



Issue 29 – December 2013

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

What a year 2013 has been! Members have successfully planned and implemented a wide variety of projects to improve the lives of people in their communities, to alleviate the suffering of animals and to raise awareness about important social issues. We have held an International TOS Conference that not only generated ideas for our Plan of Action for the next five years but also joyfully connected members from around the world.

We have been saddened by the loss of Mrs Radha Burnier, the International President of the TOS, whom we salute below and will honour in a special edition of our newsletter.

As the year comes to a close, the super-typhoon in the Philippines, that killed well over 10,000 Filipinos, has provided us with an opportunity to work together to support our sisters and brothers in that country. Our hearts go out to the Filipino community and we are thankful that Rosel Doval Santos, Vic Hao Chin and their TOS and TS team on the spot have a strong record of effective long term action and can be trusted to ensure that every penny of our donations will be used for the relief work.

Hearty thanks to TOS groups and members around the world for their outpouring of concern. So far, donations are on their way from the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Italy, Germany, Singapore, India, Spain, England and elsewhere. The TOS team on the ground is doing a sterling job organising and delivering emergency relief through members close to the areas affected. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Diana at tosinternational@wanadoo.fr

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

Geoffrey Harrod is the International TOS Webmaster

Carolyn Harrod is the past National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia

Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The TOS salutes Radha Burnier

The International President of the Theosophical Order of Service passed away on October 31, 2013, two weeks short of her 90th birthday. We honour her many decades of outstanding public and private work in the fields of education for the needy, preservation of the environment and animal welfare. We salute the courageous positions she took on a great number of contemporary issues of concern: inhumanity, violence, exploitation of the vulnerable, corruption, the abuse of women, vivisection, the pollution of the environment, nuclear weapons and genetic engineering, to name a few.

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An interview with the remarkable Fareeda Amir

Mrs Fareeda Amir retired this year as Honorary General Secretary of the TOS in Pakistan after 17 years of devoted service. "Devoted" is an understatement in qualifying her work. It would be better to say "devoted, efficient, loving, gracious and courageous" service!

In taking responsibility for the TOS, Fareeda and her husband Aman accepted the challenge of following in the footsteps of the highly respected and nationally known Mrs Gool Minwalla. They have helped the TOS continue her outstanding work during a violent and frightening period in Pakistan's history with which we are all somewhat familiar through the media. Along with their staff, they have ensured that Pakistan remains one of the most active and vibrant sections of the TOS worldwide.

It is our pleasure to share an interview with Fareeda in which she relates her rich experiences along the Way.

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Insights through service

Anne Johnstone has been a member of the TS since 1982 and is a trained nurse. With an interest in group work and science, she left her homeland of New Zealand in 2001 to help at the Krotona School of Theosophy for three months. By a stroke of luck, she received a green card through a lottery system to reside in the US. Twelve years later, she is still living in the Krotona Institute community and is part of the school staff. Her nursing knowledge, as well as her increasing familiarity with the US health system and her respect for complementary health approaches, has been useful. Anne tries to help out with the gardening at Krotona and walks many miles each day. She recently started learning to sing with more emphasis on diction! Here she reflects on insights she has gained over the years as an end-of-life midwife.

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New Spanish language TOS newsletter

We are happy to announce that our Spanish language coordinator, Fernando Pérez Martín, has started an international TOS e-newsletter in Spanish for all our members in Spain and Latin America. The first issue appeared in September and the next will appear when Fernando has received enough service-related news and articles to fill its pages. To your keyboards, linguists! In the meantime, if you would like to receive the October issue and those that follow, write to Fernando: ste_rakoczy@yahoo.es

Nos sentimos felices al anunciar que nuestro Coordinador en lengua española, Fernando Pérez Martín, ha comenzado a editar un Boletín internacional de la OTS en español para todos nuestros miembros en España y en América Latina. El primer número apareció en Septiembre y el próximo saldrá en cuanto Fernando haya recibido bastantes noticias sobre servicio y artículos, para completar las páginas del Boletín. ¡A ponernos a escribir! Mientras aparece el siguiente número, si se desea recibir el número de Septiembre y los siguientes, escribid a Fernando: ste_rakoczy@yahoo.es



Working at the Golden Link College – the experience of a lifetime

Michelle Mitchell, a TS member sometimes based in Adelaide, Australia, recently worked as a volunteer with staff and students of the Golden Link College in the Philippines. She writes of her experience, "The young people at the Golden Link College are different from any other young people I have ever worked with or met. I experienced an amazingly evolved emotional intelligence in these youngsters. They are gentle, respectful and genuinely interested in the wellbeing of those in their company. They are centred, grounded and beautiful from the inside to outside. They display no fear of authority, no tardiness, no unruliness. There is a willingness to be present and to learn, a delightful sense of playfulness and a total acceptance of and trust in others.

"I believe that Vic Hao Chin and his amazing teachers and staff at Golden Link are responsible for these results. They themselves embody the qualities they seek to nurture in their students."

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Why we should test on humans not animals

Animal testing is unethical, inhumane and completely unnecessary. With so many alternatives available to us, how can we justify the poisoning, burning, shocking and killing of more than 100 million animals each year causing them unimaginable pain, fear and loneliness?

Thousands of animals suffer and die every day in laboratories around the world, but it doesn't have to be that way. If we truly want to improve our lives and the lives of others, we need to cut out the use of animals altogether.

More and more scientists are taking a hard look at the relevance of animal experiments for human diseases and improving our lives. The evidence is showing that we can actually get much better answers about human health and develop much more effective therapies if we use human based tests instead. _

[Read more...](#)



Congratulations, Ananya

This year one of the members of our international team of TOS volunteers graduated with a Master's degree in mental health counselling. She says that her theosophical philosophy is immensely helpful as a background in this new work. Ananya Rajan, a board member of the TOS in America and current editor of its publications, plans to do her best to assist those who come to her to recognise and develop their divine potential, no matter what their outward circumstances.

In 2010, Ananya published a book entitled *Get Real! Fighting the Mythic Woman, Finding Your Authentic Self* to facilitate self-awareness. The book also incorporates theosophical ideas.

[Read more...](#)



TOS news from around the world

In this issue you'll find news from the TOS in Chennai, India, about their recent free medical camp and jumble sale and you'll read about the TOS presence at the Theosophical Society's Indo-Pacific Federation Conference in Bali. There's also news about how the Denver TOS in the USA provided its community with an entertaining yet seriously useful look at end-of-life planning. _

[Read more...](#)



Good news from India

"In an atmosphere where every morning, our newspapers greet us with stories of girls being tormented, raped, killed or treated like a doormat in one way or another, trust India's 'village republics' to bring in some good news from time to time," writes *The Hindu* newspaper.

