

THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

Service in a Changing World

(Summaries of Talks delivered on 29.12.2014)

Dr Deepa Padhi

With changing times the role of women in society has acquired new dimensions, but there are certain issues which even now challenge the women of the 21st century. Gender issues have taken such forms as violence against women both outside and inside the home, foeticide, infanticide and trafficking. The central issue now is the rights of women as human beings. Men and women need to enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. Every being is first of all a human, and therefore, has an equal claim to human rights.

By pursuing gender equality, we are

really making an effort to embrace all humanity. In fact, this issue can be resolved only with spiritual understanding as it is a process that actualizes Universal Brotherhood, the cardinal principle of the Theosophical Society. It is being put into practice by the TOS through workshops, seminars, billboards, competitions, and signature drives.

In view of changing times and situations, it may now be appropriate to substitute the term 'Universal Humanhood' or 'Universal Human Family' for 'Universal Brotherhood' in order to more explicitly convey true gender harmony to the common people.

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Mrs Usha Shah

Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania share a common history and borders, but these East African countries have different ideologies and forms of government.

Whatever the ideology or government, change is necessary. As is the case elsewhere in the world, we are reeling under increasing crime rates, pollution,

an eroded environment, a disregard for ethics and a loss of wholesome social values. Materialism has gripped the hearts and minds of people, leaving no space for spirituality.

We need leaders who are selfless and strong. They will only emerge if the change is begun at the grassroots level and addresses the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of human beings. With this long-term perspective in view, the TOS can initiate programmes to provide

education and vocational training for our countless needy. It can push for the introduction of compulsory ethics and good citizenship syllabi in public schools. It can offer yoga and meditation classes, projects for the conservation of the environment and instil spiritual growth by taking Theosophy to the people. Such initiatives will help produce honest and caring human beings who on becoming leaders will make their countries peaceful, prosperous and less materialistic.

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Nancy Secrest

Annie Besant founded the Theosophical Society Order of Service in 1908 in response to members who wished to actively promote the first object of the Theosophical Society through various lines of service. Then as now, this department of the Theosophical Society gave members a forum through which to organize various activities to alleviate suffering in the world. Today the Theosophical Order of Service can be found in thirty countries, as active and forward looking as ever. Service activities include those performed by individuals, local groups, national Sections or by Sections joining forces for international projects or disaster

relief. Activities range from knitting teddies for displaced children, to running campaigns to alleviate violence against women, dispensing medical services, or running theosophically oriented schools. More needs to be done. We need to invite and encourage more TOS work around the world. We also need to encourage and organize more use of the offerings of our electronic age. The internet, e-mail and social media allow us to be in closer contact, faster than ever before. We need to use every avenue available to us in order to truly be: 'A union of those who love in the service of all that suffers.'



The absolute Good is the cause and source of all beauty, just as the sun is the source of all light.

Plotinus

THE CHALLENGE OF WISDOM

Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 30.12.2014)

The world is forever changing. One can have the illusion that some centuries ago, there was less change. But the fact is that the world is always in movement because everything is transitory. Change is the constant of all that exists, the constant of the Universe, the modus operandi of the evolutionary process.

Generally people have the tendency to think that the world is challenging them (with changes) through other people and through events. Yet, according to theosophical teachings, our essence is Divine; therefore humans are wise in essence. At present, this wisdom manifests more or less, but the

main point is that it is our inherent nature. In fact, it is this veiled wisdom rooted in each human that is challenging the world. This challenge is materialized in a still voice resounding from the depth of the soul, the Great Silence, the abode of the mystics who, invisible and unknowing to the world, constantly bestow on it waves of benevolence.

This voice is the call from the Eternal Doctrine, Sanatana Dharma, which reveals itself with time to constantly challenge humanity with wisdom, to bring genuine learning, true understanding, and right living.



MAINSTREAMING THEOSOPHY

Vicente Hao Chin, Jr.

