



Contact

Members' newsletter of the Brisbane Theosophical Society

2016 Issue 2 May



Buddhist flag, which Col. Olcott was involved in designing, flying in a 'floating village' on Tonle Sap, Cambodia. (It's the striped flag.)

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Brisbane Theosophical Society

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BOOKSHOP & LIBRARY: (Closed on Public Holidays)

Monday, Tue, Wed, Thurs10.30 am to 2.30 pm
Friday..... 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm & 6.30 pm to 7.25 pm
Saturday9.00 am to 12 noon

This issue of "Contact" is edited by Phillipa Rooke.

The programme of Lodge groups and meeting is placed on the Lodge website which will always be the most up-to-date source of information.

The Theosophical Society has no official statements of belief. It encourages members to seek the truth by various avenues, but always subject to respect for others. All views expressed in these pages are entirely those of the authors – not of the Society.

PRESIDENT'S RAVINGS



We are now well into our 2016 year and your Committee has been busy. But sadly I first need to report the passing of long-time and devoted member Ron Spratt on 6th February. Two members of the Committee represented BTS at a quiet memorial for Ron, whose work over a number of years has been greatly appreciated. In particular, Ron was an expert on *The Secret Doctrine* and led a study group for us on this subject. He will be sadly missed.

Among other projects, the new office is up and running on the top floor, just off the upper auditorium. We have to thank several people for this, including Phillipa, John, Phoebe, Kerry and Geoff Harrod for the tech installations. We now have much improved internet, fax and telephone connections, and hope soon to have eftpos in the bookshop. A small aircon unit has been installed to improve the working conditions.

Recently, we held a meeting of members to discuss the impact on BTS of the Brisbane Council's Spring Hill Development Plan. As the turnout was disappointing, some notes on the discussion have been circulated. Note that, while such Plans often take years to come to fruition, with the Chamber of Commerce Building next door up for sale, we could be impacted at any time. Any member who wants more information is welcome to contact myself or any member of the Committee.

As reported in my talk at the beginning of February, BTS was well represented at the Annual Convention held this year in Perth. It was great to meet our dynamic International President who was guest speaker.

Our program this year is likely to include an increase in the number of DVD or YouTube presentations. This is partly to ease the pressure on our Program Committee (particularly our Secretary who has been beset with on-going sickness in her family) to find live speakers for every Friday. But just an important, we now have access to recent high-quality presentations on Theosophy by international speakers. And after all, HPB made it clear that the aim of the Theosophical Society is "to make it known that such a thing as Theosophy exists."

Our Face Book page has been up and running since Christmas, thanks to Michael Moreton and I urge you to keep in touch with our activities and other items of interest by going to <http://www.facebook.com/brisbanetheosophicalsociety>. You do not have to sign up to Face Book to view our page – it's simple, just click!

Well, this rave doesn't seem to have included anything profoundly esoteric, but maybe I could conclude with the following thought

"We are all masters of our tomorrows, however much we are hampered today by the results of our yesterdays."

Dr Annie Besant, 2nd International President of the Theosophical Society.

BRISBANE LODGE NEWS

Program Listing

The Lodge program is in the form of a 3-fold A4 sheet as a pocket sized leaflet. The weekly groups are included in sequential context between the Friday night meetings, so that it is clearer what is on and when. The Program will be sent out separately from this magazine, as it is updated. It can also be seen on the website, and downloaded as a PDF file. The web copy will always be the latest update.

Brisbane Theosophical Society Executive Committee for 2016

President: Brian Harding
Vice Presidents: Phillipa Rooke, John Harris
Secretary: Phoebe Williams
Treasurer: Dianne Manning
Committee: Christine Gwin, Robyn Rizzo, Geoff Harrod, Patricia Ossenberg

Sub-Committees -

Library: Patricia Ossenberg, Phillipa Rooke, Phoebe Williams
Bookshop: Phoebe Williams, Patricia Ossenberg, Robyn Rizzo
Finance: Brian Harding, Phillipa Rooke, Dianne Manning, Patricia Ossenberg, Phoebe Williams
Programs: Phoebe Williams, Brian Harding, Phillipa Rooke
Property & Equipment: Brian Harding, John Harris, Dianne Manning, Phoebe Williams
Publicity: Robyn Rizzo, Christine Gwin, John Harris

New Editorship of 'Contact'

After very many years of faithful, constant and uncomplaining service in the production of "Contact", Geoff Harrod is letting his computer cool down a bit, and will no longer be putting together this magazine. **The committee gratefully acknowledge his valuable contribution.** He will still be continue uploading the program and the magazine onto the web site, which is a much appreciated and valuable service.