"One such village in southern Rajasthan's Rajsamand district is quietly practising its own, homegrown brand of Eco-feminism and achieving spectacular results.

For the last several years, Piplantri village panchayat (council) has been saving girl children and increasing the green cover in and around it at the same time." _

[Read more...](#)

What's new on the International TOS website?

Our [Latest News](#) is a tribute to our International President, Radha Burnier, on her passing to the higher life on 31 October, 2013.

The new [Featured Article](#) is by Dorothy Bell. It is taken from a talk, *Service as Sacred Labour*, that she gave at the International TOS Conference in July 2013. In it she discusses four issues related to seeing service as 'Sacred Labour':

- Acknowledging the divinity and sacredness of our inner nature
- Recognising difficulties we encounter in its expression
- Choosing the path of self-transformation and purification of action
- Identifying the distinctive characteristics of a theosophical new world server – a way of being.



In our [Featured Project](#) we bring news of a vocational skills training programme organised by Usha Shah for ladies in Nairobi. They learnt manicure, pedicure and hairdressing techniques, all of which are jobs that can be done in their own homes, enabling women to be present for their children, while earning money to contribute to their financial independence and sense of dignity and self-respect.

You'll also find additions to the TOS photo gallery and the expanded *Inspiration* section. We look forward to adding more new stories and videos over the coming year. Go to <http://international.theoservice.org>



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. He challenges us to ask deep questions about our attitudes to, and relationship with, animals. We brought you some of Alan's poems in June and share another four here....

[Read more...](#)



How our planet's climate is changing

The Earth's climate has changed throughout history. Just in the last 650,000 years there have been seven cycles of glacial advance and retreat, with the abrupt end of the last ice age about 7,000 years ago marking the beginning of the modern climate era — and of human civilisation. Most of these climate changes are attributed to very small variations in Earth's orbit that change the amount of solar energy our planet receives.

The current warming trend is of particular significance because most of it is very likely human-induced and proceeding at a rate that is unprecedented in the past 1,300 years.

Earth-orbiting satellites and other technological advances have enabled scientists to see the big picture, collecting many different types of information about our planet and its climate on a global scale. Studying these climate data collected over many years reveals the signals of a changing climate.

NASA provides an amazing 26-second animation depicting how temperatures around the globe have warmed since 1880. That year is what scientists call the beginning of the "modern record." [Read more and watch the video...](#)



Beauty pause

Enjoy this beautiful collection of photographs from nature.

[View them here...](#)

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To be added to the mailing list click this link: [SUBSCRIBE](#)

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The subscribe and unsubscribe forms send you an email to make sure it was really you and require a confirmation in order to satisfy the anti-spam laws. For that reason also, there is a password entry. Just type in the name and password shown.

The TOS salutes Radha Burnier



The International President of the Theosophical Order of Service passed away on October 31, 2013, two weeks short of her 90th birthday. We honour her many decades of outstanding public and private work in the fields of education for the needy, preservation of the environment and animal welfare. We salute the courageous positions she took on a great number of contemporary issues of concern: inhumanity, violence, exploitation of the vulnerable, corruption, the abuse of women, vivisection, the pollution of the environment, nuclear weapons and genetic engineering, to name a few.

Radhaji's bracing "On the Watch-Tower" commentaries regarding social problems have often been reproduced in TOS publications and their collection in a book, *The World Around Us*, published in 2009, was warmly welcomed by TOS members. Radhaji was extremely well informed on current events and was prompt, bold and incisive in denouncing unethical political, scientific and economic practices.

We will shortly publish a special e-newsletter on Radhaji's achievements in the humanitarian service field particularly within the TOS and TS. It will also contain stories of her compassion and generosity in the private sphere of which people knew little. We wish her Godspeed in her onward journey.

For a very informative and readable account of Radha's life prepared by the "TS Wiki" team based at the TS in America, click here:

http://www.tswiki.net/mywiki/index.php?title=Radha_Burnier

An interview with the remarkable Fareeda Amir



Retiring Honorary General Secretary of the TOS in Pakistan, Fareeda Amir.

Mrs Fareeda Amir retired this year as Honorary General Secretary of the TOS in Pakistan after 17 years of devoted service. 'Devoted' is an understatement in qualifying her work. It would be better to say "devoted, efficient, loving, gracious and courageous" service!

In taking responsibility for the TOS, Fareeda and her husband Aman accepted the challenge of following in the footsteps of the highly respected and nationally known Mrs Gool Minwalla. They have helped the TOS continue her outstanding work during a violent and frightening period in Pakistan's history with which we are all somewhat familiar through the media. Along with their staff, they have ensured that Pakistan remains one of the most active and vibrant sections of the TOS worldwide.

It is our pleasure to share an interview with Fareeda in which she relates her rich experiences along the Way.

TOS: Dear Fareeda, You and your brother, Dara Mirza, were raised in a theosophical family, weren't you?

Fareeda: Yes we were. Our parents met each other through activities at the Youth Lodge in Bombay. Both our paternal and maternal grandfathers were members of the TS. On my father's side, our great grandfather was a TS member too. So, I guess that makes us fourth generation Theosophists.

Fareeda's brother, Dara Mirza (right), was for many years TS Presidential Agent in Pakistan. Dara gave lectures and conducted weekly study classes at the TS in Karachi. He lived his life in accordance with his deep commitment to Universal Brotherhood, and his altruistic life style and liberal views unfortunately made him a target. He was kidnapped and murdered in 2007.



TOS: Did you meet Gool Minwalla as a child? Were you in awe of her? What were the qualities that enabled her to achieve so much in the way of social and educational reform in Pakistan?

Fareeda: In the days before independence in 1947, Karachi was a relatively small town, with a close knit cosmopolitan community. My family and the Minwalla family collaborated regularly at the TS and had friendly contact outside the TS as well. Gool Aunty's (as we called her) sons, my brother Dara and my cousins were all of the same age, and were good friends. In later years, one of my cousins married Gool Aunty's niece.

During World War II, my mother and Gool Aunty attended courses conducted by Dr Maria Montessori in innovative approaches to teaching.

The classes were held at the Theosophical Society building in Karachi, and there is a plaque there to commemorate the event.



Children of the Montessori School that operates in the building of the TS in Karachi sing their national anthem.

Gool had a dynamic and forceful personality and was a brilliant speaker. She felt passionately that the spiritual path was not something that should be open just to the well-educated who have enough leisure to read, reflect and meditate. For her, education was a key to social transformation and spiritual progress for all. She was instrumental in advancing the rights of the poor and of women in a surprising number of domains.

