

Issue 26 – June 2013

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Dear fellow-members of the TS and TOS around the world,

July is getting very close, so if you've been thinking about joining your TOS colleagues at our conference at Wheaton, but have not yet sent in your registration, you'll need to act very soon. You'll find the program and registration form linked from the front page of our international website [here](#). It's not too late to send in your registration!!

To those of you who have registered, we're looking forward to welcoming you and sharing the vibrant conference days with you. Look out for some pre-conference homework that we'll be sending to you shortly. It will help you marshal your thoughts and contribute as fully as possible to the conference and the future work of the TOS.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy reading the varied material in this issue of our newsletter. The range of activities in which our TOS community engages is truly remarkable and inspiring. Altruistic action is certainly alive and well!

Remember that the newsletter is designed to be read while you are connected to the internet.

Please also consider sending photographs of your TOS activities and news items that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. We would welcome your contributions by email to the editors at carolyn.tosinternational@gmail.com.

With best wishes in putting theosophical principles into action,
Carolyn, Diana and Geoffrey



The editorial team (L. to R.)
Diana Dunningham Chapotin is the International Secretary of the TOS
Carolyn Harrod is the past National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia and
Geoffrey Harrod is the International TOS Webmaster.

If you are yourself full of happiness, that radiant joy is poured out upon all who come near you, and you become a veritable sun, showering life and light and love in your small circle on the earth...

C.W. Leadbeater



Celebrations at the Golden Link College in the Philippines

The Golden Link College has opened a branch campus in Cortes, Bohol province in central Philippines. As usual when the TOS opens a new school in this country, a free summer class was offered for the local community. About 140 students attended, aged 3-8. Formal classes at nursery, kindergarten and preparatory levels have now started. A new level will be added each year. The school is under the supervision of Mrs Cora Ponteres, former President of the Bohol Lodge of the Theosophical Society.

Meanwhile, at the main campus of Golden Link College in suburban Manila, the annual graduation ceremonies have been held, with former Chief Justice Reynato Puno of the Supreme Court as guest speaker. He was very impressed by the school and its students.

[Read more](#)

The TOS salutes Krishnan Lal Gupta

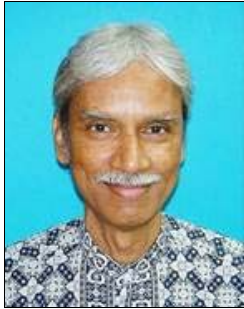
We salute the passing on January 20, 2013 of Mr K.L. Gupta, a long time TOS worker in the city of Orai, in Jalaun district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Till his last breath at the age of 90, all Mr Gupta's thoughts revolved around the underprivileged children whose education he had supported throughout his life.

He was greatly influenced by the teachings of Dr Annie Besant and Jiddu Krishnamurti. Many times during discussions he commented that he was always ready to do the service work of the TS. This started with the formation of a 'Lotus Circle' providing children with instruction in Theosophy and then with educational sponsorship work through the TOS Group in Orai. He was also a facilitator of the Foundation for Excellence (USA), a non-profit



organisation formed to help underprivileged students get a university education.

For over ten years, the TOS in France has been sponsoring the schooling and coaching of 22 of the children under Mr Gupta's guidance. The French members have been delighted to receive reports and photos of the special events conveying theosophical values and ideals organised for the children, in addition to the daily after-school tutoring and weekly cricket matches or other games. [Read more](#)



Welcome to our new Singapore Correspondent

We wish a warm welcome to Mr Vivekhanathan Mariappan as the new Correspondent for the TOS in Singapore. Vivek has been cooperating with the service endeavours of the TS in Singapore for many years, notably in the sending of theosophical books to Asian countries like the Philippines and Myanmar (formerly Burma) where there is a need for our literature.

New Friends

New Zealand TOS member, Stephanie Bretherton, shares a personal story. "I have made some new friends over the summer months. They all knew each other long before I made their acquaintance but they still welcomed me into their close-knit group and we are getting to know each other more and more each time we meet.

Queen Elizabeth II once said, "Grief is the price we pay for love" and I fear I will have to pay-up sooner than I know. You see my friends are blissfully unaware that they are on death row. Their only crime – they were born cows....