The last minute editor of this edition is Phillipa Rooke hence the differences you will see due to not having the skills which Geoff has, and the shorter form.

Australian TS e-Newsletters and 'T-in-A' magazine

The national magazine 'Theosophy in Australia' is now only posted in paper form to those members who pay extra for it when paying their annual dues. It is put on the national website www.austheos.org.au as a PDF file. To be advised by email when each new issue is available, register by sending an email to Gil Murdoch at web@austheos.org.au. Also ask Gil to add you to the e-Newsletter mailing list if you don't already receive it.

Brisbane TS now has a Facebook page

Our member Michael Morton has kindly volunteered to set up and maintain a Facebook presence for Brisbane TS.

It's at <https://www.facebook.com/brisbanetheosophicalsociety>

Visiting Speaker – Advance Notice

Our National President **Linda Oliveira** will be visiting Brisbane Lodge on Friday 5th August. Her Talk at 7.30pm is entitled

Kali Yuga: The Rise and Fall of Narcissism.

Human culture today exhibits strong streams of materialism and narcissism. Are there larger universal forces at work here? We will explore the teaching of the Yugas or great Ages, from Indian Philosophy, with particular reference to Kali Yuga and the potent symbology of the goddess Kali.



Meet the Librarian

Our volunteer Librarian, Patricia Ossenberg, is one of the unsung heroes of The Brisbane Theosophical Society.

Patricia joined the Society in 1986. She came across the TS three years earlier when she brought her daughter to Besant House for a Trinity College Speech and Drama Exam.

(Trinity College have rented our rooms for many decades for both their Speech and Music exams.) Having had a life long interest in metaphysics, she was greatly attracted to the TS.

Since joining, she has attended and run study classes, served in many capacities on the Executive committee, including a term as President, and has been the Librarian now for many years. She is also on the editorial committee for the National *Theosophy in Australia* magazine.

One of her many duties include dealing with the multitudinous boxes of donated books. These are gone through carefully, substituting worn copies in the library with newer versions, and putting many out onto the very popular 'Sale Table'. Patricia's most recent (and still ongoing) task has been to go through about 5-600 cassette tapes from the library, checking for clarity and suitability for retaining in the collection. The selected tapes have now been converted into around 100 CD's and are in the process of being labelled and put back into the library in a much more borrowable form.

Our volunteers are the backbone of the Brisbane Lodge. Without them we could not open our doors.

Thank you Patricia!

New Additions to the Library

I Am That by Sri Nisargadata Maharaj

The Art of Pilgrimage by Phil Cousineau

Secret Wisdom by David Conway

The Masters Revealed by K. Paul Johnson

Only Love by Sri Daya Mata

Scientific Vegetarianism by Edmond Bordeaux Szekely

That's the nature of the bird
of the soul;
the soul has wings
but it has forgotten
it's in a cage.
It tries, it sees
that the cage is there,
but it gets habituated,
thinks the cage
is home.

If it were the real home
it would be giving him joy
peace and freedom.
But his eyes are always out
beyond, somewhere,
knowingly or unknowingly,
seeking That.

If ever he would remember
his true Goal,
sincerely, truly,
then he could not remain
in the cage . . .

Are you feeling
you are in a cage?
Are you feeling
you are in bondage?
Not by saying,
but by inner feelings,
that you are in ignorance?
Or have you forgotten
where the walls are?

Swami Amar Jyoti

This article was written by Brisbane Lodge member, Tony Petcopoulos, who is a popular Friday night speaker, and our Tuesday volunteer on the front desk.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WEAVING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION INTO YOUR SPIRITUAL PATH

Gratitude, thankfulness or appreciation is a positive emotion or attitude which acknowledges a benefit that one is receiving has received or will receive. Being grateful acknowledges what we have attracted into our lives. You become aware of the good things that happen to you and the beauty that surrounds you and express your thanks and appreciation for your experiences without taking them for granted.