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 30.12.2014)

The Theosophical Society membership has been declining since 1928. World population has increased 3.5 times since that period, with 80,000,000 new births each year. If Theosophy reaches 100,000 new people per year, it will take us 800 years before we reach the number of new births for one year alone. At such a rate, the Theosophical Society will become more irrelevant to the changes happening in the world.

To enable us to become more relevant in the important task of individual and global transformation, we need to

go mainstream. To do so, we need to become relevant to the daily life of the individual, otherwise the theosophical message will not be of interest and will be drowned out by the billions of bits of information that are broadcast every day.

First, 99% of the world of those who have heard of Theosophy will only know us by one or two word associations (e.g., Zen is known for meditation; yoga is known for physical exercise). These words will determine whether they will become interested about Theosophy.

We must deliberately popularize the keywords for which Theosophy will be known for, be it 'oneness', 'brotherhood', 'character building', 'meditation', and so on.

Second, Theosophy must be made relevant to human life and must not remain as a mere body of knowledge. To do so, we must convert theosophical knowledge into enduring practices and institutions.

The range of possible theosophical practices and institutions is almost limitless: education, stress manage-

ment, marital success, parenting, meditation, yoga, vegetarianism, health, animal welfare, ecology, compassionate entrepreneurship, social development, political change, and so forth.

The third is the need for qualified theosophical advocates who will face the general public. If we do not have these, popularity will backfire and we will become notorious.

Hence the TS should train theosophical workers on theosophical knowledge, theosophical practice and communication skills.



MOUNA KURAL (SILENT VOICE)

Theatrical Presentation

Mr C. P. Satyajit

On 28 December, at 7.30 in the evening, there was a performance of *Mouna Kural* (Silent Voice), based on the theme of gender equality. Choreographed and directed by C. P. Satyajit, the main story of this theatrical presentation is by Mangai, a social activist on gender issues.

This experimentation combined Bharatanatyam, some martial arts, and theatrical devices as the chorus, besides offering dialogue, mime, and music. Satyajit believes in providing space to artists to explore their creativity. Though *Mouna Kural* is about the voice of silence, he encourages people to voice their thoughts and opinions. He wants it to go beyond entertainment and trigger a thought process in the audience.

The play explores life and these ideas by thinking aloud, by taking all sides while not taking a side at all, by connecting and observing from the inside and out. It is a touch on the first domino, creating a ripple towards a more evolved society. Spectators could find themselves within a character or in all the characters. *Mouna Kural* is finally what you want it to be; to each, his own. The excellent and powerful performance received a standing ovation, with the theatre filled to capacity.



Number of delegates registered as on Tuesday, 30 December: 1,202

THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

Mr Chong Sanne, the former President of Singapore Lodge, was appointed as the Presidential Representative for the **East and Southeast Asia** area in November 2013. This includes Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Myanmar, and China. **Singapore** Lodge has a membership of around 400 and hosts the Chinese Project Team, which develops the Chinese website for promoting Theosophy to Chinese-speaking people, including, of course, China. It also carries out translations of theosophical literature into Chinese. This year the Lodge ran the 37th Edition of *A Course in Theosophy & Meditation*, continuing to attract new members and giving a good broad grounding in the Theosophical teachings. They also held 15 sessions on *The Voice of the Silence*, attracting an average of 40 members per session. The Nippon Lodge in Tokyo, **Japan**, has 50 members. They have their own website and hold monthly study classes, attracting an average of 10 members. Recent works include Japanese translations of *The Secret Doctrine*, *Isis Unveiled*, and *The Voice of the Silence*. The Lodge also publishes a bimonthly magazine, *The Japanese Theosophist*, which includes translations of articles from popular TS literature. The Selangor Lodge, the only one in **Malaysia**, has 83 members, holding regular talks, study groups and discussions. This year the Lodge inaugurated a meditation room for the use of members. Study classes were also held on the *Bhagavadgita*. **Myanmar** (Burma), at its peak in 1936, had twelve

Lodges with 167 members. Today the resurrected Yangon TS has only one Lodge, the Olcott Lodge with 34 members. The Lodge has kept a low profile for a long period, attracting few members, but it has now initiated a 7-step roadmap to attract new membership. The Lodge currently has a Conscious Force Meditation every week and a Life Force Meditation every full moon with the occasional meditation trip to the ancient sacred places around Myanmar. They study theosophical literature and view theosophical videos and webcasts.