You ask if I was in awe of Gool Aunty. I would think that she inspired love and affection rather than awe. I was always aware of what the TOS was doing, but it was only in my teens that I started to go along with my mother and help out with the work as a volunteer. Gool Aunty was always thinking of ways to promote the TOS work and take it forward. It was a great privilege to see her approach to things and her skills in handling situations. She nominated me to be Honorary General Secretary in 1996, and told me that she would not take no for an answer when I expressed doubts that I might not be able to handle the work. My husband Aman and I learnt a lot from her and so did my brother Dara whom she was grooming to take over the TS work.



Mrs Gool Minwalla, 1913–2002

TOS: *What was your first task in the TOS?*

Fareeda: When I started volunteering at the TOS, my first job was to translate from Urdu into English the letters that students had written to their sponsors. In those days the TOS was handling the considerable educational work of 'Save the Children Fund' in Pakistan, and all the sponsors were from the UK. They sometimes sent photographs of themselves to their students which caused much excitement. It was the first contact the children and their families had ever had with people from another culture and race. They were fascinated by the light hair and eyes, and the photographs were shown to friends and neighbours with an element of pride! One young boy said that his ambition was to do well in his studies so that he could afford to go and visit his sponsors, and thank them personally for their help.

In later years, the TOS started its own educational sponsorship programme, and has been instrumental in educating many hundreds of young girls and boys from primary school right up to university level. We can say with satisfaction that there are many young men and particularly many young women in the work force today, who have achieved their position as a result of TOS educational sponsorship. They have become fine young progressive citizens, which is what the country needs!

The TOS in Pakistan decided long ago that the only way forward in violence-torn countries like ours is to educate its young, particularly women. We encourage them to go on to tertiary education. Many live in conditions of abject poverty but life will not be the same for them as it is for their mothers. They have hope. They are bright and talented and they know it. They play an important role in their homes in steering their siblings and parents. They are aware of what is going on in the world; of the pace of progress elsewhere and they want to be a part of that forward-moving world community. We are inundated with applications from young girls and have to maintain long waiting lists while we look for sponsors.

TOS: *What has been the hardest thing about Aman's and your volunteer work within both the TS and TOS?*

Fareeda: Overcoming numerous obstacles such as convincing parents that they should educate their daughters. Most parents requested that we help to educate their sons and were indifferent about their daughters. But the greatest obstacle was fear and a sense of responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the children, teachers and our office staff... Never knowing when violence will break out right outside our TS building in central Karachi where a lot of our educational work takes place, and where our Montessori school is located. Fear for the TS itself. Fear for the safety of our extensive Library. Fear for all our lives. And then at a deeper level, there were the dark questions that came up about human nature, terrorism and the future of the country. It is easy to remain optimistic when one isn't facing human cruelty in the raw. It takes a lot to 'keep on keeping on' in our service work when we are confronted directly with fanaticism and ruthlessness.



Aman Amir, like his wife Fareeda, was deeply involved in the administration of both the TS and TOS in Karachi over a long period. For the TOS's tribute to Aman at his passing in January 2013, see the March 2013 issue of this e-newsletter: http://international.theoservice.org/e-news/25/en25_vale_AmanAmir.htm

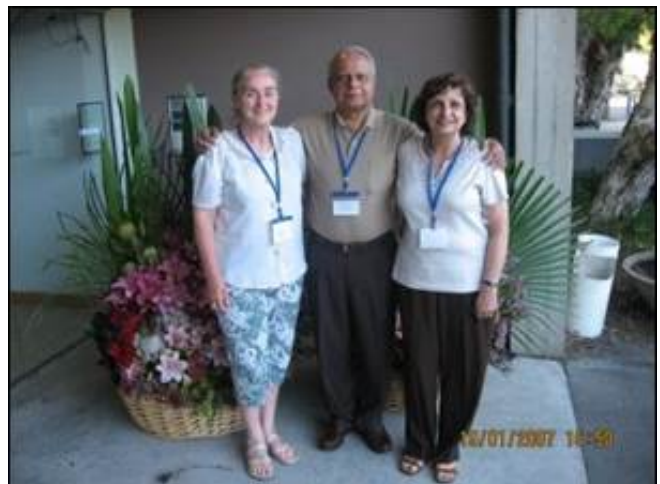
TOS: *What gave Aman and you the strength to carry on in fact?*

Fareeda: The conviction that every human being deserves to be given the opportunity to strive for betterment. First of all materially, and then spiritually. It is hard to tread the spiritual path while coping with poverty, hunger and disease. The only way out of this vicious cycle is education, as that opens the door of opportunity for change, for growth.

At a more practical level, I have to say that our Karachi team has also been able to carry on because of the loyalty of TOS members overseas, particularly Australia, New Zealand and Italy. After the terrorist attacks in the USA of September 11, 2001, some donors simply stopped supporting our educational work and even ceased communicating. Thanks to the confidence of our TOS friends, we have been able to carry on successfully. Their brotherliness is deeply felt and appreciated.



The TOS in Australia in particular, but also in New Zealand and Italy, have been inspired by Aman and Fareeda to donate funds to support the running of several of the twelve "home schools" set up by the TOS in Pakistan. Female teachers run literacy classes in their own homes. They go right into the homes of families in their areas to encourage the parents to allow their daughters to come to school, as well as their sons. The TOS in Australia recently set up a custodial account in Sydney for incoming



Here we see Aman and Fareeda with Vicki Jerome who looks after the educational sponsorships covered by TOS members in New Zealand.

donations from TOS groups around the world.

TOS: *What have been some of the high points of your work within the TS and TOS?*

Fareeda: The amazing success stories of our students. A few years ago we were thrilled to know that one of our students was among those who topped their class in medical school. She became a Bachelor of Medicine while her mother was semi-literate. We have seen so many young men and women graduating with university degrees. Our students have studied medicine, engineering, accountancy, nursing, and physiotherapy, arts, science and information technology – an amazing achievement from the children of parents who have had a very rudimentary education or no education at all. Seeing the flowering of these children into fine young citizens who care about the state of their country and their fellow humans has been the driving force that enabled us to go on with the work irrespective of the numerous hurdles and the ever-present fear.