The herd grazes peacefully on the hillside, right beside the wooden pens and ramp that will ultimately lead them onto a truck which will take them to their death. They will then know how brutal humans can be, but I would like to think that they will take with them the knowledge that we're not all like that. That they will remember an experience of human contact, love and kindness and the lingering taste of apples. [Read more](#)



TOS news from around the world

In this issue you'll find news from the TOS in **New Zealand** about their participation in the open day held by the HPB Lodge of the TS in Auckland. The TOS had information and sale stands, a PowerPoint display and talks about its projects. The TOS in **Australia** reports on its well-attended session on the work of the TOS during the national convention of the TS in Australia and the Houston TOS group in the **USA** shares its rewarding involvement with their local Food Bank that provides donated food for needy members of the community. [Read more](#)



What's new on the International TOS website?

The new [Featured Article](#) is by Carolyn Harrod, the past National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia. This article comes from a talk she gave at an annual convention of the Theosophical Society in Australia. In it, she discusses the particular characteristics of service that flow naturally from our work of inner transformation.

In our [Featured Project](#) we bring news of another project organised in Kenya by the Nairobi TOS Convenor, Usha Shah. This time she's focusing on teaching women hairstyling skills. As she explained to the women, having their own money assures them of dignity, self-respect and assistance with the material needs of their family. Hairstyling is work that can be done in their own home, enabling them to be present for their children.

The [For Members](#) section has a number of new additions. Check out our new material for parents, ideas to celebrate UN Peace Day, new posters to promote the work of the TOS, posters on Dr Annie Besant and a brochure on the TOS that you can adapt for your own group or country.

You'll also find additions to the TOS photo gallery and the expanded *Inspiration* section. Go to <http://international.theoservice.org>



Kenyan women learning hairstyling

Serving communities in the Assam & Arunachal Region

In February, TOS members in Assam and Arunachal Region were welcomed by Sissugram



Children's Home, 35 km from the city of Guwahati, where they distributed stationery, fruit, sweets and flip-flop-style sandals for inside wear.

Two months later, in April, in cooperation with the National Rural Health Mission, Mr Patowary's team organised medical checks for six or seven villages in the Rangmahal area. Supported by two mobile units fitted with X-ray, ECG and blood testing equipment, doctors and nurses examined around 200 people and distributed free medicines where appropriate.

As is their habit on such occasions of TOS service outreach, Mr Patowary, his Regional Secretary Mr Anil Barua and other TOS and TS associates organised a public meeting to talk about Theosophy and the TOS.

This event attracted keen media coverage. [Read more](#)

Service to Kumbha Melā pilgrims



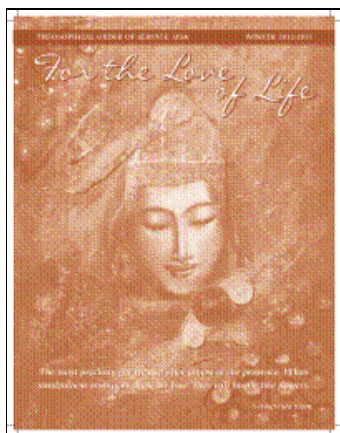
What is the largest religious gathering on earth? Any idea? It is considered to be the Kumbha Melā, a Hindu pilgrimage that takes place every three years in four holy sites in India successively, forming a 12-year cycle. Each cycle includes a Mahā Kumbha Melā, a gathering of tens of millions who flock to the city of Allahabad over a period of three weeks to bathe at the confluence (Triveni) of three sacred rivers – the Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati.

Allahabad has a fine TS and TOS presence. The members are delighted to help host the pilgrims, particularly those with reduced means. This year in March, they provided "alav" (fire) at times of biting cold. Blankets, shawls and clothes were distributed and tea served to hundreds. One thousand "puri sabji" packets were offered to the needy. At the same time "dana" was distributed to thousands of Siberian birds on the banks of the river as they also are considered guests. Thousands of TS and TOS folders were distributed through book stalls. The team was aided by members of the TS at Anand Lodge, Mohila Dharm Lodge and Sandhyadeep Study Centre. [Read more](#)



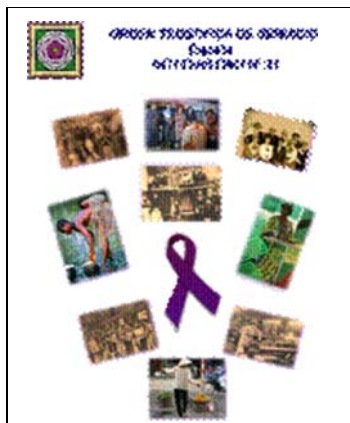
Respecting the creatures

Service takes many forms. TS and TOS member Alan Harris, of Tucson, Arizona, in the USA might be said to serve through his poetry. One of the societal evils he helps combat is cruelty toward animals. We are happy to share here a selection of Alan's poems, all expressing respect for animals and their habits. [Read more](#)



Invitation to read the magazine of the TOS in America

We draw your attention to *For the Love of Life*, the very fine magazine of the TOS in America. The latest edition contains some splendid articles on the nature of service. Read the magazine [here](#).



