

## **UPON THIS FOUNDATION IS WISDOM ESTABLISHED**

**Mr Michael Gomes**

*(Summary of Public Lecture delivered on 27.12.2014)*

Soon after her election as International President in 1907 Annie Besant gave a series of lectures in the city of Chicago in America. As was the practice in those days this was followed by questions from the audience. How did she account for the slow growth of the Theosophical Society, was one of the queries put to her. Her answer is very telling, and I quote it in full. She said: 'you cannot measure the growth of a society merely by the number of people that come into it, but by the spread of the ideas for which it stands. Now compare the world of 1875 with the world of thought today in regard to all religious, intellectual and scientific questions, and you will find a great revolution has taken place. The ideas that in 1875 were thought absurd and ridiculous are now becoming commonplace amongst all well-informed people. The growth of Theosophy — and that to me is the most important part of our work — is very great; its ideas are spreading everywhere and are being

echoed everywhere.' And this was in 1907! How far we have come since that time!

Since the Society will be achieving its 150th year of existence in a brief ten years, I thought it would be worthwhile to look at its achievements and see how far its ideas have spread. Three centuries have been touched since this organization was started. How much the world has changed since its formation. Global empires have crumbled; modes of existence which were once sanctioned are no longer tolerated. India, the jewel of the British empire, once ruled by occupiers, is now the largest democracy in the world. Universal suffrage, the right of women to vote, once ridiculed, is now seen as a universal right. Situations once tolerated, such as apartheid, are now seen as a festering sore on the body politic. And the beat goes on.

Yes, how much the world has changed since 1875 when that little group met

in New York City and sowed the germ of what would become a worldwide movement. With the publication of Mme Blavatsky's first book, *Isis Unveiled*, in 1877, the world was awakened to the idea of India as the source of an invigorating spirituality. This was foreign to the accepted ideas of the time. The Rev. Joseph Cook, who had visited India, could report to his congregation in Boston in 1882, that 'if there was any light in Asia, it is a twilight.' India was seen as the place one sent missionaries to, not to be learnt from. Col. Olcott's gesture, upon first landing in Bombay — touching the ground, because he was on sacred soil — set the tone for generations of spiritual pilgrims who were to follow from the West. The idea of living spiritual teachers in the East, was another concept spread by the Society. The publication of H. P. Blavatsky's great work, *The Secret Doctrine*, in 1888, was what we would call a 'game changer'. The survival of this nineteenth century book, so intricate, so complex, is in itself a phenomenon. Think of how many nineteenth century authors once universally known are now forgotten. *The Secret Doctrine* has joined Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and Darwin's *Origin of the Species* as one of the most influential texts to emerge from that time.

The Society's influence did not end there. The next 25 years of its existence had its own character. The election of Annie Besant as international

President in 1907 saw a widening of these concepts, the Society becoming involved in education, the arts, having an impact in literature. Let us not forget the role of the Theosophical Society in nurturing the work of J. Krishnamurti, one of the most original philosophers of the twentieth century. The next twenty-five years were different for Theosophy facing a global financial depression and war in the East and West. The Society emerged smaller but ready when the next impulse came in 1975 and the subjects it had espoused caught the public's imagination. And now the challenge lies ahead for us in this new century. Though the world has changed so very much from what it used to be, there is still so much hatred, war and poverty. The digital revolution has transformed the world into a global village where regional conflicts are as familiar to us as our own. We are more connected than ever before, yet remain more individually isolated.

Theosophy endures in this world of constant changes and our movement still has something special, unique, to offer. It is up to each of us to become *active* co-workers with that Truth that provides stability, harmony, the peace that passeth understanding. It is upon this foundation that wisdom is established. The question is: are we as members of the Theosophical Society up to this challenge? For we must, if we are to remain relevant to this dialogue.



# **TUNING IN TO OUR WORLD**

**Mrs Diana Dunningham Chapotin**

*(Summary of the Short Lecture delivered on 28.12.2013)*

Human beings have become a geological force on the planet. The poisoning of our earth is now systemic. By tampering with the delicate balance of nature, our ever-changing world has become a radically, morbidly changing one! It is only natural on the part of some to ask if we have crossed the line of no return. As Theosophists we can act as though it is not too late. We can be a force to reverse this trend.

Deep listening is required. To get a real sense of the state of the world and our future, it is helpful to tune in to the

planet with both our hearts and minds — to the earth itself, to our fellow humans and to ourselves. As well, it is useful to become aware of the subconscious fears within us that sap our energy for constructive action.