TOS: *Dear Fareeda, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all your husband, Aman, your brother, Dara, and you have done for the TOS and TS in Pakistan and we wish you all the very best in your retirement. We also send hearty good wishes to the new Honorary General Secretary of the TOS in Pakistan, Mrs Gull Afroze.*



Insights through service

Anne Johnstone has been a member of the TS since 1982 and is a trained nurse. With an interest in group work and science, she left her homeland of New Zealand in 2001 to help at the Krotona School of Theosophy for three months. By a stroke of luck, she received a green card through a lottery system to reside in the US. Twelve years later, she is still living in the Krotona Institute community and is part of the school staff. Her nursing knowledge, as well as her increasing familiarity with the US health system and her respect for complementary health approaches has been useful. Anne tries to help out with the gardening at Krotona and walks many miles each day. She recently started learning to sing with more emphasis on diction! Here she reflects on insights she has gained over the years as an end-of-life midwife.

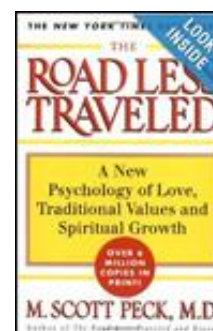


Over the years, some of my most life changing experiences have been when working with others as a helper in a professional capacity. It will easily be seen that they are in essence ones that anyone can have anywhere, at any time – in the grocery store, at a neighbour's place, or during a TS branch or study group meeting. We could call it being a midwife to a situation.

I was a nurse in a mental health facility and during the holiday time, a female patient in her sixties was suffering agitation and generally unable to look after herself. She seemed so disturbed that it was unlikely her daughter would be able to take her on leave for a few hours over the holiday period.

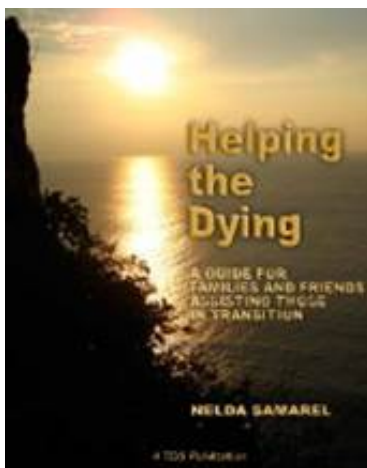
One afternoon as I was working, the woman came up to me distressed about her washing or how to do her washing. While I don't remember exactly what I said, I remember it was a straightforward reply. Within seconds the woman suddenly changed. She somehow began to understand what was happening to her and seemed to function much better for the rest of the evening. The next day she was able to be out with her family and her condition improved so much she was eventually discharged from the facility and able to go back to work. Weeks later, I met her in the store where she worked and she commented to me that she would never forget how that brief conversation had changed her. Now, some thirty years later, I have not forgotten either. With complete respect for her as a rational, normal human being and with the confidence that she would be able to understand and cope, I focused my full attention on her. This intention gave her the confidence she needed to believe in her own abilities.

Another time, when I was working in an acute medical unit during the night shift, I met a young woman with, I was told, a life-threatening lung infection. Intensive Care was prepared to admit her when needed as there was the chance that the infection would take her life. On the first night of meeting her, there was an unusual brightness to her voice. I walked out of the room convinced that she would be fine during the night. Over the next few nights, many conversations ensued about our interests and the books we had read. One book we discussed was *The Road Less Traveled* by M. Scott Peck and how helpful we both found it.



The next evening, as I was giving her intravenous medications, she shared that just before her hospitalisation she had seen an image of what she perceived as a Christ-like figure. She soon realised that she was quite sick and summoned medical help. At the hospital, while she was being X-rayed, she felt herself move into another realm. She stated that it was a nice, comfortable and warm feeling, but she knew she still had work to do. I was somewhat struck by how this woman was testing me to see if I could handle what she was sharing. This was before Near Death Experiences were widely known or spoken about. After the disclosure, the relationship felt different. She had shared something very private so there seemed to be a deeper understanding between us. This 'differentness' in a relationship after disclosure is apparently quite common. It seemed that through a common exchange such as talking about books we had both read, she felt safe to disclose information affirming that her encounter was part of a transformative process. She seemed to realise that her illness wasn't just a physical experience, but something more.

Working with folks who are dying also provides an opportunity to be a 'midwife' to a life changing experience. In fact end-of-life



midwifery, or Death Midwifery as it is referred to nowadays, is becoming a more widely known skill amongst those working in the healthcare field. The role of the midwife can vary from providing resources to family members who may not be aware of them, to listening to concerns of the patient or the family members about the dying process. Giving respite to caregivers is also a major role. It is important to be aware of the cultural concerns the dying might have as well as making sure the environment is conducive to their wishes. All this may include tying up loose ends so the person transitioning can focus on the process of letting go. The main goal is to meet the expressed needs and desires of the dying.

This may be about helping them move from a hospital to their last few days in their home or to move to be with relatives. On one occasion I recall, some members of my local theosophical branch were caring for an elder who had no relatives and was in need of a place in a home to live. The family, who had not known him for long, offered him a comfortable room in the midst of family life in their home. We were able to ask the local nurses to attend to his personal care needs while the family provided physical and spiritual support, thus facilitating a smoother passing for the dying man.



Another time, amongst the bustle of a busy hospital unit, a relative of mine shared that she was scared to die. She kept saying, "It was a dreadful place and you get a hard time over there." I was consistent in my approach, saying that what she was seeing now was what she would get. I shared my conviction that she would encounter whatever she envisioned habitually and that by thinking differently she could achieve an entirely different experience. Sometime later, she told me that she had let "them" know she was ready to go.

After she passed, I wondered how many times I had missed out on such gems amidst the cacophony of a place where many folks are coming to grips with dying or an adjustment to a change in their way of being. It made me realise how important being a midwife can be.

Sometimes just being fully present, in a calm focused way, can prove useful to move people through an issue whether it is a mental illness, a life-threatening illness, or death itself.

Working at the Golden Link College – the experience of a lifetime

Michelle Mitchell, a TS member sometimes based in Adelaide, Australia, writes an open letter about her experience of working with staff and students of the Golden Link College in the Philippines.



A few years ago I decided that I no longer wanted to live the 'daily grind' in Australia and wait 15 years for my 'retirement' days to experience parts of the world I had not been brave enough yet to venture into. Instead, I wanted to travel and offer my skills where they could be made use of – wherever in the world that may be. I had no idea where I might end up, and I certainly had no idea of the rewards that awaited me, such as the one I write about today. I have learned to travel 'light' with just 7kgs (15 pounds), and I travel with an attitude of adventure (which luckily, doesn't weigh anything!).

I am a coach, counsellor and personal development workshop facilitator. I have also worked in child protection, special education, as a community tutor and as a foster parent. In addition to parenting a daughter now 32 years old, I have also been step-parent to two children. Armed with this varied experience, in August 2012 I set out for the Golden Link College (GLC) in Caloocan City, Philippines, after meeting Vic Hao Chin at the TS World Congress in Rome in mid-2010.

