pritchard

Tasmania

Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000

Tel. 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)

https://hobart.theosophicalsociety.org.au/

Meet: 7.30pm Mondays

President: Helen Steven

Secretary: Berry Dunston

Email: helen_steven@live.com

Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:

Meet: Scouts Hall, 1 St. Georges Square, East
Launceston,

1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1.00pm

Postal address: 28 Teggs Road, Gravelly Beach, TAS
7276

email: launcestontheosophicalsociety@gmail.com

https://launceston.theosophicalsociety.org.au/

President/Treasurer: Franka Hughes

Secretary: Ruth Holt

Tel: 0418 346 526

Victoria

Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624

email: info@melbournetheosophy.org

https://melbourne.theosophicalsociety.org.au/

Meet: usually 4th Saturday each month

President: Maria Jevic

Secretary: position vacant

Mornington Peninsula Group, Certified 8/2/2000:

Meet: Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House,
Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday
of the month

(12.00pm meditation - 12.30pm lunch + library -
1.30pm presenter + questions and comments)

Coordinator: Alice Oppen

Tel: 0439 563 313

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

Meet: Shop 6, Tower Place, High Street,
Wodonga VIC 3690

1st Tuesday each month

Library hours Mon-Fri 10.00am-2.00pm

Coordinator/Secretary: Denis Kovacs

Tel: 02 6024 2905

Western Australia

Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:

21 Glendower Street, Perth WA 6000

Tel/Fax: 08 9328 8104

Email: tsp Perth@iinet.net.au

http://www.tsp Perth.com.au

Meet: 7.30pm Tuesdays

President: Franco Guazzelli

Secretary: Victoria la Rondie

Mount Helena Retreat Centre:

1540 Bunning Road, Mt Helena WA 6082

All enquiries to Perth Branch

Tel: 08 9328 8104

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Qld

2184 Springbrook Road,

Springbrook QLD 4213

Tel: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211

email: info@tsretreat.com.au

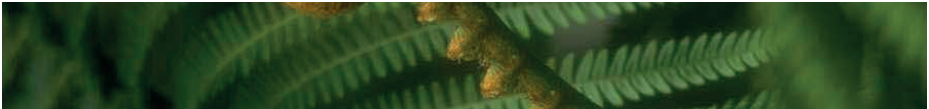
Caretaker: Kay Schiefelbein

Freedom of Thought

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

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

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



Freedom of the Society

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

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

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



The Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

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