One of the most important impacts of practising gratitude is that it is the surest way to stop the incessant negative stream of inner dialogue or negative self talk which anchors our consciousness into the lower self, the ego. An attitude of gratitude and appreciation repolarises our consciousness from the solar plexus into the heart chakra which is the doorway to the soul's radiance. The result is that we experience more joy, harmony, synchronicity, intuition, and a greater sense of connectedness and an expansion of consciousness. Fear dissipates because it cannot exist if our heart is full of gratitude and appreciation.

When for example you consciously give thanks for the beauty of a flower you become fully conscious of the flowers beauty. You open up to its energies and become fully connected into the moment. You become connected to the flower with your mind becoming fully conscious, fully lucid and fully present. The anxieties of the past and fear of the future recede. To see the beauty of the flower is a conscious action through your mind and heart with the result that you become the beauty that you see. If you consciously see the beauty in a tree you become that beauty, if you consciously see the beauty in the eyes of an old man or women and give thanks to the cosmos for allowing you to see that beauty, you become that beauty. You become the beauty of whatever you give thanks for from your heart.

You need to see each moment as an OPPORTUNITY to find things to give thanks and appreciation for so that you are continually living in the beauty of the moment and therefore raising your vibrational rate.

By consciously appreciating and giving thanks to the abundance that exists in your life you will have set in motion an ancient spiritual law.

“The more you have and are grateful for, the more will be given to you”

By weaving this ancient spiritual law into the fabric of your daily life you will be designing a wonderful blueprint for your life. By continually practising gratefulness you will positively shift your energy to the highest possible frequency which creates a vibrational match for the positive energy and experiences that you want. **YOU ARE SENDING A CLEAR MESSAGE TO THE UNIVERSE** that this is what you would like to experience. It is the law of resonance that the universe will respond to your request.

An important key in using this technique is that your appreciation and gratitude must be sincere and radiated from your heart. It is these pure emotions that create the highest vibrational frequency and thereby acts as a magnet to attract abundance into your life. The daily action of writing a gratitude journal creates a habit in your life which magnify and expands upon the sources of goodness that exists. **WHATEVER YOU FOCUS ON EXPANDS**. It is a simple concept and a powerful tool in the deliberate creation of the life that you desire.

Most people spend their time focused on fault finding and what is wrong and missing in their lives which is reflected in judgements, criticism, anger, envy and resentment therefore attracting into their life more of the same. It is important to note again what we think and focus on expands which is expressed:

“As we think so shall we be”

As such this is precisely what will manifest for the person.

Marilyn Smith in her book “Gratitude – A key to happiness” defines gratitude from a deeper spiritual perspective as “unconditional appreciation, reverence, respect and joy”.

Reverence and respect are also important in this definition of gratitude which will add depth and richness to your spiritual experience. Reverence or to revere is defined in the Oxford dictionary as:

“To regard as sacred or exalted, to hold in deep respect or venerate”

When you add the qualities of sacredness, reverence and respect into the space of gratitude and appreciation into your present moment experiences, you are moving from an intellectual perception into the deeper spiritual perception and into the space of your heart.

To move another spiritual step deeper into a spiritual heart space you can consciously draw down white light through the top of your head and into your heart on an in breath and on an out breath radiate from your heart enveloping the situation or experience with the energy of gratitude and appreciation mixed with the qualities of reverence, sacredness and respect.

Experiencing joy is another important dimension. When you feel that the gratitude you have experienced is a GIFT and therefore special, a sense of joy wells up inside of us. The feeling of joy experienced expands the quality of your gratitude.

For most people it is a revelation that we have everything that we need in life to make us happy but simply lack the conscious awareness to appreciate it. To have a grateful disposition is to have a sense of wonder, awe, thankfulness and appreciation. In a sense you are savouring your positive life experiences and situations so that you can extract the maximum possible satisfaction from your journey throughout your life.