I arrived just a few days after the clean-up of a typhoon and the streets were piled with muddy rubbish and recently unclogged drain refuse. Houses and businesses had been flooded, including the house where I stayed with other TS members. Somehow, Rekha Nahar, the Administrator of the GLC and her fellow Manila TS members had restored the house to a comfortable living space. Rekha is tireless in her work and she ensured that I was wonderfully looked after during my stay, fed with nourishing vegetarian meals, and safely transported wherever I needed to go. The house where we stayed was just around the corner from TS HQ, and so I was able to attend most stimulating discussions and get to know some very friendly and welcoming Theosophists. I was honoured to lead a one-day participative workshop for them: *Design Your Life*. I was also invited to other TS Lodges to give talks (*Ten Steps to Success* and *The Poverty of The West – Loneliness*.)

For the few weeks that I was at Golden Link College, I held interactive sessions and talks with College students and staff on topics such as: decision-making; life design; how beliefs affect our decision-making; replacing erroneous beliefs with ones that serve us; values prioritisation and goal-setting. The classes that I conducted with students were mainly the older students (15-17 years). Vic Hao Chin and I taught one class together.



Michelle Mitchell with GLC students

The young people at the Golden Link College (it is now a College, previously a School) are different from any other young people I have ever worked with or met. I experienced an amazingly evolved emotional intelligence in these youngsters. They are gentle, respectful and genuinely interested in the wellbeing of those in their company. They are centred, grounded and beautiful from the inside to outside. They display no fear of authority, no tardiness, no unruliness. There is a willingness to be present and to learn, a delightful sense of playfulness and a total acceptance of and trust in others.

I believe that Vic Hao Chin and his amazing teachers and staff at Golden Link are responsible for these results. They themselves embody the qualities they

seek to nurture in their students. They love and cherish the young people in their care. They are genuinely kind and concerned for each other and for all others, including visitors.

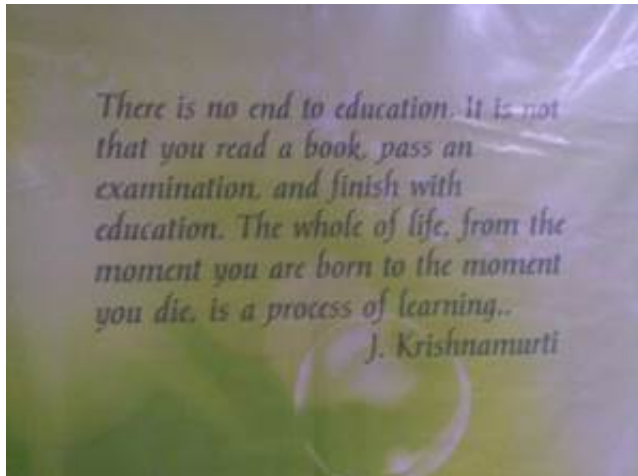
They are gently loving and openhearted. Teachers in The Philippines are amongst the lowest paid in the world, yet the output of the GLC teachers is superior to anything I can imagine in any industry, company or government in so-called 'advanced' countries.



Left: Michelle with GLC teachers

Consider this ...you have a favourite Aunt and Uncle. Whenever you visit them, you know you are loved, you know that they will give you something lovely to eat and drink, and you know they want to see you and help you with anything that you may need. You feel welcome and wanted. You know in your heart that whatever happens to you, they are there for you, and there is nothing temporary about their caring and warmth towards you. This is what it feels like to be in the company of Golden Link teachers and the young people they teach.

In such a special environment, employing mainstream teachers who have had regular training means that they have to 'unlearn' many 'regular' teaching habits. As the College has 'grown up', it has been able to start employing those who were themselves students at GLC and are familiar with its teaching methods. This is part of the function of the tertiary section of this educational establishment.



Posters displayed on the school walls

At Golden Link College, I met an amazing TS woman, Cora Ponteres from Bohol (another island in the Philippines). Cora had decided that Golden Link College is such a wonderful place that she told Vic Hao Chin that she wanted to set up a school where she lives. Cora has done this! Starting up a School is an enormous feat. Cora is now School Directress at Golden Link Bohol Campus. The School opened in April this year (2013) and already has more than 120 students between the ages of 3-8 years.

I am not the only person from Australia who has experienced the GLC atmosphere. TS Member Gerard Brennan has been going there for years. Gerard is a high school teacher who, in our Australian school holidays, funds his own way to the Philippines to teach the young people at the GLC. I talked at length with Gerard in 2010 and once I had talked with him, I just knew that I would go there one day.



From left to right at back: GLC Kindy teacher, Michelle Mitchell and Cora Ponteres

How I wish that there were more Golden Link Colleges in the world. With their interpersonal skills and generosity of spirit, these young people will surely influence and bring about a better quality of life for those who are lucky enough to be associated with them in their personal lives, in their families and in their

communities.



Above: Michelle leading a discussion with GLC students

Left: Student poster displayed on school wall

Close to my last day, the College put on a two day concert. Parents and friends were invited. Near the end of the first day, the students, without warning, asked me to come to the centre of the stage. They sang to me, danced for me, and recited prose to me. They gave me loving notes, cards and letters. They also gave me gifts that were useful and meaningful. It was the effort and generosity of spirit that shone through as they did things for me that made me feel special and appreciated. It was also then that I realised why they had taught me a national dance (dancing over sticks that are constantly moved by the people at either end of them), and yes, I was invited to dance 'with the sticks'. I must say that the rehearsal went much better than the 'performance'.

That evening, I attended a dinner at the College with the teachers. I took the opportunity to say how much I had enjoyed their company and support during my stay. One special moment during that dinner was when the College Principal, Eiren Ayuino, looked at me gently with her beautiful eyes and said: "I want to sing to you – not because I have been asked, but because I want to" and proceeded to sing to me very sweetly. Magical moments such as these will stay in my heart forever.

I was amazed at how appreciative the students at GLC were that I had come to share my Australian culture and personal wisdom with them. There were times at Golden Link College when I wondered if I really had anything to teach there. As it turns out, it was I who learned a great deal from them. I was humbled and grateful to have visited and worked with these incredible young people and their teachers.



GLC students on stage

Janice Gapaz is the Student Affairs Officer at GLC. Janice ensured that my everyday needs at the College were taken care of – that there was always a teacher or a student available to help me find my way, or to see to my needs. Together, we lunched at the College every day. Janice was a most pleasant companion. I am grateful to have been in such fine company.

I took many, many photos while I was at GLC, and every now and then, when I look over them, I am re-humanised, and I know once again that there is a special place on this planet where people are always kind to each other and are willing to learn and share, to be present for each other and to just 'be' the love that they are.