The TOS's Spanish language newsletter on UN related activities

Can you read a little Spanish? Since 2008, the TOS's Spanish language coordinator, Fernando Pérez Martín, has put out an electronic newsletter presenting information to the members about UN aspirations in the realm of world peace, unity and the relief of suffering. Fernando's ardent desire is to inspire TOS members to support the work of the UN at local, national and international levels.

The entire series of newsletters – 28 to date – can be found [here](#)



The power of music as an element of social transformation

Here is the touching and uplifting story of how orchestra director, Luis Szarán, took music to slum children in Paraguay and transformed their lives. Faced with too few instruments for the many young people wishing to make music, Luis and his band of volunteers recycled items from Paraguay's largest rubbish dump to make violins, flutes, cellos, saxophones... Luis was amazed to discover that children could start their lessons on these instruments with dignity. The Landfill Harmonic was born!

Turn your computer's sound on and [View the video](#) It gets increasingly inspiring as it goes along.

Thanks to Argentinian TOS member, Maria Rosa Martinez, for drawing this link to our attention.

Would you like to receive this on-line newsletter automatically?

- a. To sign up, you only have to send a message telling us which country you live in to tos.intouch@gmail.com with "Subscribe TOS e-newsletter" in the Subject line.
- b. If you do not want to receive future newsletters you can easily unsubscribe. All that is needed is a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with "Unsubscribe TOS e-newsletter" in the Subject line.

>[TOS e-news 26 June 2013](#)

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Tree planting to mark the opening of the school



Parents and guests who attended the parents' orientation.

In the main campus of Golden Link College in suburban Manila, the annual graduation ceremonies have been held, with former Chief Justice Reynato Puno of the Supreme Court as guest speaker. He was very impressed by the school and its students.







>TOS e-news 26 June 2013

The TOS salutes Krishnan Lal Gupta



We salute the passing on January 20, 2013 of Mr K.L. Gupta, a long-time TOS worker in the city of Orai, in Jalaun district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Till his last breath at the age of 90, all Mr Gupta's thoughts revolved around the underprivileged children whose education he had supported throughout his life. Gratitude inspired his devotion...

Left, a kit of educational material is offered by Brother K.L. Gupta to a student on the occasion of Diwali, the Festival of Light.

Krishnan Lal Gupta was born on July 1, 1922 in the small town of Berasia, close to the city of Bhopal, in the state of Madhya Pradesh in central India. He was the eldest of five sons and four daughters in a family of precarious financial circumstances. Krishnan Lal showed such eagerness in his studies that he was given a scholarship permitting him to stay at school through intermediate and high school levels. So great was the impact on his life that he became a life-long server of needy children where he lived, ensuring that as many as possible had an opportunity for higher studies.

Krishnan Lal served as a government employee with the Indian Ordnance Factories organisation from 1945 to 1980. He became a member of the Theosophical Society in 1961. He was greatly influenced by the teachings of Dr Annie Besant and Jiddu Krishnamurti. Many times during discussions he commented that he was not able fully to grasp theosophical teachings but he was always ready to do the service work of the TS. This started with the formation of a 'Lotus Circle' providing children with instruction in Theosophy and then with educational sponsorship work through the TOS Group in Orai. He was also a facilitator of the Foundation for Excellence (USA), a non-profit organisation formed to help underprivileged students get a university education.



A student participates in a ceremony paying homage to the memory of Dr Besant.



Swami Nityanand, a member of the Orai Lodge of the TS, addresses the children on the occasion of Annie Besant's birthday.



Swami Nityanandji also gives the children lessons in Vipassana meditation.

For over ten years, the TOS in France has been sponsoring the schooling and coaching of 22 of the children under Mr Gupta's guidance. The French members have been delighted to receive reports and photos of the special events conveying theosophical values and ideals organised for the children, in addition to the daily after-school tutoring and weekly cricket matches or other games.



