

## **THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: AN ASTRONOMICAL CONCERN**

**Dr Lakshmi Saripalli**

*(Summary of Theosophy-Science Lecture delivered on 29.12.2010)*

Talk about global warming and climate change are what we hear commonly today. Efforts are on globally to deal with them, to understand the physical processes involved and their effects, to find means of curbing them, through searches for less polluting sources of energy generation to designing energy-efficient means, and even through lifestyle changes that mean less consumption of energy. Lifestyle is the key. There is also scepticism regarding global warming and climate change. In its 4.7 billion-year past, the Earth has been through warming and cooling phases evidenced by the cycles of ice ages. While we are not unaware of the effect of a changing sun, the acceleration of the rise in carbon dioxide levels in recent decades and its coincidence with the steep rise in ocean temperatures leaves little doubt of the involvement of the heavy anthropogenic hand. There can be no doubt again of the growing human impact and its

gargantuan footprint on Earth. The heightened pollution levels in natural systems, whether air, water or soil pollution, changed landforms or ecological destruction — all are directly attributable to humans.

We see change happening in our everyday surroundings, pleasant and unpleasant, man-made or natural, whether on timescales of merely days or months or of decades, and therefore, within our own lifetimes. Changes on longer timescales, of centuries and even millennia, are noted and studied by historians and scientists. The rise and fall of civilizations, geological activity and even impacts on the Earth have been studied. Changes that occur on even longer timescales, of several billion years, are being studied by astronomers. Change is inevitable. The view that life is a flux is famously associated with Heraclitus who said, one does not step into the same river twice.

Our comforts come with a price.

Every watt of power has consequences for the Earth. The era of unbridled growth in many sectors also urges an unbridled growth in the human footprint; heavy indeed is the price.

We cannot overlook the growing struggle of nature as it tries to cope with the demands or burdens on it, or direct destruction of it. We are witness today to changes of such colossal pace, magnitude and spread, and in such a variety of forms, that natural systems are unable to adjust. Irreversible changes such as species extinction accompany this pursuit.

In this talk I have shared my concern of changes being brought about in our natural environment alongside reflections on the beauty and grandeur that lets me connect with the subject of my professional interest, astronomy and astrophysics — changes whether on timescales of seconds or on timescales of billions of years . . . gas concentrations changing into galaxies or clouds

of gas, condensing into stars within galaxies or rotating discs of hydrogen and dust transforming into streaming jets of matter.

Seemingly primitive lifeforms, the microscopic diatoms, hold a mirror to our actions as do visitors from space, the meteorites. We have taken a look at these in my talk, taking in both their sheer beauty and wonder, and their grave message of direct evidence of damaged natural systems, pointing to excesses, to throwaway lifestyles and of the endless growth of consumerism.

We have taken a journey from the microscopic to the astronomical, letting us explore the world from the exquisite to the grand, letting us ponder on the message of change and urging us to better read ourselves. We have taken a journey to connect. On the occasion of the annual Theosophical Society Convention it is only appropriate to raise these concerns and connections, hoping for insights.

## **WITHOUT LOVING CARE, I AM NOTHING** ***(Session III of Theme)***

*(Summaries of Talks delivered on 30.12.2010)*

### **Mr Marcos Resende**

Human consciousness is facing outwards, with no perception of the subtle energy that moves life at every moment. Living this way, we manifest brutality, violence, selfishness, insensitivity and profound ignorance. We must find out if it is possible to live in a way in which love is present, with its aggregating, unifying and uplifting energy. As

long as we do not perceive ourselves as craving for success in the material world and for the satisfaction of our physical, emotional and intellectual appetites, we will not make space, in our subjectivity, for the beneficial energy that is love.

Love escapes our mental will. We cannot touch that which is more subtle

than thought through traditional ways of thinking. It takes sensitivity, care, diligence and a certain inner stillness so that we can find the source of pure water that exists at the deepest levels of human consciousness and in all nature.

