



## Australian T.O.S. Links – December 2013

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Welcome to our final issue for 2013. The festive season is almost upon us. It is this time of the year that we are given the opportunity to test our true spiritual and service values. Family connections often bring up obstacles that are actually a gift for us to address our impediments (see under sent in by a TOS member)

Our **Annual General Meeting** will be held at the Sydney TS Conference on Sat 25 Jan at 2.00pm. In addition we have generously been allocated a TOS session on Wed 22 Jan at 2.00pm featuring Keith Howe's as guest speaker followed by reports from this year's conferences from the American Section and the Indo Pacific Conference in Bali.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in Sydney and sharing ideas together.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year everyone from your national TOS team Jean, Carolyn and Travis.

### National TOS Philippine Relief Appeal

Thank you all those who donated to our TOS appeal last month to assist TOS work in the Philippines. As you are no doubt aware many thousands lost their lives, homes were destroyed and the country has been truly devastated by the ferocity of typhoon Haiyan

We sent Vic Hao Chin of TOS Philippines an initial donation of aud5000 on 15 Nov for immediate aid. Donations are pouring in to TOS the Philippines from TS and TOS worldwide. Vic has indicated that they hope to be able to concentrate on using the funds for long-term sustainable projects. e.g. building automated water wells in public schools which would be made available to the public within the village. Many organisations are providing daily needs such as bottled water and food. TOS Australia will endeavour to send ongoing financial support.

If you would like to **donate** to this humanitarian programme you may send your donations to our treasurer;  
Ms Carolyn Harrod  
26 Lytham Street  
Indooroopilly Qld.4068

You may direct deposit to our national TOS account:

Name of Account: Theosophical Order of Service Australia  
BSB:062009  
Account No. 0090 3790  
Payee email [cdharrod@gmail.com](mailto:cdharrod@gmail.com)

Were you born into a Muslim family, or a Christian family, or a Jewish family, or a Hindu family, or a Buddhist family? Why should an accident of birth make you a Muslim, or a Christian, or a Jew, or a Hindu, or a Buddhist? Think for yourself. Take nothing for granted. Question everything. Reach your own conclusions based on your own experience, intuition and common sense. These are amongst the gifts the bountiful universe bestowed when we were given the opportunity to be born in a human body. We should use those gifts well, and make the most of this precious opportunity, for that is what we are here to do.

Fear is the lock, consciousness is the key and love is on the other side of the door.



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### TOS fund raiser tour to Bali for the 13th Triennial Indo-Pacific Conference, 1-6 Nov 2013 from Dr Olga Gostin Adelaide TOS



**Radha Burnier**

**15 Nov 1923 – 31 Oct 2013**

Our international president of TOS passed to peace on 31 Oct. Her life was one of devoted service to the theosophical movement.

Radha worked tirelessly for the welfare of all. She was dedicated in implementing education to those less fortunate, passionate about environmental issues and animal welfare. Radha will be remembered for many things, in particular her fine intellect and the gift of writing. Her monthly column in The Theosophist inspired thousands. She was a lady of high principles and very well respected. Radha will be fondly remembered as an example of a life lived in service for others.

A quote from our late president answering a question from a journalist regarding our theosophical society:

**“Our body may be small,  
but our consciousness is large”**

In presenting a brief summary of this engaging and profoundly moving conference, I have chosen to focus on those aspects that seem to me most relevant to our commitment as TOS members. Indeed, the conference had "Practising Theosophy" as its overarching theme, a delightfully ambiguous title that invited either an exploration of the tenets of theosophy, or the exploration of theosophy 'in action'. Not surprisingly, most talks straddled both nuances.

In his opening address entitled 'Actorless Action' Ravi Ravindra reminded us that humans are essentially social beings and that our task is to engage in conscious, mindful action and interaction with others. Paradoxically, however, he pointed out that since we cannot foretell the outcome of action, we should not expect or demand 'right' action from others. Instead, we should act with focused awareness, remaining free from attachment to the fruits of our actions, or indeed from expecting any outcome at all. In a final salvo Ravi Ravindra warned us against delaying action while seeking perfect motivation. The important thing is to start action from where we currently are.