An outing for the children with K.L. Gupta in 2009

Krishnan Lal was married to Mrs Vidya Devi who passed away in 1999. Their daughter, Mrs Archana Gupta, is a bank employee in Indore and their elder son, Dr S.K. Gupta, a radiologist in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. His younger son, Prasoon, is a medical representative in Orai. Prasoon is now taking responsibility for Krishnan Lal's educational work, especially the coaching being run by Orai TOS Group. Prasoon reported recently that in late March he took the children on a pilgrimage to Bithoor-Kanpur in the state of Uttar Pradesh to the banks of the holy river Ganga and also to the Zoological Park in Kanpur. Krishnan Lal is surely at peace in the knowledge that his work is in safe and devoted hands.



In the river Ganga in March 2013



After-school coaching class to help the children do well in their studies.



Here we see Prasoon Gupta (far right) with some of the children.



Another one of the outings for some of the children

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New friends

New Zealand TOS member, Stephanie Bretherton, shares a personal story and her hope that this herd of cattle, ultimately destined for the violence of slaughter, will remember an alternative experience with humans marked by gentleness and compassion.



Sometimes my daughters join me, or my husband, who prefers to observe from a comfortable distance. A couple of close friends have also come to feed the cows and others have said they'd like to sometime. Like us, the cows have their individual preferences. Some like the Weetbix, others spit them out preferring the apple. Some enjoy lettuce while others turn their noses up at it. A couple of them are noticeably confident and assert themselves to get more than their fair share of what's on offer by pushing others out of the way and nudging me with their heads to make sure I don't forget they are there. You can be sure these two will always be at front of the herd of which there are only 15.

A few of them don't show any interest whatsoever, seeming to prefer to graze the grass rather than approach this strange visitor. If I approach them they are wary of me but stretch their necks as far as they will reach to investigate the piece of apple in my hand. A long tongue sometimes attempts to wrap itself around the treat, other times they just back away. I throw the apple in the grass at their feet. They find it and it's gone.



I have made some new friends over the summer months. They all knew each other long before I made their acquaintance but they still welcomed me into their close knit group and we are getting to know each other more and more each time we meet.

Queen Elizabeth II once said, "Grief is the price we pay for love" and I fear I will have to pay-up sooner than I know. You see, my friends are blissfully unaware that they are on death row. Their only crime – they were born cows.

A couple of times each week, I pay them a visit to feed them apples and other tasty morsels like carrots, lettuce and the cereal biscuits, Weetbix.



Some of the more confident ones like having you rub their heads and necks as you would a cat or dog and actually seem to enjoy the contact with another species. They also show their excitement in a similar way to that I have seen in horses, and my dog, running and kicking their back legs up in a frisky manner. My friends who came to feed them with me are Hare Krishna devotees who hold cows sacred. As they fed each cow, they greeted them with "Hare Krishna", the holy name of Krishna being transcendently blissful and bestowing all spiritual benedictions. I was touched by their love for these gentle creatures.

Why bother? The herd grazes peacefully on the hillside, right beside the wooden pens and ramp that will ultimately lead them onto a truck which will take them to their death. They will then know how brutal humans can be but I would like to think that they will take with them the knowledge that we're not all like that. That they will remember an experience of human contact, love and kindness and the lingering taste of apples.





>[TOS e-news 26 June 2013](#)

TOS news from around the world

Open Day at the HPB Lodge of the TS in Auckland, New Zealand

The national coordinator of the TOS in New Zealand, Mrs Renée Sell, reports having an excellent time at the recent open day held by the HPB Lodge of the TS in Auckland.

“What a wonderful day for TOS to be a part of! This was 'Theosophy in Action' at its best in this annual open-house festival celebrating the ancient wisdom, the unity of all life and spiritual self-transformation. This free event gave members, family and friends an opportunity to explore spirituality and bring community together. Presentations, activities and stalls were enjoyed by all. Here are some photos of the TOS's information and sale stands, its PowerPoint display and the talk given on its projects. We are looking forward already to next year's open day.”



The TOS at the convention of the Theosophical Society in Australia

The TOS in Australia was invited to provide a session during the recent annual convention of the Theosophical Society in Australia, held in Melbourne. The TOS session was well attended by an interested audience.