The work of the **TS in America (TSA)** is necessarily collaborative. In recent years, the role of **Internet and information technology** has come to be a vital component in almost everything that is done, with the aim to make the Theosophical teachings and worldview more available to both members and the public. Every day we present public programs at the Olcott national centre, with more of that programming being made available online, both in live streaming and as archival video and audio available on our Website. Our classes and lectures are normally viewed and participated in, live, in countries around the world. We hosted two **international events**. The first was the Inter-American Theosophical Federation Congress. It was held in May at the Olcott headquarters, drawing members from fourteen countries in North, South, and Central America for meetings, programs, and the triennial election of officers. In July, we hosted

the 'Education for a New Humanity' conference. For four days it brought together educators from several educational models with links to Theosophy: Krishnamurti, Waldorf, Montessori, Raja Yoga, Golden Link schools; The Prairie School of Dupage; and Education for Life.

To support our local groups, the **National Secretary**, Mr David Bruce, schedules national speakers to visit the various lodges, study centres, camps, and federations. During the last fiscal year, 20 national speakers gave 71 presentations at 41 locations. The **prison program** continues to reach out to inmates across the country, with very good results. The **Henry S. Olcott Memorial Library** has improved its online presence through a redesigned Web page and catalogue. Marina Maestas was welcomed back into her previous role as Library Director in December. About 50 new titles are added to the collection each month. Library acquisition funding is directly tied to the sales of our Amazon store. The **Public Programs Department** strives to provide a wide range of programmes for study, meditation, service, and community participation. The Thursday night lectures are intended for the general public and cover an eclectic range of topics from different traditions. By webcasting many of these programs, we reach a larger national and international audience. We continue the effort to develop and offer more online programs in the interactive **webinar** format. These include a number of classes such as 'The Process of Self-Transformation' with Vic Hao Chin, Jr

and 'At Home with Theosophy' with Pablo Sender. The **Theosophical Publishing House (TPH)**, in addition to printing the usual around ten books per year, and the production of e-books is continuing at an accelerated pace. We have added an additional 30 titles since January 2014. Our Foreign Rights and Permissions Manager has brought over 20 new contracts from publishers in Spain, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Germany, and Italy. We hope to facilitate a greater flow of resources from the American section to Adyar. Particularly in the areas of technology and archive management, we can expect high levels of cooperation between our two campuses.

The largest and most active Section in Latin America is the TS in **Brazil**, headed by Mr Marcos L. B. de Resende. Although Lodge 'Amizade' had to close during the year, they have added the 'Sobral' study group in Ceara state. They currently have 33 Lodges and 18 study groups. In addition to their numerous Lodge and study group regular meetings and seminars, the national gatherings included the 33rd summer school, with an attendance of 170 who studied Clara Codd's *The Technique of the Spiritual Life*. There were 8 other national gatherings with several lecturers each on theosophical themes. Their 19th International School of Theosophy was held over 5 days in July with the theme 'Ancient Wisdom — A Way to Self-Awareness' and was attended by 120 people. The main speakers were Mr Antonio Girardi, General Secretary of the Italian Section and Mrs Patrizia Calvi, Under Secretary of the same,

giving 6 and 3 lectures respectively. The Section has many departments, including Book-shop, Editing House, Training, Internet, and TOS. They also have three institutes: one in Brasilia and the Raja Theosophical Centre and Pythagoras Institute, both in Sao Paulo. Their quarterly magazine has a run of 1,500 copies and is sent to every member in the country, with the remaining copies sent to the Lodges and study groups. The **Cuban Section** is the second largest in Latin America. Their General Secretary, Mrs Barbara Fariñas Piña, reports that the Section obtained official permission from the government authorities for the publication of their Theosophical e-magazine, *Revista Teosofica Cubana*, which started its publication in January of this year as a quarterly in electronic form. Their Annual Convention was celebrated in January, with the theme 'Important Theosophical Criteria in Our Work'. The studies in the Lodges have continued as in previous years with themes based on theosophical books, lectures, and articles. The Havana Lodges organized a summer school workshop with the theme 'Diagram of Meditation', attended by 30 active members. The closing conference was open to the public, with constructive participation in the form of suggestions and questions. Some members from Havana, including Ms Fariñas, visited three out of the four Lodges outside the capital, in the cities of Matanzas, Santa Clara, and Cienfuegos. The TS in **Mexico** had a very active year, with three electoral processes. The General Secretary,