The great twentieth century humanitarian, physician, theologian and noble prize winner Albert Schweitzer called gratitude; “The secret to life”

Sarah Breathnach in her book “Simple Abundance” states that both abundance and poverty exist simultaneously in our lives as parallel realities. She states that it always our conscious choice which of the gardens that we tend. When we choose not to focus on what is missing and what is wrong with our lives and other people and instead focus on being grateful for the abundance of what presents itself such as family, friends, nature and personal pursuits that bring us pleasure the waste land of illusion falls away and we experience heaven on earth.

This is the prize if you choose to take this assignment and do the work.

“Which garden are you fertilising, watering and tending?”

“Being happy is the natural state. Where there is an abundance of life there is joy, as we can see everywhere in Nature; but man looks in the wrong direction for it; he seeks outside himself what is to be found only within.”

N. Sri Ram

An extract from a talk by James Thompson

The Mindless Way

Most people live their lives in a state of constant thinking and in a state of almost permanent unhappiness. All strive for happiness with none other than temporary relief. The thinking creates more unhappiness by dwelling on past atrocities or future disasters and this increased unhappiness in its turn generates more thinking, either of revenge, or hope. We imagine a perfect future with this or that dictator dead and this or that political party in power. We would be happy if only the kids would leave home, we could get a yacht as big as Greg Normans, or win the Tattsлото. The truth is that we would be just as unhappy but under different external conditions.

If we analyze this we can see that all this unhappiness is derived from a memory of past experiences or fear of future ones. Is any of this real? How could it be? Where is the threat, the danger. It is in the mind, either a memory or a thought projection. Most of its content has no reality in the external world and almost all, if not all of our unhappiness could be erased if we could find the off switch or pull out the batteries.

Now the mind does not want to be switched off, it unlike you is perfectly happy dwelling on all that misery, it actually enjoys it in a paradoxical way. So it will tell you that such happiness is possible in the distant, mind projected future if you engage in some impossible religion that it has created for the purpose. And we fall for it. We become Buddhists so that we can become enlightened in about ten thousand lifetimes. We become Christians, and not listening to the words of Jesus, create an industry of ensuring our fitness to survive some hypothetical far-off judgement day. This is not to say that religions did not have enlightened founders, their scriptures prove otherwise, but most of them have since been corrupted by lesser followers who were still asleep.

If we think about time we shall see that past and future can be characterized by content spanning billions of years but the present moment is reduced to an infinitesimal spec like the zero point on a graph. It could have no reality except for the fact that the brain somehow slightly blurs our experience so we can exist. All this of course has no reality because it is only a mind projection. Indeed on all actual evidence, the present now is all that exists, yet we do not live in it.

To do so involves relegating mind to its proper function which is to deal with practical issues. That involves watching carefully its content to see what is going on and learning to spent ever increasing periods of time in a no mind state which we may call inner tranquility, being or stillness. This is not an unconscious state because the watcher remains aware of himself as a state of pure awareness. In this way, enlightenment grows slowly like a plant in this lifetime, rather than appearing as if by magic in some imagined future lifetime.

How is this done? There is no substitute for doing it. Thinking about it achieves nothing. That is why a scholar of the spiritual does not become spiritual, whatever that means! We must practice what we preach.

My first experience with such teaching was over thirty years ago when I had mediation and yoga lessons from a man whose ideas were in the style of Gurdjieff. The meditation worked along these lines:

Sit quietly and become aware of my body. If I can watch the body, I cannot be it.

Now turn the attention away from the body and observe the feelings. Say to oneself, if I can see my feelings, I am not them. Who am I. Now pass to the thoughts and quietly observe them. Say to yourself, if I can be aware of my thoughts they are not me either. Drop the thoughts and become aware of my own awareness. This is the end of the road for ordinary people. Combined with this is the simple theory

of man number 1,2,3 and 4. This simple process for getting in touch with the inner man or higher self works wonders because once experienced it is never forgotten and can be invoked at any time.