In order to find the energy which is essential to life, which is love, self-knowledge is necessary, which is based on the infinite, careful and impartial observation of ourselves, of life and of relationships. When egocentric living ceases, dissolved by free observation, love begins to emerge as the morning

## **Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko**

Our world is beautiful and perfect; it was created by the Loving Mind, so all creation — the smallest particle or the entire Universe — demonstrates this loving diligence, great care and wisdom. The human mind has unravelled several mysteries of nature but also focused man's efforts towards exploiting the resources of the planet. Due to lack of foresight and reckless wastefulness, mankind has become a source of imbalance on our planet. Today's world is filled with injustice, cruelty, wars, famine, despair. It is suffering from a lack of love, understanding, sympathy and compassion.

Personal responsibility is the key to bring real change to our world. True revolution evolves from the divine source hidden in every human being. The inner door leading into the temple of the Soul opens, the inner light illuminates all human life, the warmth of love melts the ice of cold reason; we

sun, dispelling the darkness of unconsciousness and ignorance. And when this wonderful energy begins to rule our lives, everything changes.

Without love life is sterile, colourless and perfume-less. We must die to the ego, with its array of interests produced by our self-centred mental structure, so that life can be simpler, with care for others and for all that lives, with affection, respect and deep comprehension. Without love we are poor mortals living without beauty. By dying to the ego we are life itself, the blossom in nature.

start experiencing new relations with the outside world. Our life becomes less self-centred; we feel concerned about other beings and global problems.

In order to understand the needs of other people, we should focus on our personal experience of loving connection, compassion and sympathetic joy in the happiness of other living beings. Evil cannot be defeated by evil. The only way to bring in a real change is through the path of love. In this way we can move up the evolution spiral and gradually get to the essence of the Great Creative Ideation, our aim being to find love and wisdom.

Our Teachers provide us with great examples of loving care, tireless self-sacrifice and self-renunciation. What brings us into their circle is a deep inner realization of the Great Truth that 'without loving care I am nothing'. Our goal is a happy world. Let us join forces and try our best to bring this about.

## Mr Abraham Oron

Every human being longs for love, wants to be loved. We are all strongly drawn to those who love us and to those we love. But why is love so hard for us? Why is it so difficult for us to feel closeness, warmth, caring, fondness, brotherhood and compassion for others, even sometimes for those within our own families? The answer may be found in this beautiful pearl of wisdom known as *Light on the Path*. In Part II, it says:

Look for the song of life, look for it and listen to it first in your own heart. At first you may say: it is not there, when I search I find only discord. Look deeper.

What it actually says is that you cannot love others if you do not find the source of love in yourself. It also says that we cannot find that source of love which is in our higher Self and spiritual Soul if we are not willing to look inward. Looking inward can be difficult, because

we may encounter our lower self or that which is unpleasant, that which causes discord within us.

*Light on the Path* describes this state:

When you have found the beginning of the way the star of your soul will show its light; and by its light you will perceive how great is the darkness in which it burns. Mind, heart, brain all are obscure and dark.

Yes, it is true that without loving care we are nothing, but we cannot really love and care for others if there is a gap inside us separating us from the source of love within. We all need love, we all exist because of the love of those who cared for us when we were young and weak. Everyone has experienced the strength that a loving smile or look or touch can give. The whole of creation is held together by the bond of Divine love and compassion.

## THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

In Adyar, the Headquarters of the whole Society, there have been changes in the personnel. The present International Secretary, Mrs Kusum Satapathy, and her husband, Mr Chittaranjan Satapathy, are both helping with the work. Mrs K. Satapathy has been the International Secretary since the middle of last year. Mr Satapathy is looking after a good part of the Olcott Education Society which deals not only with the education of the poor, but with the education of us ourselves.

Mr Ramkumar, an experienced electrical engineer, is now the head of the Maintenance Department.

The Olcott Education Society and its components are doing well, but we intend to start work of a different kind for those who do not necessarily take a university degree. We will start as soon as the Krishnamurti School finishes its work here in 2014, on the land owned by the Society. The new programme will take the form of education in various crafts and aspects of life, such as looking

after sick people, which will be taught to girls, as well as crafts like good paper making and electrical and other useful skills for boys.