Theosophy is a dynamic force for both social and individual transformation. It is possible to tap into limitless inner resources to help us shape the future intelligently and rapidly. In the words of a French environmentalist, it is too late for pessimism. Let us move forward confidently to effect positive change.



# **I HAVE PROMISES TO KEEP**

**Mr R. C. Tampi**

*(Summary of the Short Lecture delivered on 28.12.2013)*

Theosophy treats evolution as a cosmic process. The One becomes many. The many descend from the supreme heights, subjecting themselves to limitations after limitations through level after level. Below the loftiest and subtlest conditions they assume manifold forms reaching finally the densest state. The unlimited inherent potentialities increasingly get enfolded by denser and denser matter. As the spirit is hedged in increasingly by matter, this downward motion is labelled 'involution'. The lowest level it reaches is the physical world, from where an onward ascent of

unfoldment commences. This is evolution, which literally means unfoldment. In this process of manifestation, numerous forms of life with greater potentials express themselves through greater complexity in organization. At every stage hidden potentials are unfolded. This moves always in the direction of higher efflorescence.

Thus the pure Spirit flows back to the fullness of its source. The pilgrim is back home. Each one of us at every moment, reaches one of the different merited positions on this path towards perfection. The pace of progress depends

on the person concerned. There are in fact as many paths as there are pilgrims. The way is self-chosen, self-induced and self-devised. From the moment the journey commences the pilgrim is bound by his promise to return home in due course gathering a rich crop of varied experiences.

The journey of the soul is not at all a smooth one. The path is long, steep and winding. There are intimidating dangers, ominous threats and irresistible temptations. The influence of alluring charms encountered on the journey is graphically portrayed by Robert Frost in a small poem. Moved by the dark and deep forest in the winter twilight, the poet stops his horse. Suddenly he becomes mindful of the

promises he has to keep and the long way ahead. He says,

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

The soul's journey through life is an obligatory pilgrimage. Before it begins, man is bound by his promise to return home as early as possible unconcerned about all temptations and dangers. There are many 'prodigal sons' who betray their Father. However, everyone will return home in the end. Let each of us remember on our way back to our spiritual home — 'But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep.'



## THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

In early December the **Spanish Section** held their sixth Silent Retreat directed by Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, with 50 people attending. The study was based on *At the Feet of the Master* by Krishnamurti and *Viveka-Chudamani* by Shankara, and the activities were always combined with meditation. At Easter, the Section had its 36th 'Jornadas Ibéricas' (or Spanish Days) over a four-day period, held in San Lorenzo del Escorial, near Madrid, with 50 people attending. Most of the Spanish Lodges were represented. As in the last few years, Hesperia Lodge (in Madrid) and the General Secretary, Mrs Angels Torra, organized the event, with the theme 'The Hermetic Thought'. The Section's summer school had 132

participants doing a comparative study of *The Voice of the Silence* and *The Path of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva, led by Mr Fernando de Torrijos. During the year the Section gained 2 new study centres. Several members of the board visited 12 Spanish Lodges and Study groups, giving lectures and workshops in every city visited. The **Portuguese Section's** General Secretary, Mr Carlos Guerra, says that a set of public functions were held in Lisbon consisting of talks and discussion sessions aimed at encouraging spontaneous contributions from the participants and panels. These were coordinated by different members and occasionally by invitees, always trying to attract members and new

sympathizers. As in previous years, 3 out of the 11 Lodges were active in a decentralized manner: in Lisbon, Porto, and Évora; and one study group is actively working in the Azores. The **Greek Section** says that a new study group of 9 members has been formed in the island of Crete, named *Radamanthis*. Although their annual membership remains at 40 Euros, their quarterly magazine, *Ilisos*, is given free to all 215 members, and the current magazine subscription stands at about 500.

In **Germany**, Mrs Manuela Kaulich was reelected as General Secretary during their General Assembly held in June. Ms Mary Anderson, former international Vice-President and Secretary, was again the guest of honour at their summer school, this time studying Clara Codd's *Theosophy as the Masters See It*. The summer school was held in mid-June, earlier in the year, to facilitate members' attendance at the European Congress in Paris. All 3 **Austrian Lodges** offer weekly lectures throughout the study year, with subjects based on classical theosophical teachings and related subjects. Lecture topics are regularly placed on the TS in Austria website. In October the European School of Theosophy took place near the city of Graz, with the focus being on the teachings of H. P. Blavatsky and the *Mahatma Letters*. The precarious financial situation continues to be voiced by the representatives of the 3 Lodges, yet they hope to overcome this situation and are confident that the future of the Austrian TS is secured. The General Secretary of the **Belgian**

**Section**, Mrs Sabine Van Osta, states that they have been developing an action plan since early September to modernize the Section's programmes and presentation. They are putting special emphasis on Wallonia, the French-speaking southern part of the country, by seeking inspiration mainly from sister Sections and their Lodges, and reconnecting with them more actively. In the Brussels headquarters they have regular sessions around J. Krishnamurti's teachings in addition to a basic programme of 'Introduction to Theosophy'.