The National TOS Coordinator, Jean Carroll, spoke about the important role that service plays in a theosophical life. Travis James, a TOS member from Adelaide, then shared his ideas on how the vision of the TOS could be applied to the current 'boat people' issue with which Australia is grappling. Finally, Carolyn Harrod, a TOS member from Brisbane, spoke about several international projects and how they embodied the type of service for which the TOS aims. Throughout the presentations, participants asked a number of insightful questions.

As Jean reflected, one of the benefits was that, "the session introduced some of our TS members to a broader view of the TOS."

The TOS also held its AGM during the national TS convention, allowing TS members to follow what is happening in the TOS, if they wished to.



Jean Carroll



Travis James

The Houston TOS, USA, helping out at a local food bank

Members of the TS and TOS in Houston, USA, recently donated their time to a local Food Bank, a charity that provides donated non-perishable food items to families living in poverty. Each month, the Food Bank sends thousands of food packages to families in need.

In two hours, their group and others prepared 2,500 bags that could provide up to 15,000 meals for poor children who could not provide their own meals in the weekend. Can you imagine packaging 15,360 lbs of rice – just one of their tasks?

Not only did they support a good cause with their much appreciated help, but they had a lot of fun working together.



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Serving communities in the Assam & Arunachal Region

In February, TOS members in Assam and Arunachal Region were welcomed by Sissugram Children's Home, 35 km from the city of Guwahati, where they distributed stationery, fruit, sweets and flip-flop-style sandals for inside wear. Regional TOS President, Mr Jatindra Nath Patowary, reported that the children gave them a warm reception, singing songs and performing dances for their new friends whom they urged to come back as soon as possible.



In April, in cooperation with the National Rural Health Mission, Mr Patowary's team organised medical checks for six or seven villages in the Rangmahal area. Supported by two mobile units fitted with X-ray, ECG and blood testing equipment, doctors and nurses examined around 200 people and distributed free medicines where appropriate. _

Members of the “Mahabahu” TOS group, under the leadership of Mrs Charu Lata Kalita, organised a much appreciated lunch for the medical staff and visiting TOS members.

As is their habit on such occasions of TOS service outreach, Mr Patowary, his Regional Secretary Mr Anil Barua and other TOS and TS associates organised a public meeting to talk about Theosophy and the TOS. He invited all present, particularly the young people, to study theosophical literature and to lead a life in accordance with the principles of Theosophy.

This event attracted keen media coverage.



>TOS e-news 26 June 2013

Service to Kumbha Melā pilgrims

What is the largest religious gathering on earth? Any idea? It is considered to be the Kumbha Melā, a Hindu pilgrimage that takes place every three years in four holy sites in India successively, forming a twelve-year cycle. Each cycle includes a Mahā Kumbha Melā, a gathering of tens of millions who flock to the city of Allahabad over a period of three weeks to bathe at the confluence (Triveni) of three sacred rivers – the Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati.



Allahabad has a fine TS and TOS presence. The members are delighted to help host the pilgrims, particularly those with reduced means. There are six TOS groups scattered around the city. “Seva Sangam” group in Tagore Town is unique in the sense that all the members of the Tagore Town Ladies’ Club are members of the group. There are over a hundred of them, making them the largest and most active group in the region of Uttar Pradesh.

This year in March, they provided *alav* (fire) at times of biting cold. Blankets, shawls and clothes were distributed and tea served to hundreds. One thousand *puri sabji* packets were offered to the needy. At the same time *dana* was distributed to thousands of Siberian birds on the banks of the river as they also are considered guests. Thousands of TS and TOS folders were distributed through book stalls. The team was aided by members of the TS at Anand Lodge, Mohila Dharm Lodge and Sandhyadeep Study Centre.



The city of Allahabad has an interesting history in terms of theosophical work. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, hailed from here. He joined the TS in 1903 at the age of 14 under the inspiration of Mrs Besant and his family provided the building for the Ananda Lodge. More than 75 years ago, well-known TS author, Dr I.K. Taimni, added the library to the lodge. A loved national figure in the TOS, Mr P.S. Mittal, resides in Allahabad. Our current International Vice-President, Mr Mahendra P. Singhal, completed a science degree at Allahabad University before taking a graduate course in civil engineering. The current organising secretary of the Tagore Town TOS group, Mrs Gyan Kumari Ajeet, is a popular Girl Guide leader. Years ago, she received a national award from the President of India for her services to education. She is still serving – she currently runs a school in the lodge building in the name of the TOS.