Mrs Lissette Arroyo, writes that Mr Enrique Sánchez (the only candidate) was elected as National President for 2015-2017, taking office on 17 February. Mexico participated in the Inter-American Theosophical Federation (IATF) Congress held at the TSA headquarters in Wheaton from 28 May to 1 June. The theme was 'Theosophy as Action', and Mrs Arroyo lectured about 'Inner Life and Daily Life'. During the Congress, Mrs Arroyo participated in the IATF meeting, where Mrs Isis Resende (the only candidate) was elected as President of the IATF and Mrs Arroyo as Vice President. Mexico has 12 Lodges and 4 study centres, two of which are awaiting their Charters.

The **Argentinian Section** has a Centre in San Rafael, Mendoza, that holds study and reflection activities for members and sympathizers, where they held the Section's 50th Summer School in January with Juan Viñas as coordinator and 70 participants in attendance. The topics were: 'Theosophy: A knowledge applied to everyday life' and 'The Theosophical Society: A critical analysis of its objectives'. TS members from Chile, Bolivia, Peru, and Cuba participated in the activities, making suggestions with innovative ideas. The Section organized successful book fairs in San Lorenzo and Río Cuarto, where they distributed many information flyers about the work of the TS and sold quite a number of books. The contents of their web page continues to grow. They completed the painting of their building at a high cost with the contribution and efforts of all the members. From the TS

in **Bolivia**, Teresa Weyer de Núñez reports that they celebrated all commemorative dates and held numerous regular meetings and study courses in their 11 Lodges and 2 study groups, with joint meetings on the last Sunday of every month. During their national gatherings they had speakers visiting from Argentina (Maria Rosa Martinez and Ernesto Garcia), who spoke in the Cochabamba Headquarters and in the city of Santa Cruz; and Isaac Jauli, from Spain, and former General Secretary of the Mexican Section, who also spoke in Cochabamba and in La Paz. Bolivia had their national gathering in Cochabamba in April and in San Benito in August. Their Headquarters also held 6 workshops and 5 conferences during the year. **Chile** writes that their Convention had as its theme 'Inner Knowledge, Spiritual Key'. They distribute pamphlets about Theosophy on subways and electronic pages. In addition to the printed magazine, they have an electronic Theosophical Brochure, a blog, and a Facebook and Twitter presence, all of which have been well received. In addition to regular Lodge meetings and

study groups, their public meetings offer Theosophy courses and programmes such as 'Krishnamurthi in our lives'. The Presidential Representative in **Peru** tells us that their main concern revolves around the danger of their losing their property to trespassers. Despite the struggles of trying to recover their land, their 2 Lodges offered 12 public meetings. In addition, they offered free an internet course on Theosophy for the public. The Lodges carry on with their studies as well. On 1 June they also celebrated the 90th anniversary of the founding of the TS in Peru. The Director of the TOS in Peru has established a Facebook page spreading news about protection of animals and the environment. The TS in **Uruguay**'s library is very active in lending books to members and opens three days a week for public use. Their 5 Lodges meet once a week and study theosophical and related teachings. The TOS in Uruguay is very active, providing a variety of free services, from recycling bottle taps to offering free classes in English, Portuguese, and Chi-kung. They also offer psychology workshops.



**The Self is not to be obtained by instruction,
Nor by intellect, nor by much learning.
He is to be obtained only by the one whom He chooses.
To such a one the Self reveals His own person.**

Mundaka Upanishad III.2.3

Printed at the Vasanta Press, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India