I feel truly blessed to have had this 'rich' experience in a place where money and opportunity are often scarce in a way that we just have not experienced in 'the West'.



Left to right: School Dean, Dr Aaron Antonio, Michelle Mitchell and Vic Hao Chin

Wealth truly is about the giving and sharing amongst people – and I was lucky enough to experience that every day at The Golden Link College in the Philippines.

Thank You Vic, Rekha, Cora, Eiren, Janice, GLC teachers and your beautiful students.

With love - Michelle Mitchell

For information on the Golden Link College's approach to education and its methods of conveying theosophical ideas to students from pre-school to tertiary level, go to our website here:

<http://international.theoservice.org/articles/201110-glc-theosophy.html>

Why we should test on humans not animals

This article by Abigail Geer was published in November, 2013 on <http://www.care2.com>



Animal testing is unethical, inhumane and completely unnecessary. With so many alternatives available to us, how can we justify the poisoning, burning, shocking and killing of more than 100 million animals each year causing them unimaginable pain, fear and loneliness?

Thousands of animals suffer and die every day in laboratories around the world, but it doesn't have to be that way. If we truly want to improve our lives and the lives of others, we need to cut out the use of animals altogether.

Why Animal Testing Doesn't Work

More and more scientists are taking a hard look at the relevance of animal experiments for human diseases and improving our lives. The evidence is showing that we can actually get much better answers about human health and develop much more effective therapies if we use human based tests instead. Some of the main reasons animal testing is ineffective are:

- Animals are not little humans, and although we might share most of our genes with other mammals, our physiology and the way our genes actually function are critically different.
- Animals don't suffer from human diseases and the longer we waste trying to recreate these illnesses in animals, rather than studying their human form, the less chance we will have of understanding and curing them.
- The distress that laboratory animals are forced to endure has been proven to cause unpredictable changes in neurochemistry, genetic expression and nerve regeneration, leading to unreliable and ineffective results.
- 9 out of 10 drugs that appear promising in animal studies go on to fail in human clinical trials because it is not possible to accurately predict how they will behave in people.
- Relying on animal experimentation in some cases impedes and delays discovery of drugs and procedures that may be beneficial to humans because they fail in animal testing.

Cruelty Free Alternatives to Animal Testing

Nearly 100 alternatives to animal testing have been discovered, many of which have proven highly effective, highlighting the fact that there is absolutely no need to continue this barbaric and archaic practice. Here are just some of the viable alternatives :

In-Vitro – The National Academy of Sciences concluded in 2007 that scientific progress was such that they would “transform toxicity testing from a system based on whole-animal testing to one based primarily on in-vitro methods.”

Organs-on-a-Chip – Instead of conducting toxicity tests, drug tests and disease research on live animals, Harvard's Wyass Institute has devised an effective organ-on-a-chip process in which human cells are used to create mini organ simulations.

Human Brain Imaging – Advances in brain scanning and imaging techniques mean that it's now possible to collect a wealth of usable data and statistics which is far more useful than the questionable data collected from cutting into the brains of monkeys, cats and rats.

Human Blood Testing – Instead of killing hundreds of thousands of rabbits each year in “pyrogen” tests, scientists can now test for fever-causing contaminants in medicines by using human blood samples.

Microdosing – When test patients are given a microdose of a drug which is well within safe limits, advanced imaging techniques can be used to detect the way the body breaks down the substances.

Many people believe that animals are here for humans to use, and even if we have to sacrifice 100,000

animals in the hope of benefiting one person, then it is worth it. But the truth is that ethical human-based tests will better help our loved ones and save millions of animals annually.

Vivisectors and pro-animal testing advocates are running out of excuses. There is a better, more kind way. Show your support by choosing to buy only cruelty-free products.

In our next electronic newsletter, we'll bring you information on cruelty-free products.

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Congratulations, Ananya



This year one of the members of our international team of TOS volunteers graduated with a Master's degree in mental health counselling. She says that her theosophical philosophy is immensely helpful as a background in this new work. Ananya Rajan, a board member of the TOS in America and current editor of its publications, plans to do her best to assist those who come to her to recognise and develop their divine potential, no matter what their outward circumstances.

In 2010, Ananya published a book entitled *Get Real! Fighting the Mythic Woman, Finding Your Authentic Self* to facilitate self-awareness. The book also incorporates theosophical ideas.

Bravo, Ananya. We wish you all the best in your counselling work.

Nota bene: We published an interview with a mental health counsellor last year – Linda Jo Pym – in which she explains how her theosophical philosophy helped her through a long career without ever becoming a source of proselytising. You can find the interview here

<http://international.theoservice.org/articles/201204-jopym.html>

In 2014 we will bring you an interview with a third Theosophist in the same profession – Barbara Bradley Hebert.

TOS news from around the world

Free medical service and a jumble sale on the Adyar Estate

The Theosophical Order of Service, Chennai conducted a free multi-speciality medical camp at the Social Welfare Centre on the Theosophical Society's Adyar Estate on May 5, 2013 in view of 'White Lotus Day' being on May 8th. 130 patients were screened during the camp. The doctors present offered their free services during the camp. There were doctors from various disciplines such as general medicine, paediatrics, dental, skin, ophthalmology and others. Patients were screened for diabetes and hypertension and ECGs were taken for patients with cardiovascular disorders. Free medicines were dispensed to the patients.



General Medicine



Dental check-up



Eye check-up



Dermatologist



Physiotherapist



Paediatrician



Blood Sugar Testing



ECG



Free medicines

The members of the Vasanta Round Table also held a jumble sale at the same time in the premises of the Social Welfare Centre. They had collected clothes and other items from their friends, neighbours and other well-wishers. The items were carefully sorted and then displayed for the sale. The members volunteered and guided the patients who had come for the medical camp and helped them make their purchases. Both the medical camp and the jumble sale were very well received by one and all.



Members of the Vasanta Round Table greeting patients and setting up the jumble sale

The TOS at the Indo-Pacific Federation Conference in Bali

The 12th Triennial Conference of the Indo-Pacific Federation of the Theosophical Society was recently held in Bali.

Since the conference theme was *Practising Theosophy*, it is little wonder that several leading TOS workers were invited to speak.

Jean Carroll (Australia), Vicki Jerome (New Zealand) and Dr Rosel Doval Santos (Philippines) presented

their ideas in a Symposium – *How can the Theosophical Order of Service help the Theosophical Society.*

Jean and Vicki report that there were actually many animated discussions about theosophically oriented service work throughout the convention.