We wish all members in Allahabad joy in their service endeavours.



>TOS e-news 26 June 2013

Respecting the creatures

Service takes many forms. TS and TOS member Alan Harris, of Tucson, Arizona in the USA, might be said to serve through his poetry. One of the societal evils he helps combat is cruelty toward animals.

Alan was raised in a farming environment near Earlville, Illinois, USA, in which grain crops were grown and cattle, pigs and sheep were raised until they were 'sold.' As a boy he raised ducks, geese, and chickens in the back yard. He didn't think much then about what happened to animals after they were trucked away from the farm. In his early adulthood, he even took a job at a turkey farm.

"At the farm my assignment was to cut off the turkeys' heads with an air-assisted pair of shears," he writes. "I didn't actually kill the turkeys, since they were already dead and gutted by the time they reached me, hanging upside down by their feet on conveyor hooks. I stood beside a big barrel and tossed the severed heads into it. When the barrel became filled with turkey heads, another worker would take it away and set up an empty barrel, and the decapitations would continue all day.

The setup there was like an assembly line (or rather a turkey disassembly line) as the person at each station did the same thing to each turkey carcass that came along. The turkeys were sold 'fresh' in boxes, ready for freezing or cooking.

I worked there only during the pre-Thanksgiving and pre-Christmas seasons that year, when demand for turkey dinners was high. At that time I was desperate for a job, so I set aside any concern about the lives of the turkeys. The pay was humble, as was the job. I imagine my karma for that year was decidedly on the negative side of the balance sheet."



Alan joined the Theosophical Society in 1980 and, a year later, after reading *The Inner Life* by C. W. Leadbeater, he decided to adopt the vegetarian way of life in order not to be part of the karmic chain of killing (or hiring to kill) animals for food. In 2003 he became a vegan, also for ethical reasons, setting aside eggs and dairy products because of their origin in mechanised, unnatural environments.

We are happy to share here a selection of Alan's poems, all expressing respect for animals and their habits. These poems and all Alan's other poems, essays, stories and photo gallery can be seen on his Website entitled *An Everywhere Oasis* at www.alharris.com.

Photo to left: C. W. Leadbeater

Sentence



*Back of our house
a lovable stray pooch,
young and off-white
with random black
Mendelian punctuation,
darts about and sniffs grassy clumps
until, eyeing a soggy tennis ball
wedged under the neighbor's fence,
she plucks it up in her teeth
and prances puppylike for attention
as if mankind needs to please play ball
(has she romped with children
before being dumped out of
their father's midnight-slinking car?),
seeming ignorant or heedless
that ball is not played
where she is going to go --
by way of famishing jaunts
through shrubby neighborhoods,
altercations with kept cats
and with collared mutts,
a trusting ride
in the dogcatcher's van,
and a meager feast or two
before the period
at the end
of her
sentence.*

Animal Tao

*A cat is mostly yin;
of the Cosmos she is the twin.
Like the mysterious Cosmic Laws,
she keeps well hidden her claws
until some urgent necessity.*

*A dog is thoroughly yang,
with his boisterous bark and his fang.
Ignoring the subtler laws
and concealing none of his flaws,
he pursues life and cats with avidity.*

*A dog is always searching,
but a cat is content with perching.
The dog loves to follow his nose,
while the cat simply sits there and -- knows.
Activity ends in tranquillity.*



Tavern Talk



*Did you ever look deeply
into the eye of a chicken?*

*No, you say,
they have
nothing between their eyes
but cartilage,
and you laugh at your little joke.*

*Did you ever look deeply
into the eye of a chicken?*

*Yes, you say, and
it came over and bought
me a drink,
and you laugh some
more.*

***Did you
ever look
deeply into
the eye
of a chicken?***

No, you say, have you?

Yes, I have.

What did you see?

*I saw a light like a little
egg-shaped sun,
and inside it were countless
smaller eggs.*

*It was like touching my eyeball
to a live wire,
and it lasted for only a split second,
but I saw infinity in the eye of a chicken.*

*Yeah, I saw that once in a waitress's eye,
you say with a snicker.*

*Same infinity I saw,
only I didn't have to leave a tip.*

Interpreting Geese

*A flock of Canada geese
flies overhead,
honking whenever
honks are needed.*

*One goose veers
away on its own
to the left.
Another splits right.*

*Zen awareness might
say, "Ah, yes: the
goose and the goose
and the flock. This is."*

*A philosopher might
see three divergent
realities coming
into being above.*

*An ornithologist
might ahem and
expertly affirm, "Yes,
geese will do that."*

*According to a poet:
"Feather-flung loners,
ecstatic with freedom, fly
straight to their unknowns."*

Hunters say blam.