From the TS in **Slovenia**, Mrs Breda Zagar writes that all four Lodges had regular weekly meetings, with public lectures being held in three of them. Two new members joined in Ljubljana. Four seminars were organized during the year in a spirit of harmony, brotherly feelings, and joy. Their annual meeting had 74% attendance of the membership and the Presidents of all four Lodges. They are glad that Adyar Lodge in Ljubljana has finally moved to new premises, which has increased their enthusiasm and will facilitate their work. Mr Thomas Martinovich informs us that the work of the TS in **Hungary** continued in all of their 3 Lodges, two of them in Budapest. They organized ten monthly public lectures from September through June, with attendance ranging from 25 to 50. The main subjects dealt with the practical application of theosophical principles. A few days after each lecture 'open meetings' were organized to meet with enquirers and answer any questions arising out of

the lectures, which are recorded and uploaded onto the website of the particular Lodge, complemented with slides. The Presidential Representative in **Russia**, Mr Pavel Malakhov, reports that 5 out of the 7 Lodges had their weekly meetings during the year, where they study mainly *The Secret Doctrine* and other teachings in the light of the *SD*. Every month the Moscow Lodge has two public theosophical lectures followed by discussion of the topic, and a members-only meeting to plan the activities of the Lodges. They have three publishing vehicles: a bimonthly e-newsletter with 350 subscribers, an e-magazine with a hard-copy run of 100 dedicated to the classical literature of theosophy, and a yearly magazine with articles of modern Russian theosophists. They also have a list (and growing) of Internet activities of Russian members on the TS in Russia website. Mr Malakhov visited all 7 Lodges and some theosophical groups, confirming their work. He ends his report by stating that the theosophical movement in Russia is undoubtedly gaining strength. In **Ukraine** Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko tells us that in the fall of last year they added a new Lodge and became a Regional Association. In June of this year, the first General Meeting of the TS in Ukraine took place, resulting in her election as the new Organizing Secretary. They held their Ninth All-Ukrainian Convention in November of last year with over 70 participants. All 5 TS Lodges and 2 study centres conducted regular meetings and studied classic theosophical

literature during the year. A new cell of the TOS was started in Ukraine, and additional TOS cells were also created in six different cities. A Scientific Group was formed during the year. They now have their own website and every Lodge and study centre has their own page on it. A delegation of 10 members attended the European Congress in Paris, and 3 members gave talks at the 3rd All-Russian Conference in Moscow in March. A total of 6 seminars, 1 round table, and 43 public lectures took place in different cities of Ukraine.

Mr Abraham Oron, President of the **Tel Aviv Lodge**, attached to Adyar, says that their Lodge is quite active, with 3 public meetings each month, held in two locations; 3 members' meetings on a weekly basis each month on different theosophical subjects, including round-table reading, discussion, and meditation on chosen sections of *The Secret Doctrine*; 3 one-day excursions per year, with hiking, meditation, and discussion of various spiritual aspects of Nature; 2 weekend seminars per year in different sacred places, such as the Dead Sea and a Jerusalem monastery; monthly advanced study meetings for facilitators; one yearly convention in May; 2 introductory courses in Theosophy per year of about 15 meetings each; and 2 courses during the year dealing with harmful emotions using Theosophical and Buddhist perspectives. Monthly meetings are held by 6 active study groups focusing on Theosophical subjects. Issue number 100 of their bi-annual magazine, *Or (Light)*, just turned from hard-copy to an