Dr Rosel, Vicki Jerome and Jean Carroll

Denver TOS, USA, offers community service

In September, the Denver TOS provided its community with an entertaining yet seriously useful look at end-of-life planning.

Local radio celebrity and author, Jo Myers, presented "Good to Go – a Guide to Preparing for the End of Life." Jo strongly recommends putting your end-of-life plans in place before you and your family are in crisis. A heavy topic was infused with a light touch when Jo grabbed her guitar and sang her original composition, *Shovel Buddies*.

Attendees received a "Good to Go" folder from Jo to jump-start their planning, and the TOS handed out copies of Nelda Samarel's booklet "[Helping the Dying.](#)"



Jo Myers

Good news from India

The following 'good news' report by Mahim Pratap Singh was published in the April 11, 2013 issue of The Hindu.

THE HINDU

In an atmosphere where every morning, our newspapers greet us with stories of girls being tormented, raped, killed or treated like a doormat in one way or another, trust India's 'village republics' to bring in some good news from time to time.

One such village in southern Rajasthan's Rajsamand district is quietly practising its own, home-grown brand of Eco-feminism and achieving spectacular results.

For the last several years, Piplantri village panchayat (council) has been saving girl children and increasing the green cover in and around it at the same time.



Here, villagers plant 111 trees every time a girl is born and the community ensures these trees survive, attaining fruition as the girls grow up.

Over the last six years, people here have managed to plant over a quarter of a million trees on the village's grazing commons – including neem, sheesham, mango, Amla among others.

On an average 60 girls are born here every year, according to the village's former sarpanch [village council leader] Shyam Sundar Paliwal, who was instrumental in starting this initiative in the memory of his daughter Kiran, who died a few years ago.

In about half these cases, parents are reluctant to accept the girl children, he says.

Such families are identified by a village committee comprising the village school principal along with panchayat and Anganwadi [health care centre] members.

Rs. 21,000 is collected from the village residents and Rs. 10,000 from the girl's father and this sum of Rs. 31,000 is made into a fixed deposit for the girl, with a maturity period of 20 years.

But here's the best part.

"We make these parents sign an affidavit promising that they would not marry her off before the legal age, send her to school regularly and take care of the trees planted in her name," says Mr Paliwal.

People also plant 11 trees whenever a family member dies.

But this village of 8,000 did not just stop at planting trees and greening their commons. To prevent these trees from being infested with termite, the residents planted over two and a half million Aloe vera plants around them. Now these trees, especially the Aloe vera, are a source of livelihood

for several residents.

“Gradually, we realised that aloe vera could be processed and marketed in a variety of ways. So we invited some experts and asked them to train our women. Now residents make and market aloe vera products like juice, gel, pickle etc.,” he says.



The village panchayat, which has a studio-recorded anthem and a [website](#) of its own, has completely banned alcohol, open grazing of animals and cutting of trees. Villagers claim there has not been any police case here for the last 7-8 years.

Mr Paliwal recalls the visit of social activist Anna Hazare, who was very happy with the progress made by the village, he says.

“But Rajasthan is quite backward in terms of village development compared to panchayats in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra etc. So we need to work hard towards creating more and more empowered villages,” says the former sarpanch, hoping the government listens to him.

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. He challenges us to ask deep questions about our attitudes and relationship with animals. We brought you some of Alan's poems in June and share another four here.

Stray

*As I gaze nightward at our
volunteer chandelier of stars
light-years away (each point
a twinkly memory of a light that was),*

*a white tomcat approaches me
like an old friend and brushes
my pant-leg, crying up from the snow
as if in hungry agony.*

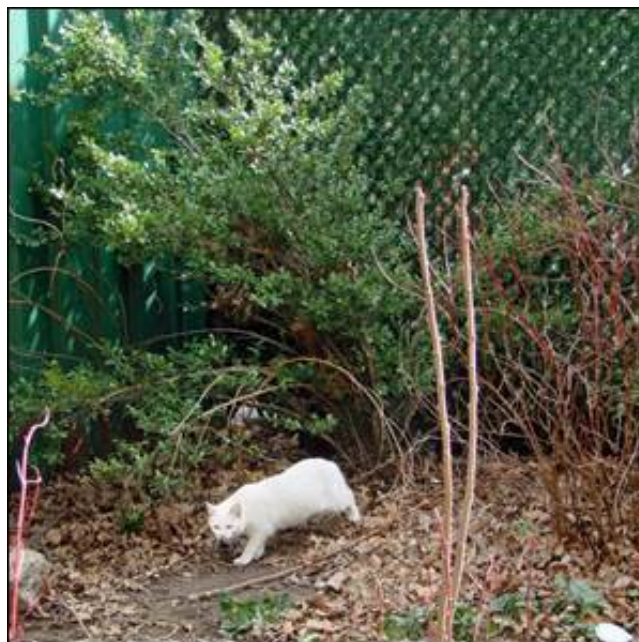
*I fetch some dry cat food,
pour it into a Styrofoam tray
on my porch, and watch him
dine with great crunching.*

*My eyes in the blazing sky again,
I drink measureless ancient light
into my emptiness as a gift
from the magnificent All-of-it.*

*Is our future in the stars?
I laugh aloud into the night air,
feeling the moment so mightily
I care little for any answer.*

*The speckled black overhead ocean
absorbs my laugh with dignity
while the white stray, finished with his meal,
wipes his chin on my pant-leg.*

*A universe above and a cat below
circumscribe my being in this
delicate wintry instant --
love coming from both ways.*



My Cow, My Guru

*My brown cow
lives in the now.
How?
Nohow.*

*Quantity and time and hay slide
through her unnoticed. She
doesn't count her stomachs*



or her breaths or her days.

She seeks no acupuncture treatments, nor does she brew herbal teas.

Being the best she can be holds no interest for her as she grazingly meditates with slow-moving hooves and jaws over a grassy pasture.

Her Buddhic eyes see out and in all the way.

My cow knows an old, old mantra that she neither flaunts nor hides -- when the world needs a moo, she gives it one.

As her swishing tail with Zen precision scatters a bunch of flies like unwelcome thoughts, my brown cow's gaze is inly intimating to me, "No how is there to now."