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"At the farm my assignment was to cut off the turkeys' heads with an air-assisted pair of shears," he writes. "I didn't actually kill the turkeys, since they were already dead and gutted by the time they reached me, hanging upside down by their feet on conveyor hooks. I stood beside a big barrel and tossed the severed heads into it. When the barrel became filled with turkey heads, another worker would take it away and set up an empty barrel, and the decapitations would continue all day.

The setup there was like an assembly line (or rather a turkey disassembly line) as the person at each station did the same thing to each turkey carcass that came along. The turkeys were sold 'fresh' in boxes, ready for freezing or cooking.

I worked there only during the pre-Thanksgiving and pre-Christmas seasons that year, when demand for turkey dinners was high. At that time I was desperate for a job, so I set aside any concern about the lives of the turkeys. The pay was humble, as was the job. I imagine my karma for that year was decidedly on the negative side of the balance sheet."



Alan joined the Theosophical Society in 1980 and, a year later, after reading *The Inner Life* by C. W. Leadbeater, he decided to adopt the vegetarian way of life in order not to be part of the karmic chain of killing (or hiring to kill) animals for food. In 2003 he became a vegan, also for ethical reasons, setting aside eggs and dairy products because of their origin in mechanised, unnatural environments.

We are happy to share here a selection of Alan's poems, all expressing respect for animals and their habits. These poems and all Alan's other poems, essays, stories and photo gallery can be seen on his Website entitled *An Everywhere Oasis* at www.alharris.com.

Photo to left: C. W. Leadbeater

Sentence



*Back of our house
a lovable stray pooch,
young and off-white
with random black
Mendelian punctuation,
darts about and sniffs grassy clumps
until, eyeing a soggy tennis ball
wedged under the neighbor's fence,
she plucks it up in her teeth
and prances puppylike for attention
as if mankind needs to please play ball
(has she romped with children
before being dumped out of
their father's midnight-slinking car?),
seeming ignorant or heedless
that ball is not played
where she is going to go --
by way of famishing jaunts
through shrubby neighborhoods,
altercations with kept cats
and with collared mutts,
a trusting ride
in the dogcatcher's van,
and a meager feast or two
before the period
at the end
of her
sentence.*

Animal Tao

*A cat is mostly yin;
of the Cosmos she is the twin.
Like the mysterious Cosmic Laws,
she keeps well hidden her claws
until some urgent necessity.*

*A dog is thoroughly yang,
with his boisterous bark and his fang.
Ignoring the subtler laws
and concealing none of his flaws,
he pursues life and cats with avidity.*

*A dog is always searching,
but a cat is content with perching.
The dog loves to follow his nose,
while the cat simply sits there and -- knows.
Activity ends in tranquillity.*



Tavern Talk



*Did you ever look deeply
into the eye of a chicken?*

*No, you say,
they have
nothing between their eyes
but cartilage,
and you laugh at your little joke.*

*Did you ever look deeply
into the eye of a chicken?*

*Yes, you say, and
it came over and bought
me a drink,
and you laugh some
more.*

***Did you
ever look
deeply into
the eye
of a chicken?***

No, you say, have you?

Yes, I have.

What did you see?

*I saw a light like a little
egg-shaped sun,
and inside it were countless
smaller eggs.*

*It was like touching my eyeball
to a live wire,
and it lasted for only a split second,
but I saw infinity in the eye of a chicken.*

*Yeah, I saw that once in a waitress's eye,
you say with a snicker.*

*Same infinity I saw,
only I didn't have to leave a tip.*

Interpreting Geese

*A flock of Canada geese
flies overhead,
honking whenever
honks are needed.*

*One goose veers
away on its own
to the left.
Another splits right.*

*Zen awareness might
say, "Ah, yes: the
goose and the goose
and the flock. This is."*

*A philosopher might
see three divergent
realities coming
into being above.*

*An ornithologist
might ahem and
expertly affirm, "Yes,
geese will do that."*

*According to a poet:
"Feather-flung loners,
ecstatic with freedom, fly
straight to their unknowns."*

Hunters say blam.