Vic Hao Chin's talk 'Mainstreaming Theosophy' addressed the vast societal changes that have occurred since the TS was founded in 1875, and the ensuing need to redefine our vision of theosophy. Whereas the ageless wisdom continues to offer us a pathway through individual transformation, he sees this as a necessary step to larger-scale social transformation where theories are translated into practice. Thus he suggested that it is imperative to engage with and harness the power of social media and websites to create a so-called theosophical academy, which would promulgate and popularise the premises of theosophy. (This was also the focus of Pedro Oliviera's interactive talk on 'Challenges and opportunities in making Theosophy more widely known'). continued over



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Such engagement, however, is but the necessary foundation for practical action in pressing social issues, be they of an educational, political or other social context. As examples of such practical theosophy he spoke of the ethos and values inculcated at the Golden Link schools in the Philippines, as well as TS engagement at the government's request, in providing peace education for soldiers engaged in sectarian warfare. Vic Hao Chin provided us with a blueprint for action:

1. Identify key ideas or social issues that need to be addressed.
2. Develop an appropriate transformative self-preparation or training of those who would be engaged in social action.
3. Act with synergy and determination within the context of long-term planning and commitment.
4. Start small, but start. Be ready for failure, and start again.

Several speakers expanded on the themes outlined above. In his talk entitled 'Practising Theosophy: Knowing and Being', S. Sundaram spoke passionately about the need to internalise theosophical values in order to live not just 'side by side' but together, actively and consciously. Only such internal transformation will ensure proper relations with others, and enable us to address some of the pressing problems before us. Brother Sundaram posited a progression in which heart and head combine in a threefold engagement with others through sensitivity, commitment and social action.

In a symposium on the relationship between TOS and TS Vicky Jerome reviewed the history of the TOS, reminding us that Annie Besant originally launched it as the Theosophical Society Order of Service, with widespread engagement in education (especially of women) and political activism based on inner transformation through action. This point was concisely summarised by Jean Carroll in her three-step journey of progression from Awareness to Action and Altruism. There need be no dichotomy between spiritual engagement and social action. This was powerfully illustrated by Rosal Santos' talk on broad-ranging and dynamic practical initiatives in the Philippines. Two other presentations focused on detailed regional

accounts of theosophy in action: Isis de Resende blew our minds with the breadth and energy of theosophical activism in Brazil; while Ng Ay Na spoke about theosophy in Malaysia.

In addition to the topics discussed above, there were four historical presentations: Dianne Kynaston reviewed the evolution of the TS in the participating countries of the Indo-Pacific Federation; Michelle de Jong attempted to unravel for us the complex Hindu-Buddhist history of Bali, starting with the exile of the Majapahit kingdom to Bali following the coming of Islam to Java; S. Sundaram outlined the evolution of the TS in India, while Sanne Chong presented a fascinating insight into theosophical engagement in China under the almost solo activism of one Dr Wu Ting Fang in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

### **Spectacular Balinese dancers at conference closing ceremony**



In conclusion I must repeat that I have limited this brief review to those presentations that I thought might be most appropriate for our TOS publication. In the end, of course, this is a silly point of demarcation as the whole tenet of the conference was that true theosophists express their internalised spirituality through action. How could I then not have addressed Ravi Ravindra's two other talks: 'Knowledge and the state of unknowing' and 'Mindfulness in action and mindlessness in love'? Or Vic Hao Chin's. 'The power of awareness' and Linda Oliviera's 'Discovering the diamond: inner disarmament'? The answer is simple: I did what I could in the space allocated! It was a wonderful conference and I thank Jean for the opportunity to reflect and share with those unable to attend.



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### TOS Fundraiser to Bali

Following the Indo Pacific Conference twenty TOS members travelled to Ubud and spent 4 nights relaxing in a tropical paradise in the heart of this enchanting town. During our visit our guide Dwi (Dewy) showed us the sights including a visit to a typical Balinese family compound. We were all amazed at their cohesive culture. Our guide expressed his concern on how their ancient culture would adapt to the rapid modernisation of Indonesia. We observed many links between Balinese culture and our theosophical worldview.

We then travelled to central Java and had an early morning visit to the Buddhist world heritage site at Borobudur. This site was certainly worth the visit. We also had a full day sightseeing passing through spectacular mountain scenery to the Si Kadang Crater and Lake Warner (Colour Lake).

A donation of \$200 was made on behalf of the Sydney travel agency to our TOS Philippine Fund.



Ubud visit to family compound



TOS group at Borobudur Buddhist site in central Java



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