Many people have this experience of themselves as watcher but do not continue with it because the mind attempting to defend itself convinces them that it does not lead anywhere or that it is unproductive. Actually only about one in a thousand have become seers in this sense. The rest live in what they believe is the real world of incessant mental activity and consider 'seers' as ineffectual dreamers or madmen. They disregard the fact that almost everything of value in human culture has come about when their originators were in such a state.

The process of getting enlightenment consists of making such a state the dominant mode of consciousness and relegating mind to its true purpose of facilitating the practicalities of life and solving real problems. The mind gets out of control when it devotes its activity to inventing non-existent problems and corresponding solutions and at the same time the watcher goes to sleep.

James Thompson has been involved with the Theosophical Society for many years, and has kindly delivered Friday Night talks for the Brisbane Lodge.

The Buddhist flag, which is depicted on the front cover, is a modern creation and it was jointly designed by Mr J.R. de Silva and Colonel Henry S. Olcott to mark the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon in 1880.

Colours in the Buddhist Flag

Blue : Universal Compassion
Yellow : The Middle Path
Red : Blessings
White : Purity and Liberation
Orange : Wisdom



There are six colours in the flag, but the human eye can see only five. They are described in the Scriptures as emanating from the aura around the Buddha's body and head when He attained Enlightenment under the bodhi tree.

There are 5 vertical stripes of red, yellow, blue, white and orange. The sixth colour is a compound of the first 5, but for design purposes its five ingredients are all shown in small horizontal stripes on the flag.

The horizontal bars signify peace and harmony between all races through out the world. The vertical bars represent eternal peace within the world.

In simple terms, the Buddhist Flag implies that there is no discrimination of races, nationality, areas or skin colour; that every living being possess the Buddha Nature and all have the potential to become a Buddha. The colours symbolise the perfection of Buddhahood and the Dharma.

<http://slbuddhists.org/inanutshell/buddhistflag.html>



T.O.S. news

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Email: geoffrey.harrod@gmail.com
President: Geoff Harrod Vice-President: Dianne Manning

Dates for your diary

All interested people are invited to attend the **planning meetings** which are held quarterly from 10.00 to 11:30 am in the T.S. rooms. Meeting dates in 2016 are:

- Saturday 4 June
- Saturday 3 September and
- Saturday 3 December (AGM).

The **Healing Meditation Group** meets prior to each TOS meeting between 9:30 and 10:00 in the upstairs room at the TS. All are welcome.

Altruistic Projects

- Brisbane TOS members recently donated \$250 to the Fiji Cyclone Appeal.
- We are excited about a new project to help enhance the well-being of victims of domestic violence and young women at risk of homelessness. We are offering free places in the cooking classes organised by celebrity chef, Dominique Rizzo, the daughter of Brisbane TS member, Robyn Rizzo. Dominique is generously giving us a reduced price for the classes to enable us to provide places for more women.

Dates for your diaries to support our Altruistic Projects

A social afternoon of book browsing to benefit Victims of Domestic Violence Sunday 26 June from 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm.

Funds raised will support Women's House, a shelter for victims of domestic violence that provides a wide range of services to women. See the advertisement below for details.

Concert to benefit the Home-schools in Pakistan Sunday 7 August at 2:30 pm.

This education project is conducted by the TOS in Pakistan. The Qandeel home-schools enable children, young girls and women who have no opportunity to pursue even a basic education, to attend classes. Reading, writing and arithmetic are taught by a teacher who holds classes at her own house which is in the same locality as the students. The teachers meet regularly for professional development. These schools provide life-changing opportunities. All donated funds are spent on the schools, since administrative tasks in both Australia and Pakistan are done by volunteers.



You are invited to Afternoon Tea in a bookshop



You are invited to browse in a beautiful community bookshop to help TOS fundraise for Women's House which provides support, emergency housing, advocacy and information to women experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault. Come along and enjoy a glass of wine and afternoon tea while immersing yourself in the wonderful world of books and socialising with friends.

50% of the sale of books and CDs will also be contributed to the TOS.

When: Sunday 26 June, 2.30pm-5pm

Where: Annerley Community Bookshop, Shop 12, 478 Ipswich Road, Annerley

Cost: A donation of \$10

Tickets: available from the TOS and by emailing:

fundraisingqueries@outlook.com

All proceeds are going to Women's House