Plowhorse

*My horse and I are brothers,
and the morning sun knows why.*

*Within my horse resides
a soul, I'm pretty sure --
more wisdom than just to strain
and turn brown fields to black.*

*I'd guess this horse was human
in ages before the Ice,
but now for some dim reason
is sentenced to the plow.*

*Service, a horse's essence,
had best be, too, my own
as we pull such plows as matter
into ages still to come.*

*My horse and I are brothers
and the morning sun knows why.*



At the Abattoir



*Splat.
Grunt.
Plop.*

*We feed the world,
except for bloodless vegetarians.
Come hither, sweet swine,
and we will make you useful,
oh, so useful to mankind:*

*Thud.
Rip.
Crack.
Slit.*

*Cow, your life-long destiny is consummated
here.
Your epitaph reads "Grade A, choice."
Your burial ground, the maw of man,
is decorated with two rows
of tombstone teeth.*

How our planet's climate is changing

This information comes from NASA's website. You'll find interesting presentations of scientific data by visiting it at <http://climate.nasa.gov/index>



While summer temperatures have been blistering in both hemispheres, [this video](#) takes the longer historical view. It comes to us from our friends at [NASA](#) and is an amazing 26-second animation depicting how temperatures around the globe have warmed since 1880. That year is what scientists call the beginning of the "modern record."

You'll note an acceleration of those temperatures in the late 1970s as greenhouse gas emissions from energy production increased worldwide and clean air laws reduced emissions of pollutants that had a cooling effect on the climate, and thus were masking some of the global warming signal.

The data come from NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, which monitors global surface temperatures.

Changes in Earth's climate

The Earth's climate has changed throughout history. Just in the last 650,000 years there have been seven cycles of glacial advance and retreat, with the abrupt end of the last ice age about 7,000 years ago marking the beginning of the modern climate era — and of human civilisation. Most of these climate changes are attributed to very small variations in Earth's orbit that change the amount of solar energy our planet receives.

The current warming trend is of particular significance because most of it is very likely human-induced and proceeding at a rate that is unprecedented in the past 1,300 years.

Earth-orbiting satellites and other technological advances have enabled scientists to see the big picture, collecting many different types of information about our planet and its climate on a global scale. Studying these climate data collected over many years reveals the signals of a changing climate.

The evidence for rapid climate change is compelling:

Glacial retreat

Glaciers are retreating almost everywhere around the world – including in the Alps, Himalayas, Andes, Rockies, Alaska and Africa.

Shrinking ice sheets

The Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have decreased in mass. Data from NASA's Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment show Greenland lost 150 to 250 cubic kilometres (36 to 60 cubic miles) of ice per year between 2002 and 2006, while Antarctica lost about 152 cubic kilometres (36 cubic miles) of ice between 2002 and 2005. Current data show that this trend is continuing.

Declining Arctic sea ice

Both the extent and thickness of Arctic sea ice has declined rapidly over the last several decades at a rate of 11.5% per decade.

Sea level rise



Global sea level rose about 17 centimetres (6.7 inches) in the last century. The rate in the last decade, however, is nearly double that of the last century and is due to two factors: added water coming from melting land ice and the expansion of sea water as it warms.

Global temperature rise

All three major global surface temperature reconstructions show that Earth has warmed since 1880. Most of this warming has occurred since the 1970s, with the 20 warmest years having occurred since 1981 and with all 10 of the warmest years occurring in the past 12 years. Even though the 2000s witnessed a solar output decline resulting in an unusually deep solar minimum in 2007-2009, surface temperatures continue to increase.



Warming oceans

The oceans have absorbed much of this increased heat, with the top 700 metres (about 2,300 feet) of ocean showing warming of 0.302 degrees Fahrenheit since 1969.

Ocean acidification

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the acidity of surface ocean waters has increased by about 30 percent. This increase is the result of humans emitting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and hence more being absorbed into the oceans. The amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by the upper layer of the oceans is increasing by about 2 billion tons per year.

Extreme events

The number of record high temperature events in the United States has been increasing, while the number of record low temperature events has been decreasing, since 1950. The U.S. has also witnessed increasing numbers of intense rainfall events. This pattern is repeated in other countries with a higher incidence of super-typhoons, fires, drought and floods.



The role of human activity

In its recently released *Fourth Assessment Report*, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of 1,300 independent scientific experts from countries all over the world under the auspices of the United Nations, concluded there is a more than 90 percent probability that human activities over the past 250 years have warmed our planet.

The industrial activities that our modern civilisation depends upon have raised atmospheric carbon dioxide levels from 280 parts per million to 379 parts per million in the last 150 years. The panel also concluded there is a better than 90 percent probability that human-produced greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have caused much of the observed increase in Earth's temperatures over the past 50 years.

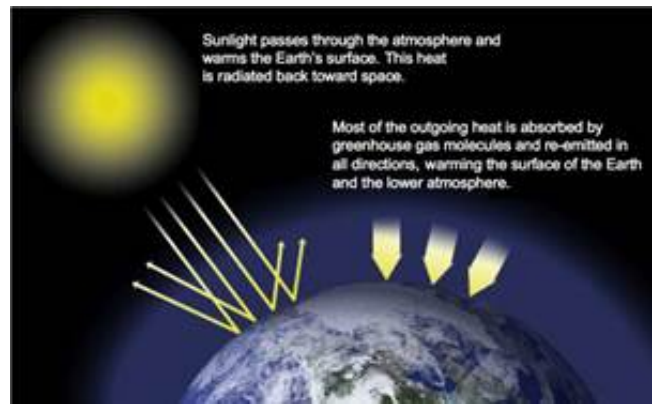
They said the rate of increase in global warming due to these gases is very likely to be unprecedented within the past 10,000 years or more. The panel's full *Summary for Policymakers* report is online at http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf

Solar irradiance

It's reasonable to assume that changes in the sun's energy output would cause the climate to change, since the sun is the fundamental source of energy that drives our climate system.

Indeed, studies show that solar variability has played a role in past climate changes. For example, a decrease in solar activity is thought to have triggered the Little Ice Age between approximately 1650 and

1850, when Greenland was largely cut off by ice from 1410 to the 1720s and glaciers advanced in the Alps.



But several lines of evidence show that current global warming cannot be explained by changes in energy from the sun:

- Since 1750, the average amount of energy coming from the Sun either remained constant or increased slightly.
- If the warming were caused by a more active sun, then scientists would expect to see warmer temperatures in all layers of the atmosphere. Instead, they have observed a cooling in the upper atmosphere, and a warming at the surface and in the lower parts of the atmosphere. That's because greenhouse gasses are trapping heat in the lower atmosphere.
- Climate models that include solar irradiance changes can't reproduce the observed temperature trend over the past century or more without including a rise in greenhouse gases.

The challenge of adapting to future climate

Our lives and livelihoods are shaped by the climate, so adapting to future climates will involve nearly all aspects of our economies, societies and the environment. Our ingenuity will help us find technological solutions to reducing greenhouse gases but we will also need to ask some deep questions in terms of our relationship with the environment and make some difficult personal and social choices.



Beauty Pause