The Olcott Education Society has several units of which the biggest is the Olcott School, founded by the first President. It has around five hundred and twenty students. All get free education, breakfast, textbooks, two sets of uniforms, note-books, etc. The children and their parents come from poor backgrounds and they get advice and support. Computer literacy has started. Talks have begun on Theosophical concepts by Mr Harihara Raghavan. Forty-eight out of fifty-three students passed out; among them a young man, Naveen Kumar, scored 477 marks out of 500, and received a laptop computer and commendations.

The Social Welfare Centre runs day-care for about one hundred pre-school children, who receive free food, fruits, etc. The children learn colouring, alphabets, songs and dance. Dr Revathy visits the Centre regularly and gives guidance on health care.

The HPB Hostel is a free hostel where accommodation is provided for boys who come from troubled homes. During recent holidays the children undertook a plastic removal campaign in the Theosophical Society's compound.

The Animal Dispensary has been working since 2001, but there is a shortage of personnel at present, which we hope will be put right soon. More than nine thousand animals were treated for infections, fractures, etc. A number of dogs and cats were sterilized,

and new homes were found for thirteen puppies and other animals.

The Scout Camping Centre has gone on well, but the buildings have to be repaired. There were a number of camps during the year, which meant that many boys and girls enjoyed the camping ground.

The Theosophical Publishing House had a good year, despite decreasing grants from the US, UK and Australia. Two new publications and several reprints were brought out. Manpower constraints continue to be a problem but a co-publishing alliance with some publishers has proved a success.

The Adyar Library has functioned well. It has as its new Director, Dr K. N. Neelakantan Elayath, who was Head of the Sanskrit Department of the University of Calicut, and has many publications to his credit. Publications and reprints were brought out during the year as usual and all other work went on normally despite shortage of personnel.

The Theosophical Order of Service organized a very successful fund-raising sale at the World Congress in Rome. A variety of programmes are carried out in many parts of the world. The making of 'teddies' for children suffering from tragedies has been a huge success. Ms Lorraine Christensen is coordinating a committee which has been set up to support United Nations projects. Mrs Nelda Samarel has distributed a booklet entitled *Helping the Dying*. Those who want to, can contact the directors in various countries, and Mrs Diana Dunningham.

Members must be aware that owing to political changes there are also other changes; for example, Pakistan is now out of our purview but the Ukraine with its four Lodges has to be regarded as part of the Society. We hope that one day the whole world can be included. The extent of the Society's teachings and influence has a role in this work. We are hopeful

of a change in the world's position. We are entering a new era in which we find many people's lives and ideas are changing, although there is much woe and confusion at present. During this century, let us hope that there will be a move to be truly Theosophical whether it is called by that name or not.

RADHA BURNIER

## INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — I

The first session of the Indian Section Convention took place on 27 December, with the presence of the International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, and the International Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, both of whom addressed the gathering. The General Secretary, Mr S. Sundaram, after presenting written greetings which had been sent by a number of members, called upon the various representatives of the many Theosophical Federations in India to give their greetings. In his address, the General Secretary stated that 'it is imperative that we realize the importance and significance of right perspective, right perception and right proportion in life'. 'Life', he said, 'is about the balance of the head and the heart.' Mr Sundaram then proceeded to give an overview of Theosophical work in India. An important activity was the conference on 'Peace and Conflict' held at the Indian Section Headquarters in Varanasi, 5-7 May 2010, and inaugurated by the International President. A number of Study Camps were held in the Section during the year and the National Lecturers visited many Lodges. There are 452 Lodges and Study Centres in India.

## MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

This year's exhibition in the Archives focuses on the theme of the Convention — 'Theosophical Teachings on the Path'. Key statements on the nature of the Path and its qualifications were extracted from books such as *At the Feet of the Master*, *Light on the Path* and *The Voice of the Silence*, as well as from well-known titles like *The Theosophic Life* by Annie Besant, *Thoughts for Aspirants* by N. Sri Ram and from the writings of Mrs Radha Burnier, International President of the TS. The display cases also contain the books themselves plus selected photographs of the authors. Other items on display include Dr Besant's personal copy of *At the Feet of the Master*, a miniature porcelain painting of Col. Olcott by artist Florence Fuller, a sketch by HPB on an 'Apocalyptic Vision of Col. Olcott' as well as a picture of M. A. Oxon, precipitated by HPB in New York.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF THE ROUND TABLE**

The Order of the Round Table came into existence on 5 July 1908. In 1895, Dr Annie Besant started a 'Lotus group' for the children of TS members in London. One of the members of this group was George Herbert Whyte. He was 16 years old when he joined the Lotus group and, in time, took over its organization from Dr Besant. He had a special interest in working for young people and his wife, Ethel, assisted him in this. The Order has spread to over twenty countries and has regular activities at the international, national and local levels. At its ceremonial meetings, an empty chair is always kept for The King, who embodies the perfection of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty in our world. The Round Table ceremony incorporates the life stories and teachings of the great World Teachers and inculcates reverence for Nature. It seeks to instil universal values in its members. The youngest members are called Pages, and are taught the quality of Kindness. They progress to Companions and learn the virtue of Helpfulness. The Companions become Squires who learn Courageousness. Finally, one becomes a Knight and espouses the quality of Righteousness. Each year, on Christmas Day, the Round Table holds a ceremony at the Headquarters Hall at Adyar, during which greetings from different countries and various parts of India are given.

## **MUSICAL CONCERT**

Ms Nirali Kartik, a promising young vocalist from Ahmedabad, gave a soul-stirring performance of Hindustani classical music on the evening of 27 December at the Adyar Theatre. Gifted with a rich and melodious voice, Nirali Kartik rendered two compositions in Raga Bihag, followed by a composition in fast tempo in Raga Jog. She concluded her recital with a soulful rendition of a Bhajan (devotional song) composed by the great saint Guru Nanak in Raga Bhairavi. Ms Kartik was accompanied on the tabla (percussion) by Sri Satheesh Babu and Sri Shankar Tucker on the clarinet. The International Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, expressed deep appreciation on behalf of all those present to Ms Kartik and her accompanists for 'an evening of celestial music'.

## **SLIDE PRESENTATION ON ADYAR**

On 28 December delegates to the International Convention were treated to an interesting and informative slide presentation on Adyar, the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society. The presenters were Dr Geetha Jaikumar and Dr T. P. Alaganantham. Dr Alaganantham presented a brief pictorial



history of Adyar as the Headquarters chosen by the Founders of the Society and offered a guided visual tour of the main places on the estate, including a number of heritage buildings and religious shrines. Dr Jaikumar gave a presentation of Adyar's unique flora and fauna, including the fact that many of the trees here were brought from other countries by different International Presidents, notably Mr C. Jinarajadasa. The audience was delighted to see pictures of flowers, trees, birds (including migratory ones) and animals that make Adyar their home and contribute to the intangible beauty of this unique spiritual Centre. The presenters also highlighted the fact that the inspiration to purchase this place in 1882 came to the Founders from their Adept-Teachers, whose influence still broods over Adyar.



Let the encouragement we draw from a survey of the results accomplished in the year that has fled serve to spur us on to greater efforts and more strenuous exertions. Let it make all feel that there is now a power behind the Society which will give us the strength we need, which will enable us to move the world, if we will but UNITE and WORK as one mind, one heart. The Masters require only that each shall do his best, and, above all, that each shall strive in reality to feel himself one with his fellow-workers. It is not a dull agreement on intellectual questions, or an impossible unanimity as to all details of work, that is needed; but a true, hearty, earnest devotion to our cause which will lead each to help his brother to the utmost of his power to work for that cause, whether or not we agree as to the exact method of carrying on that work. The only man who is absolutely wrong in his method is the one who does nothing; each can and should cooperate with all and all with each in a large-hearted spirit of comradeship to forward the work of bringing Theosophy home to every man and woman in the country.

H. P. Blavatsky