internet edition, with a mailing list of 3,500 sympathizers. From the **West African Section**, General Secretary John Boakye reports that they managed to go ahead with planned activities in spite of tremendous difficulties and challenges faced during the year. These have affected their membership, which has not been growing as expected, but they are not losing hope for improvement. A public lecture and two schools of the Wisdom were held at the headquarters building, known as 'Theosophy House', which they have established with individual members' contributions. The plot of land is in a prime area and was donated by a now-deceased member, offering the Section an opportunity to have a place of their own. The **East and Central African Section** is comprised of four countries (referred by them as Regions): they are Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia. The Section has 5 Lodges, two of them in Zambia. The largest Lodge is in Nairobi, Kenya, which held 31 meetings in Gujarati, 19 in English, and 9 joint meetings. This Lodge is also involved in various TOS activities, including donations of lamps, water tanks, medical assistance to the needy, and tree-planting. Mufulira Lodge in Zambia and Dar-es-Salaam Lodge in Tanzania have also been involved in various TOS activities during the year. All the Lodges meet regularly, mostly weekly. The General Secretary, Mr Ebrony Peteli, reaffirms their commitment to strengthen the work of the Section.

In the Indo-Pacific region, the **Indian Section**, with 16 Federations and

459 Lodges, remains the largest in the Theosophical Society Adyar. Mr S. Sundaram was re-elected unopposed as the General Secretary for another term of 3 years. Their annual convention was held in Adyar in December 2013, chaired by the former International Secretary, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, and addressed by the former Vice-President, Mr M. P. Singhal. Annual conferences were held by most Federations. The former Vice President and former Secretary were chief guests in one such annual conference each, and the General Secretary was the chief guest in three of these annual conferences. The 91st South India Conference was held in Adyar during the Easter holidays with 145 participants. The theme was *The Key to Theosophy* by HPB. There were 12 speakers and it was inaugurated by the former international Secretary. The concluding address was given by Dr A. Kannan. The North Indian Study camp was held in Varanasi during October 2013 with 65 delegates. Prof. R. C. Tampi and Mr P. K. Jayaswal directed the study camp on the theme of *The Secret Doctrine*. Another study camp was organized jointly by Bihar and UP Federations on *The Key to Theosophy* in March 2014. MP & Rajasthan and UP Federations jointly organized a study camp on *The Voice of the Silence* by HPB in July 2014 with about 70 participants. The Section Headquarters conducted the Presidential Election in accordance with the Rules of the Society and the procedures laid down. Dr Annie Besant's 166th Birth Anniversary and other TS holidays were duly celebrated by the Indian Section.

The General Secretary attended the Indo-Pacific conference held at Bali, Indonesia, in November 2013 and spoke at the Conference. He visited different Federations and Lodges in India during the year and spoke at many places. The Assistant General Secretary, Mr Pradeep Mahapatra, was the Chief Guest at the annual conference of the Bihar Theosophical Federation and visited several Lodges in A.P., Odisha, and the Lodge at Bhowali. National Lecturers Mr P. K. Jayaswal, Mr C. A. Shinde, Mr N. C. Krishna, Mr B. D. Tendulkar, Mr S. S. Goutam, Mr A. P. Lokhande and Mr S. K. Pande gave talks at various places during the year. Mr Pedro Oliveira, former International Secretary, delivered a talk on 'The Future of Humanity at Bengaluru City Lodge. The Bhowali Centre, with excellent conference facilities, food, and accommodation, has been set up in the Himalayas, which is being increasingly used for study camps and retreats. *The Indian Theosophist* monthly journal was published with an average circulation of 3,500 copies. A special number was published to commemorate 125 years of publication of *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Voice of the Silence* by HPB. In addition to the Section journal, 13 Federations published their own journals at regular intervals.

The **Australian Section** held its annual convention in Sydney last January. It now has a new home for

their National Headquarters on the Sydney city fringe. The Section is working on a new website that is almost complete and has established a social media presence with a Facebook Page. Contact with members is established through newly established e-bulletins sent out from the National Headquarters. In addition to the four printed editions of the national magazine *The General Secretary*, Mrs Linda Oliveira, visited nearly all the centres around the Section during the year. The **New Zealand** Section held its annual convention in Auckland with the theme 'Our Potential for Change.' It has put together a strategic plan for the next 3 years. The focus will be on creating a greater public awareness of Theosophy in New Zealand and making greater use of the Internet and Social Media to engage members and the public in an exploration of theosophical principles and ideas, with the aim of bringing people together in workshops and helping at branches throughout the country. This also includes the use of webinars and the live broadcasting of future events. The Section has also been reviewing its board structure over the last couple of years, moving to a smaller elected board, bringing it into line with current best practices. A vote was held by National Referendum of the members on the proposal, resulting in an overwhelming majority of respondents voting in favour.



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Number of delegates registered by Sunday, 28 December: 1,187

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